



Perceived Parental Rejection and Psychological Maladjustment among Adolescents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Bushra Sajid, Ph.D., Islamia College Peshawar, bushra@icp.edu.pk
Syeda Nadia Shah, M.Phil. Islamia College Peshawar

Abstract- The aim of the present study was to measure the extent of parental acceptance-rejection and its possible relationship with psychological maladjustment among adolescents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. For this purpose, a sample comprising 321 adolescents, including 166 males and 155 females, having age range between 18 to 25 years, with $M = 20.8$ and $SD = 3.76$ was selected from four different regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, namely, Peshawar, Charsadda, Mardan, and Chitral. The data was collected by administering short forms of Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (Adult PARQ: Father and Mother) and Adult Personality Assessment Questionnaire (Adult PAQ). Both the scales have been devised by Rohner and Khaleque (2012) and translated into Urdu language by Riaz (2011). The Urdu versions of the scales were used in the study. In addition, a personal data form, devised by the researcher, was used to record the demographic information of the participants. According to the results, parental hostility/aggression was assessed as the predictor of hostility/aggression among adolescents. Scores on Adult PARQ and Adult PAQ revealed that parental hostility/aggression was positively correlated with hostility/aggression in adolescents. Moreover, positive correlation between parental indifference/neglect and emotional instability in adolescents was also analyzed from the data. However, no significant gender difference in perceived parental rejection was evidently found among the respondents. It is, therefore, concluded that adolescents with perceived parental rejection may be psychologically maladjusted specifically marked by hostility/aggression and emotional instability.

Key words: perceived parental rejection, psychological maladjustment, adolescents

I. INTRODUCTION

Psychological adjustment and well-being of individuals depend upon how they perceive their interpersonal relations specifically with parents or caregivers and that is the core principal of Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory) postulated by Rohner and his colleagues (2008). According to the theory, parental acceptance-rejection is measured on a continuum of parental warmth that has two poles: at the positive end lies parental acceptance and the negative end indicates parental rejection. The theory also describes parental acceptance as warmth, affection, love, care comfort, and support shown by parents toward their children, whereas, parental rejection refers to parental neglect, hostility, withdrawal, and absence of love towards children. In addition, the interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory suggests that perceived parental acceptance and rejection highly influence individuals' psychological as well as behavioral adjustment in various ways. In case of rejection, individuals tend to acquire anxiety and insecurity towards life and may develop personality traits associated with psychological maladjustment (Khaleque&Rohner, 2002a; Rohner&Khaleque, 2010). These traits were later identified by Rohner et al (2012) as hostility, aggression, dependence, impaired self-esteem, inadequate self-adequacy, emotional unresponsiveness, emotional instability, and negative worldview.

Although, a large number of cross-cultural and intracultural studies have attempted to analyze only mother-child relationship, however, an abundance of researches are available suggesting significant contribution of both mother and father in children's psychological adjustment that tends to persist during adolescence and later life, too (Rohner&Veneziano, 2003). Similar findings were proposed by Carrasco and Rohner(2013) in their significant research on parent-child relation and its possible impacts. As a matter of fact, no significant difference between perceptions of maternal and paternal acceptance-rejection was assessed among children (Chen, Liu, & Li, 2000; Rohner&Britner, 2002; Rohner&Veneziano, 2001).

Baumrind (1991) showed in his study that the degrees of individuals' mental health as well as specific traits and personalities were strongly linked to the parenting styles they received during childhood.

According to Feldman & Wentzel, (1990), children exhibit greater social competence, life satisfaction and intimacy in peer relationship when they share a close healthy relationship with their parents. Matejcek and Kadubcova (1983), in their study on children from Czechoslovakia, found that those children who scored high on the warmth subscale had low scores on the parental hostility, neglect and undifferentiated rejection. Subsequently, these children had low scores on unfavorable personality traits too.

Hence, these studies provide an empirical platform for the phylogenetic perspective of the IPARTheory as hypothesized by Rohner much early in 1999 according to which, all human beings possess the needs for positive and affectionate response from surrounding individuals especially parents. When these needs fail to meet in childhood, they have the susceptibility to develop into a specific group of negative personality traits as assumed in the theory's personality sub theory. Moreover, these negative personality traits grow into a stable negative personality pattern called rejection syndrome during adulthood which negatively affects the psychological adjustment and behavioral functioning throughout lifetime (Rohner 2004, Khaleque and Rohner 2002a, 2011a, b). Other researchers also provide remarkable findings suggesting adverse psychological and behavioral consequences of perceived parental neglect. For instance, Miranda et al. (2015) concluded that perceived parental rejection among children leads to negative self-evaluations that have greater tendency to persist and may trigger symptoms including depression and socially unacceptable externalizing behavior(s) in future.

It is evident that parental neglect or lack of supervision is one of the major causal factors of inducing aggression among children that may be exhibited in the form of more aggressive behavior later during adolescence (Knutson, Degarmo, Koepl, & Reid, 2005). These findings were further suggested by Kotch et al., (2008) in their remarkable research on a representative sample of 1318 American children, having age-range between 4 to 8 years. It was revealed that those children who were subjected to parental maltreatment and abuse were at risk of developing more externalizing behavioral problems in future, subsequently, affecting their academic achievement, interpersonal relations, and psychological health, too. It is noteworthy to mention that Simons et al., (1998) in their study discovered that adolescents' delinquent behavior including drug use was strongly linked with lack of parental support and involvement. According to Eron et al., (1991), aggression in youngsters is greatly induced by parent's emotional rejection and physical punishment in early life. This implies that those children who experience parental rejection during childhood are prone to exhibit aggression in later life.

Rationale

The aim of this study was to measure the degree of parental acceptance-rejection and its causal relationship with psychological adjustment/maladjustment among adolescents. This study represents an empirical medium for parents to realize how their attitude may make or break their child's personality. At the same time, a deeper insight has been provided for adolescents in regard to their relationship with their parents. For this purpose, the study was carried out on an extensive sample of adolescents at district level.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the degree of perceived parental acceptance-rejection among adolescents.
2. To measure the effects of perceived parental acceptance-rejection on psychological adjustment/maladjustment of adolescents.

Hypotheses

1. Total score on Adult PARQ (Mother & Father) will indicate perceived parental rejection among adolescents.
2. Total PAQ score will show psychological maladjustment among adolescents.
3. Scores on Hostility/Aggression subscale of Adult PARQ will predict high level of aggression among adolescents.
4. Perceived parental aggression will be positively correlated with aggression in adolescents.
5. Perceived parental neglect will be positively correlated with emotional instability in adolescents.

III. METHOD

Sample

The sample comprised of n=321 participants, including 166 males and 155 females, having age range of 18 to 25 years with M = years and SD = . Of the total sample, 77 were from Peshawar, 69 from Charsadda, 105 from Mardan and 70 participants belonged to Chitral. All the participants were students and were selected from reputable educational institutes of their locality.

Inclusion and Exclusion criteria:

Male and female respondents of ages between 18 and 25 years were included in the study. Subjects who were below 18 years or above 25 years were excluded. The sample comprised of only educated adolescents/young adults, with uneducated sample excluded from the study.

Measures

The following measuring instruments were used in the study:

1. Personal Data Sheet
2. Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaires (Adult PARQ: Father Version & Mother Version)
3. Personality Assessment Questionnaire (Adult PAQ)

1. Personal Data Sheet (devised by the researcher for the present study)

Demographic information of the respondents including name, age, gender, education, and socioeconomic status was collected using a personal data sheet as devised by the researchers.

2. Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaires (Adult PARQ: Father Version & Mother Version)

Parental Acceptance- Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) is a standardized measure of perceived parental acceptance or rejection as devised by Rohner and Khaleque (2012). The scale is available in two forms: *the standard form* and *the short form*. Each form consists of two versions: mother version and father version, separately. The current research uses the short form of Adult PARQ that consists of 24 items. Possible scores on the short form range from a low of 24 (maximum perceived acceptance) to a high of 96 (maximum perceived rejection).

Sample items on the mother version include: My mother “lets me know she loves me” (warmth/affection), “yells at me when she is angry” (hostility/aggression), “pays no attention to me” (indifference/neglect), and “does not really love me”(undifferentiated rejection). Responses are marked on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from (4) “Almost always true” through (1) “Almost never true.” Scoring is done on the four subscales of PARQ: hostility/aggression and indifference/neglect scales, and 4 in the undifferentiated rejection scale. The alpha coefficient for PARQ is .95. Moreover, PARQ is available in more than ten languages worldwide and has been translated into Urdu language by Riaz (2011).

3. Personality Assessment Questionnaire (Adult PAQ)

Adult PAQ (Rohner&Khaleque, 2012) is a self-report inventory that comprises seven subscales for assessing the seven personality traits of individuals, namely, hostility/aggression, dependency, negative self-esteem, emotional instability, emotional unresponsiveness, self-inadequacy, and negative worldview. The scale consists of 63 items. Individuals respond to items on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from (4) “Almost always true of me” to (1) “Almost never true of me.” The total score is obtained by summing up the seven subscale scores after reverse scoring selected items. Scores on the adult PAQ range from a low of 63 that indicates psychological adjustment, to a high of 252 revealing serious psychological maladjustment. Further, test–retest reliability for the adult PAQ was shown to be .76.

Procedure

In order to collect the desired data for the present study, all the participants were approached after taking formal permission from the educational institutes they belonged to. This was indeed not an easy task as the data was to be collected from four different regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. For this purpose, one region was assigned to each researcher so as to save time, expenses, and energy.

The researchers briefed the subjects about the purpose of the research and told them that their participation was voluntary and would be kept unidentified and confidential. In this way, rapport was established between the sample and the researchers. All the measuring scales were administered in a predetermined sequence. It was observed that majority of the participants did not face any difficulty in marking the responses as they were all students and were able to read and write. Each respondent took 15-20 minutes to fill in all the questionnaires. Later on, scoring of the responses was carried out following the procedures as prescribed in the test manual and the data was analyzed through version 22 of SPSS.

IV. RESULTS

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample(n=321)

Characteristics	Peshawar (n=77)	Charsada (n=69)	Mardan (n=105)	Chitral (n=70)
Gender				
Male	62.4	50.8	51.5	41.2
Female	37.7	49.3	48.6	58.6

According to Table 1, of the total male participants, 62.4% were from Peshawar, 50.8% from Charsada, 51.5% from Mardan, and 41.2 % belonged to Chitral. On the other hand, of the total female participants, 37.7% were from Peshawar, 49.3 % from Charsada, 48.6 from Mardan and 58.6% were from Chitral.

Table 2

<i>Means and Standard Deviations of scores on short forms of PARQ (Mother & Father) and its subscales</i>					
	W/A M (SD)	H/A M (SD)	I/N M (SD)	U/R M (SD)	Total PARQ M (SD)
PARQ-M	13.69 (4.64)	11.38 (4.17)	11.15 (3.91)	7.33 (3.78)	43.57 (12.8)
PARQ-F	13.97 (4.75)	10.89 (4.30)	11.04 (4.38)	7.09 (2.90)	43.02 (13.2)

Note. W/A= Warmth/Affection subscale; H/A= Hostility/Aggression subscale; I/N= Indifference/Neglect subscale; and U/R= Undifferentiated Rejection subscale of Parental Acceptance/Rejection Questionnaire

Table 3

<i>Means and Standard Deviations of scores on PAQ and its subscales</i>								
	Hostility	Dependency	Negative Self-Esteem	Negative Self-Adequacy	Emotional Unresponsiveness	Emotional Instability	Negative World View	Total PAQ
M	20.45	23.68	20.12	17.82	20.58	22.88	18.63	146.46
(SD)	(5.88)	(5.16)	(4.84)	(4.87)	(4.07)	(4.91)	(5.62)	(22.23)

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations and t-values of males and females in Perceived Parental Acceptance-Rejection among adolescents (n=321)

Variables	Males (n=166)		Females (n=155)		t	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
PARQ-M	43.77	12.72	43.36	13.05	.280	.77	-2.42	3.23	0.031
PARQ-F	44.24	12.02	41.70	14.45	1.78	.08	-.375	5.44	0.191

Note. PARQ-M= Parental Acceptance/Rejection Questionnaire (Mother); PARQ-F= Parental Acceptance/Rejection Questionnaire (Father)

Table 4 shows no significant difference between scores of males and females on PARQ-Mother and PARQ-Father.

Table 5

Linear Regression Analysis of Hostility/Aggression subscale of Adult PARQ (Mother & Father) for predicting aggression among adolescents (n=321)

Variables	Hostility/Aggression among Adolescence (n=321)		
	B	SE	B
Constant	11.61	.884***	
Hostility/Aggression-M	.276	.082***	.196 .383

Hostility/Aggression-F	.523	.080***	
<i>Note. Hostility/Aggression-M=Hostility/Aggression subscale of Adult PARQ (Mother); Hostility/Aggression-F=Hostility/Aggression subscale of Adult PARQ(Father); Aggression R²=.270, *p<.05, **p<.01, & ***<.001</i>			

Table 5 shows the results of linear regression analysis that explains parental hostility/aggression 27% of the variance. The table is statistically significant at $p < .000$, which suggests that the hostility/aggression of mother and father is a strong predictor of hostility/aggression among adolescence.

Table 6

Correlation between Hostility/Aggression subscale of Adult PARQ (Mother and Father) and aggression among adolescents (n=321)

Variables	1	2	3	M	SD
1. Hostility/Aggression-M	—	.571**	.414**	11.38	4.17
2. Hostility/Aggression-F	.571**	—	.495**	10.89	4.30
3. Hostility/Aggression-A	.414**	.495**	—	20.45	5.88

Note. Hostility/Aggression-M=Hostility/Aggression Subscale of Adult PARQ (Mother); Hostility/Aggression-F= Hostility/Aggression Subscale of Adult PARQ (Father); Hostility/Aggression-A= Hostility/Aggression Subscale of PAQ(Adolescents)

Table 6 shows that Pearson correlation examined the relationship between Hostility/aggression subscale of Adult PARQ (mother and father) and hostility/aggression among adolescence. The relationship of Hostility/aggression subscale of Adult PARQ (mother) with aggression was positive, strong in strength and statistically significant ($r = .414^{**}$, $p = .01$). The relation of Hostility/aggression subscale of Adult PARQ (father) with hostility/aggression among adolescence is also positive, strong in strength and statistically significant ($r = .495^{**}$, $p = .01$).

Table 7

Correlation between Indifference/Neglect subscale of Adult PARQ (Mother & Father) and Emotional Instability subscale of Adult PAQ among adolescents (n=321)

Variables	1	2	3	M	SD
1. Indifference/Neglect-M	—	.659**	.178**	11.15	3.91
2. Indifference/Neglect-F	.659**	—	.179**	11.04	4.38
3. Emotional Instability-A	.178**	.179**	—	22.88	4.91

Note. Indifference/Neglect-M=Indifference/Neglect of Mother; Indifference/Neglect-F=Indifference/Neglect of Father; Emotional Instability-A= Emotional Instability in Adolescence

Table 7 shows that Pearson correlation examined the relationship between Indifference/neglect subscale of Adult PARQ (mother and father). The relationship of Indifference/neglect subscale of Adult PARQ (mother) with Emotional instability among adolescence was positive, strong in strength and statistically significant ($r = .178^{**}$, $p = .01$). The relation of Indifference/neglect subscale of Adult PARQ (father) with emotional instability among adolescence is also positive, strong in strength and statistically significant ($r = .179^{**}$, $p = .01$).

V. DISCUSSION

The present study attempted to assess the level of perceived parental acceptance-rejection and its possible causal relationship with psychological adjustment/maladjustment among adolescents. For this purpose, Urdu translation of the short forms of Adult Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) (Adult PARQ: Mother & Father) and Personality Assessment Questionnaire (Adult PAQ) were administered in sequence. According to Tables 2 and 3, scores on both the scales indicated perceived parental rejection and high degree of psychological maladjustment in the respondents, thus supporting hypotheses 1 and 2. However, Table 4 showed no significant gender difference in perceived parental acceptance-rejection among the subjects. Furthermore, it is evident from figures in Tables 5 and 6 that perceived parental hostility/aggression predicted hostility/aggression in adolescents, and was found to be positively correlated with hostility/aggression among adolescents. Therefore, hypotheses 3 and 4 were also supported by the findings in the mentioned tables. Moreover, values of correlation in Table 7 confirmed hypothesis 5 of the current research which assumed positive correlation between perceived parental neglect and emotional instability in adolescents,

Literature review shows that the findings of the present study are supported by abundance of researches in the field. For instance, Taylor, Larsen-Rife, Conger, and Widaman, (2012) suggested that aggressive attitude of parents serves as a potential threat to healthy development of children that often persists later during adolescence, too. Knox, Burkhart & Khuder (2011) investigated the possible relationship between harsh parental treatment and aggressive behavior among children. The sample comprised of parents/caregivers having children with age range up to 10 years. It was concluded that parental hostility played crucial role in childhood aggression and conduct problems. Later, similar findings were suggested by Yaros, Lochman & Wells (2016) in their longitudinal study that explored parental aggression to be a high risk factor for promoting hostile and violent behavior(s) in middle school boys. In another study, adolescents with authoritarian parents obtained high scores on physical and verbal aggression. However, boys scored higher in physical aggression than girls (De la Torre-Cruz, García-Linares & Casanova-Arias, 2014). Researches on parental aggression have remarkably proved that paternal and maternal hostility individually predicts externalizing problems among youth (Carrasco, Holgado, Rodríguez, & del Barrio, 2009; Harold, Elam, Lewis, Rice, & Thapar, 2012; Stocker, Richmond, Low, Alexander, & Elias, 2003). Hence, parent-child relationship plays an extremely important role in the psychological as well as emotional development of children. According to Maccoby and Martin (1983), warm parenting style leaves lifetime positive impact on the personalities of children and subsequently provides the pathway for attaining emotional security and mental health during adulthood.

It is, therefore, evident that the current study is in line with previous studies that show positive association between negative parenting styles and negative internalized behaviors such as emotional instability in offspring. Mendo-Lazaro et al (2019) found a strong positive correlation between emotional instability among children and perceived parental rejection. A meta-analysis by Rohner and Khaleque (2002) proposed that individuals' psychological adjustment/maladjustment is generally marked by perceived parental acceptance-rejection regardless of the worldwide boundaries of culture, ethnicity, and religion. Another cross-cultural meta-analysis by Rohner, Khaleque, and Ali (2015) examined 220 studies, having 33081 participants from 23 countries around five continents. The study demonstrated that perceived parental acceptance/rejection was significantly related to psychological adaptation of children as well as adults. In addition, parental rejection was explored as a determinant for psychological and behavioral problems among individuals. Rodríguez, et al (2016) also studied perceived parental acceptance-rejection as a causal factor for psychological maladjustment among adolescents. For this purpose, the overall psychological condition of 226 participants was systematically studied by the researchers. It was found that the psychological maladjustment of the individuals was best predicted by perceived paternal rejection as compared to perceived maternal rejection. Findings by Ali, Khaleque and Rohner (2015) are congruent with that of the current research which finds a noteworthy linkage perceived parental acceptance and overall psychological wellbeing of the participants. In a cross-cultural study to investigate the parental warmth and socio-emotional adjustment in children of several nations, Chung, Zappulla & Kaspar (2008) also found a strong connection between parental concerns and desirable behavioral as well as psychological outcomes in children.

To sum up, literature provides a large number of studies that are congruent with that of the current research that finds a strong linkage between perceived parental harsh treatment and certain behavioral as well as emotional disturbances including aggression and emotional instability in adolescence. For instance, Mathurin, Gielen, & Lancaster (2006) concluded that children who experienced corporal punishment in childhood lead to such personality traits as aggression, emotional instability and overall psychological accommodation as adults.

VI. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that perceived parental hostility/aggression may lead to aggressive attitude among adolescents regardless of differences in their gender, geographical and cultural background. In addition, perceived parental neglect has also found to be positively correlated with emotional instability in adolescents.

Limitations and Suggestions

Following are the limitations and suggestions of the current research:

1. The study was carried out to investigate parental impact on the behavior of undergraduate adolescents. It is suggested to study parental influence among illiterate adolescents in future. This shall also contribute in increasing the generalizability of the results.
2. Another major limitation is that the study was restricted to the region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa only. In future, this research may be replicated by obtaining data from other provinces of Pakistan that may help in providing vast knowledge about effects of parenting among Pakistani adolescents having different cultural context.

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