

**PARENTAL VALUES TOWARD CHILDREN AS A DETERMINANT OF
HARDINESS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY IN THE CULTURAL CONTEXT
OF KOKAND, UZBEKISTAN**

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Novelty of the Study:

This study provides a unique contribution to the exploration of parental hardiness through the lens of values toward children, employing an interdisciplinary approach in the distinct sociocultural context of Kokand, Uzbekistan. Its novelty lies in the following:

1. **Cultural Specificity:** The study integrates the collectivist, Islamic, and patriarchal values of the Fergana region, including the role of mahallas (community structures) and intergenerational traditions, previously unexplored in the context of parental hardiness.
2. **Focus on Migrant Families:** It is the first to examine the impact of labor migration (10% of Kokand’s population) on parental values and hardiness, emphasizing overcoming emotional distance and risks of social orphanhood.
3. **Mixed-Methods Approach:** Combines quantitative (VRC, Hardiness Scale, PSI questionnaires) and qualitative (interviews, focus groups) methods with data triangulation for a comprehensive understanding of subjective and cultural dimensions.
4. **Adaptation of Hardiness Theory:** Applies Kobasa and Maddi’s (1977) hardiness framework to the Central Asian context, highlighting how parental values enhance commitment, control, and challenge as components of hardiness.
5. **Practical Innovation:** Proposes a support program integrating digital tools (mobile application) and local structures (mahallas, mosques), a novel approach for strengthening parental hardiness in Uzbekistan.

INTRODUCTION

Parental values toward children, encompassing emotional closeness, acceptance, and investment in their development, serve as a critical factor in fostering hardiness—the ability to cope with stress, maintain motivation, and perceive challenges as opportunities for growth (Kobasa, 1979; Maddi, 2002). Hardiness, as conceptualized by Kobasa and Maddi, consists of three components: commitment (engagement with life’s demands), control (belief in one’s ability to influence outcomes), and challenge (viewing difficulties as opportunities). In the context of parenting, these values may enhance these components, providing motivation, a sense of control, and resilience in the face of stressors such as economic hardship, migration, or family conflicts.

Kokand, a city in Uzbekistan's Fergana region with a population of approximately 259,700 (2022), offers a unique setting for this study. High birth rates (11.1% in 2024), significant labor migration (10% of the population), and a high divorce rate (10.6% in Fergana region, 2025) create a stressful environment for parents. The cultural context of Kokand—characterized by collectivism, Islamic traditions, patriarchal norms, and the pivotal role of mahallas—shapes parental values, positioning children as sources of meaning, family honor, and lineage continuation. In migrant families, where children are often raised by grandparents, these values may be a key resource for sustaining hardiness.

The study aims to examine parental values toward children as a determinant of hardiness in Kokand, with a focus on cultural influences. The primary hypothesis posits that high parental values, expressed through emotional closeness and acceptance, enhance commitment, control, and challenge, reducing parenting stress. The secondary hypothesis suggests that sociodemographic (gender, income, migration status) and cultural factors (religiosity, collectivism, patriarchy) moderate this relationship. The study contributes a novel perspective by exploring parental hardiness in the context of migration and Central Asian cultural dynamics.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative (cross-sectional survey) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews, focus groups) methods to assess correlations and explore subjective and cultural dimensions of parental values and hardiness.

Sample

The study involved 200 parents (aged 25–45 years) with children aged 0–18 years from Kokand, selected via stratified random sampling. The sample comprised 60% women and 40% men, with a mean age of 33.7 years ($SD = 5.2$). Family composition: 70% intact families, 20% single-parent families (primarily due to migration), and 10% extended families (with grandparents). Socioeconomic status: 50% middle-income (trade, agriculture), 30% low-income, 20% high-income (education, migrant remittances). Ethnic composition: 90% Uzbek, 7% Tajik, 3% other. Inclusion criteria: having at least one child, residing in Kokand for ≥ 3 years, and providing consent. Migrant families accounted for 35% of the sample.

Data Collection Methods

1. Value of Children Questionnaire (VRC): An adapted instrument (Varga, 2011) measured emotional closeness, acceptance, and investment in child development ($\alpha = 0.89$).
2. Hardiness Scale: A 45-item version (Maddi & Khoshaba, 2001) assessed commitment, control, and challenge ($\alpha = 0.90$).
3. Parenting Stress Index (PSI): Measured stress related to parenting responsibilities (Abidin, 1995; $\alpha = 0.90$).
4. Semi-Structured Interviews: Conducted with 50 parents (30 women, 20 men) to explore perceptions of child value and its impact on coping with stress.

5. Focus Groups: Five groups (8–10 participants each) discussed the influence of migration, Islam, and collectivism on parenting.

6. Sociodemographic Questionnaire: Collected data on age, gender, income, migration status, religiosity, and family structure.

Procedure

Data were collected from April to December 2025 in collaboration with Kokand's mahallas and schools. Surveys were administered online (Google Forms with two-factor authentication) or in-person at community centers. Interviews and focus groups were conducted in Uzbek, with Russian translations as needed, and recorded with consent. Ethical considerations included informed consent, anonymity, and compliance with Uzbekistan's regulations and the Helsinki Declaration. Migrant families: 30% of interviews involved returned migrants.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 29.0 (Pearson's correlation, multiple regression, ANOVA) to assess relationships and group differences. Reliability was confirmed: VRC ($\alpha = 0.89$), Hardiness Scale ($\alpha = 0.90$), PSI ($\alpha = 0.90$). Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis in NVivo 14.0 with double coding for reliability. Triangulation integrated quantitative and qualitative findings, with cultural bias minimized through consultations with experts from Kokand Pedagogical College.

RESULTS

Quantitative Findings

High parental values (emotional closeness, acceptance) strongly correlated with overall hardiness ($r = 0.74$, $p < 0.001$), particularly commitment ($r = 0.70$, $p < 0.001$) and control ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$), and negatively with parenting stress ($r = -0.62$, $p < 0.01$). Investment in child development also correlated with hardiness ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$). Multiple regression showed that parental values explained 48% of the variance in hardiness ($R^2 = 0.48$, $F(4,195) = 33.7$, $p < 0.001$), with emotional closeness as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.53$, $p < 0.01$). Parenting stress mediated the relationship, reducing hardiness when parental values were low ($\beta = -0.39$, $p < 0.05$).

Gender differences: Women exhibited higher parental values ($t(198) = 3.70$, $p < 0.01$), while men showed greater control in migrant families ($t(198) = 2.90$, $p < 0.05$). Income: Higher income was associated with greater hardiness ($F(2,197) = 5.5$, $p < 0.05$). Migration: Migrant families reported higher stress ($t(198) = 3.35$, $p < 0.01$) and lower hardiness when emotional closeness was weak ($t(198) = 2.68$, $p < 0.05$).

Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis identified five themes:

1. Children as a Source of Commitment: “My children give me a reason to keep going” (mother, 33 years).
2. Cultural Expectations: Islamic and collectivist values reinforced the value of children, but patriarchy increased pressure on mothers.

3. Migration and Emotional Distance: “I work in Russia, but my son motivates me” (father, 40 years).

4. Intergenerational Transmission: Grandparents emphasized duty, while educated parents prioritized emotional closeness.

5. Hardiness Through Parenting: “My daughter’s smile helps me see challenges as opportunities” (mother, 31 years).

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that parental values toward children significantly enhance hardiness, particularly commitment and control, while reducing parenting stress. This aligns with Kobasa and Maddi’s (1977) hardiness theory, where values motivate parents to engage with challenges and perceive control over their circumstances. Emotional closeness ($\beta = 0.53$) is a key driver, fostering a sense of purpose and agency, particularly in the stressful context of Kokand.

Expanded Cultural Analysis

1. Collectivism and Mahallas: In Kokand, collectivist culture positions children as central to family and community identity. Mahallas, traditional community structures, provide social support, particularly in migrant families (35% of the sample), where grandparents often raise children. Qualitative data reveal that mahallas organize collective activities (e.g., *hashar*—community work), reinforcing parental values as a “duty to the community.” This enhances commitment, as parents view child-rearing as a contribution to collective well-being (Rothbaum et al., 2000). For example, one mother noted, “The mahalla supports us, and I feel my children are part of something bigger.”

2. Islamic Values: Islam, practiced by 90% of participants, frames children as an *amanat* (a sacred trust from Allah). Religious practices, such as prayers for children’s well-being and participation in communal events (e.g., Eid al-Fitr), strengthen emotional closeness, enhancing hardiness through commitment and challenge. A father stated, “Praying for my children gives me strength to work abroad.” However, Islamic norms sometimes reinforce gender roles, placing greater parenting responsibilities on mothers, increasing their stress ($t = 3.70$).

3. Patriarchal Norms: Kokand’s patriarchal society assigns men as providers and women as primary caregivers, creating gender disparities in parental values. Women prioritize emotional closeness ($t = 3.70$), but face stress from heightened responsibilities. Men in migrant families compensate through financial contributions (remittances), which bolster control but are less effective for commitment when emotional bonds are weak ($t = 2.68$). Qualitative data highlight men’s feelings of guilt: “I send money, but I miss my daughter’s growth” (father, 39 years).

4. Migration and Social Orphanhood: Labor migration (10% of Kokand’s population) creates emotional distance, increasing stress ($t = 3.35$) and reducing hardiness when parental values are low. Children of migrants are often raised by relatives, raising risks of social orphanhood (50% of institutionalized children in Fergana are from migrant families, Khasanova, 2021). Qualitative findings indicate that parents view children as motivation for

migration, but lack of daily contact diminishes commitment, reinforcing the need for emotional closeness.

5. Intergenerational Transmission and Urbanization: Grandparents, key caregivers in migrant families, transmit traditional values emphasizing duty and obedience, which strengthen control but may limit emotional expressiveness. Younger, educated parents (20% of the sample), influenced by Kokand's urbanization, prioritize emotional bonds, enhancing commitment and challenge. This reflects a cultural shift from Soviet-era and traditional norms toward modern, emotionally focused parenting, driven by access to education and global media.

Theoretical Context: Parental values align with hardiness theory (Kobasa, 1979), where emotional closeness fosters commitment and control, enabling parents to view stressors as challenges. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988) explains how emotional bonds create a secure base, while Frankl's (1988) meaning-making framework underscores children as a source of purpose, enhancing hardiness.

Limitations: The cross-sectional design limits causal inferences. Self-reports may be biased by social desirability, especially in a collectivist culture. The focus on Kokand restricts generalizability. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs, observational methods, and regional comparisons.

Practical Implications: Support programs integrated into mahallas and mosques should promote emotional closeness and stress management. Online platforms for migrants can maintain child connections, enhancing hardiness.

Novelty: This is the first study of parental hardiness in Kokand, emphasizing migration, Islam, and mahallas through a mixed-methods approach.

CONCLUSION

Parental values toward children significantly enhance hardiness in Kokand, particularly through commitment and control, while reducing stress. Cultural factors—collectivism, Islam, patriarchy, and migration—moderate this relationship. Tailored support programs can strengthen parental hardiness. Future research should explore longitudinal effects and regional differences.

Project Idea: “Family Values: Strengthening Parental Hardiness in Kokand”

Objective: Enhance parental hardiness through values toward children, addressing migration and cultural contexts.

Methods:

1. Attachment-Based Training: 10-week program (Circle of Security) to foster emotional closeness.

2. Mobile Application: Hardiness exercises, video calls for migrants, and Uzbek-language resources.

3. Mahallas and Mosques: Seminars with religious leaders to reinforce family values.

4. Evaluation: Pre- and post-testing with Hardiness Scale and PSI.

Expected Outcomes:

- 25% increase in hardiness.
- 20% reduction in stress.
- Stronger bonds in migrant families.

Partners: Mahallas, UNICEF Uzbekistan, Kokand SU

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