

A Study of Parental Acceptance–Rejection in Relation to Depression and Life Satisfaction among Adolescents

Dr. Roshan Lal¹, Amit Kumar^{2*}

ABSTRACT

Relationship between parents and children is the closest one that an individual experiences throughout his/her life. Parental acceptance-rejection affects child's key components of cognitive and emotional development. **AIM** The present study was planned to study the relationship between parental acceptance and rejection of adolescents in relation to depression and life satisfaction and also evaluate the gender differences. **METHOD** 360 adolescents (180 males and 180 females) in the age range of 16-18 years were selected as the sample for the present study. Purposive sampling technique was used to collect the sample from private schools of Mandi, Gobindgarh and Khanna (Punjab). They were administered the Short form of Parental Acceptance–Rejection Questionnaire (Rohner 2005), Beck Depression Inventory-II (Beck et al., 1996) and Satisfaction with Life scale (Diener et al., 1985). Descriptive statistics, t-test and correlation analysis were computed. **RESULTS** The main findings are discussed in detail in light of recent researches in the field.

Keywords: Parental Acceptance-Rejection; Depression; Life-Satisfaction; Adolescents

Adolescence is the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood. It represents one of the critical transitions in the life span and is characterized by a tremendous pace in growth and change that is second only to that of infancy. Biological processes drive many aspects of this growth and development, with the onset of puberty marking the passage from childhood to adolescence. This period has seen many changes over the past century namely the earlier onset of puberty, later age of marriage, urbanization, global communication, and changing sexual attitudes and behaviours.

But how these changes or developments exactly take place in one's life? A new born is nurtured under the parental care i.e. the family is the immediate source of the child's interaction. It is this interaction process only which shapes the overall personality of the child. Therefore, parent child interaction or parental care should be filled with positive emotions or feelings of love, care, kindness, etc as opposed to feelings of hatred, judgements, withdrawal, finally resulting in rejection of the child.

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India

² Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India

*Corresponding Author

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According to Rohner (1986) Warmth i.e. WA in parental acceptance-rejection theory is defined as the affection, and love of parents towards their children. It has two forms of expression, i.e. Physical expression and Verbal expression. Physical expression of warmth includes the behavior of parents just as hugging, fondling, caressing, approving, kissing, smiling, or support. Verbal expression of warmth includes the behavior of parents as praising, complimenting, telling stories to the child, singing songs or saying good or nice things to child. These behaviors are mostly found in those children who belong to accepting families, while in changes with the time in the child they may get angry and impatient or rejected.

Rejection, in the other hand, in parental acceptance-rejection theory is defined as absence or withdrawal of acceptance. In the theory, rejection takes three forms: Hostility-Aggression (HA), Indifference-Neglect (IN), and Undifferentiated Rejection (UR). Hostility refers to the internal feelings of resentment and anger toward the child and it may be shown behaviourally in forms of verbal and physical aggression. Aggression refers to behaviours that are meant to hurting another person physically or psychologically. Indifference, on the other hand, is not showing concern for the child. Undifferentiated rejection refers to the child’s feelings of rejection without naming parental behavior as neglect or aggression, but rather points to the child’s global feelings of being unloved (Rohner, 1986).

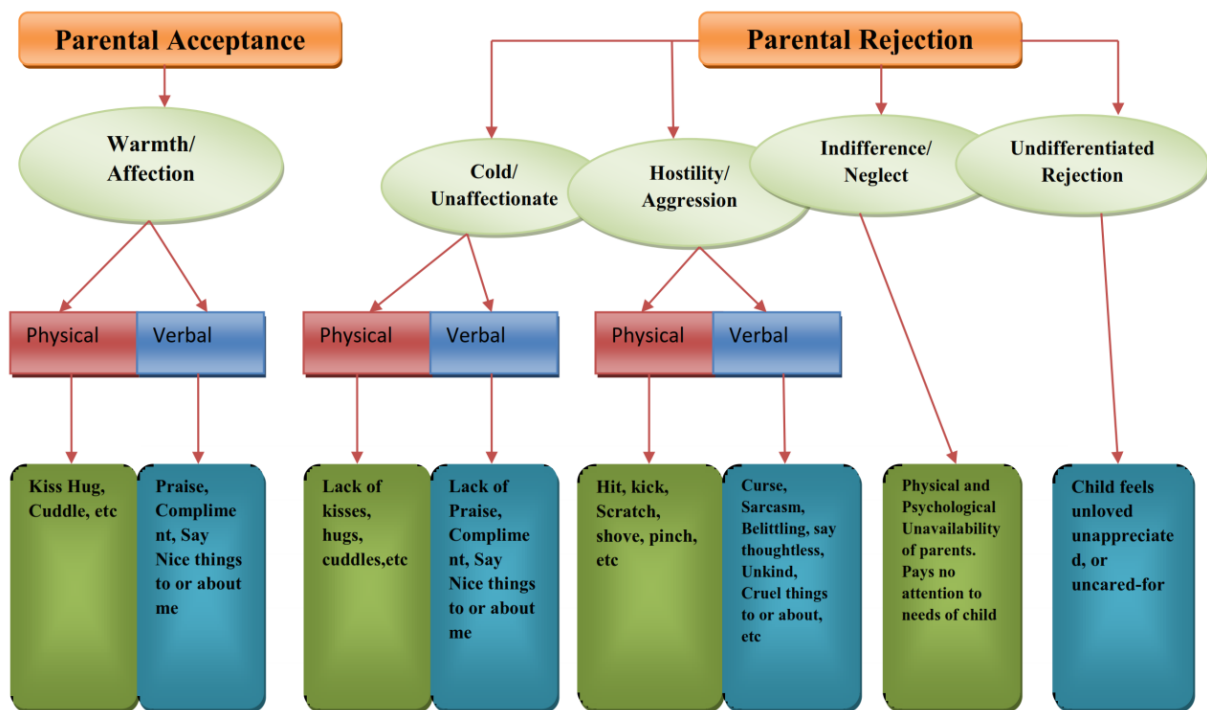


Figure 1: Dimensions of Parental Acceptance and Rejection

Adolescence phase of growth is very critical in the lives of human beings and implication of parental relationship at this stage of development has great importance as it provides the most important environment in which children develop as individuals and as functioning members of their society (Russell, Mize, & Blssaker, 2002). It has been stated that the child’s feelings of being loved and accepted by his/her parents has a strong influence on psychological development. Besides the parent-child relationship also creates a role model for the child’s interpersonal relationships. Hence, this paper is a crucial step in understanding the association of parental acceptance and rejection with depression and life satisfaction.

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DEPRESSION

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V, American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013) describes major depression as loss of pleasure or depressed mood and reduction in daily life activities. Depressive feelings become more prevalent in adolescence since it is the transitional period involving major changes in physical development, cognitive abilities, emotional adjustment, and self-esteem (Weissman & Shaffer, 1998). Adolescents who grow up in conflicting and rejecting home environment are more vulnerable to feelings of depression (Nilzon & Palmerus, 1997).

Burge and Hammen (1991) provided convincing evidence for the relationship between parenting behavior and depression. They videotaped interactions of mothers and their children while discussing a topic of discord. It was found that the affective quality of interaction between mother and child during this discussion predicted depressive symptoms of the child 6 months later (Saritaş, 2007). Lau and Kwok (2000) investigated the relationship between family environment and depression in adolescents in Hong-Kong. It was concluded that adolescent's depression was related to perceived family environment.

LIFE SATISFACTION

Life satisfaction can reflect experiences that have influenced a person in a positive way. These experiences have the ability to motivate people to pursue and reach their goals. (Bailey, Eng, Frisch, & Snyder, 2007) There are two kinds of emotions that may influence how people perceive their lives. Hope and optimism both consist of cognitive processes that are usually oriented towards the reaching of goals and the perception of those goals. Additionally, optimism is linked to higher life satisfaction, whereas pessimism is related to symptoms in depression. (Chang & Sanna, 2001)

Researchers have sought to assess the presumed determinants of life satisfaction in adolescents. In addition to demonstrating the roles of individual factors (e.g. temperament, attributional style differences), a variety of contextual factors have been shown to relate to adolescent life satisfaction. Across the full range of adolescence, students' ratings of the quality of their family relationships have been shown to be of greater significance to their overall life satisfaction than peer, school, or community-level ratings (Dew & Huebner, 1994; Huebner, 1991).

OBJECTIVES

To study:

1. Parental acceptance-rejection in relation to depression and life-satisfaction among adolescents.
2. Gender differences on parental acceptance-rejection, depression and life-satisfaction.

HYPOTHESES

Based on the review of literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. Parental acceptance is positively related to life satisfaction and negatively correlated with depression among adolescents.
2. Hostility-aggression, indifference-neglect, and undifferentiated rejection is negatively correlated with life satisfaction and positively correlated with depression among adolescents.
3. There are gender differences on parental acceptance-rejection, depression and life-satisfaction among adolescents.

METHOD

SAMPLE

The sample for the present study comprised of a total of 360 adolescents i.e. 180 males and 180 females of age 16-18 years. The sample was collected using the purposive sampling technique from schools of Mandi Gobindgarh, and Khanna (Punjab). An inclusion and exclusion criteria was also set.

DESIGN

The present study is a correlational study which involves 360 adolescents (180 males and 180 females) of age 16-18 years who were approached using the Purposive Sampling technique.

MEASURING TOOLS

The following psychological tools were used

1. Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ; Rohner 2005)

It is a self-report 24 item questionnaire which is designed to measure the respondent's assessment regarding the way their parents treated them. There are 4 responses to each question ranging from 'almost always true' to 'almost never true'. It consists of four sub scales namely Warmth/Affection (WA); Hostility/Aggression (HA); Indifference/Neglect (IN); and Undifferentiated Rejection (UR). PARQ reliability coefficients (alphas) for the mother version of the Adult PARQ ranged from .86 to .95, with a median reliability of .91. Mean test/retest reliability of all versions of the Adult PARQ across time spans ranging from six through 12 months is .93. It has 4 dimensions namely,

2. Beck Depression Inventory-II (Beck et al., 1996)

It is a 21 item 4 point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 3. The maximum score a person can attain is 63. A higher score is indicative of a more severe form of depression (Beck et al., 1996). A cut off score was also developed which ranges from minimal depression to severe depression (Beck et al., 1996). BDI-II shows alpha coefficient of 0.92 for outpatients and 0.93 for the college students. BDIII has high content validity. The test retest reliability ranged from 0.73 to 0.96.

3. Satisfaction with Life scale (Diener et al., 1985)

It is a 5-item 7 point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Although the scoring is kept continuous, some cut offs have also been set ranging from extremely dissatisfied - extremely satisfied. The scale has moderate temporal stability and strong internal reliability. Where the coefficient alpha was found to be 0.87, the test retest reliability was reported as 0.82 (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985).

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

In the present study correlation analysis was used to study the correlates of parental acceptance- rejection in students. To find if any gender differences exist or not, T-test was applied.

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RESULTS

Table 1 : Correlations for the total sample on the mother form (n=360)

| | WA | HA | IN | UR | LIFE SATISFACTION | DEPRESSION |
|-----|----|--------|--------|--------|-------------------|------------|
| WA | 1 | -.33** | -.37** | -.36** | .15** | -.17** |
| HA | | 1 | .53** | .63** | -.21** | .14** |
| IN | | | 1 | .50** | -.08 | .19** |
| UR | | | | 1 | -.27** | .24** |
| LS | | | | | 1 | -.22** |
| DEP | | | | | | 1 |

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level of significance (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level of significance (2-tailed)

Table 2: Correlations for the total sample on the father form (n=360)

| | WA | HA | IN | UR | LS | DEP |
|-----|----|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| WA | 1 | -.305** | -.561** | -.383** | .161* | -.110 |
| HA | | 1 | .344** | .625** | -.231** | .048 |
| IN | | | 1 | .304** | -.160* | .157* |
| UR | | | | 1 | -.290** | .128 |
| LS | | | | | 1 | -.260** |
| DEP | | | | | | 1 |

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2-tailed) **Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2-tailed)

Table 3 : Correlations for the males on the mother form (n=180)

| | WA | HA | IN | UR | LS | DEP |
|-----|----|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| WA | 1 | -.320** | -.385** | -.334** | .092 | -.207** |
| HA | | 1 | .491** | .502** | -.166* | .204** |
| IN | | | 1 | .473** | -.039 | .211** |
| UR | | | | 1 | -.152* | .234** |
| LS | | | | | 1 | -.254** |
| DEP | | | | | | 1 |

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2-tailed) **Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2-tailed)

Table 4 : Correlations for females on mother form (n=180)

| | WA | HA | IN | UR | LS | DEP |
|-----|----|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| WA | 1 | -.338** | -.355** | -.381** | .170* | -.143 |
| HA | | 1 | .564** | .724** | -.253** | .077 |
| IN | | | 1 | .513** | -.120 | .162* |
| UR | | | | 1 | -.358** | .245** |
| LS | | | | | 1 | -.260** |
| DEP | | | | | | 1 |

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2-tailed) **Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2-tailed)

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Table 5 : Correlations for females on father form (n=180)

| | WA | HA | IN | UR | LS | DEP |
|-----|----|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| WA | 1 | -.305** | -.561** | -.383** | .161* | -.110 |
| HA | | 1 | .344** | .625** | -.231** | .048 |
| IN | | | 1 | .304** | -.160* | .157* |
| UR | | | | 1 | -.290** | .128 |
| LS | | | | | 1 | -.260** |
| DEP | | | | | | 1 |

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2-tailed) **Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2-tailed)

Table 6 : Means, Standard Deviations and t-ratio for the mother form (n=360)

| | MALES (n=180) | | FEMALES (n=180) | | T-RATIO |
|------|---------------|---------|-----------------|---------|---------|
| | MEAN | SD | MEAN | SD | |
| WA | 26.6556 | 3.72118 | 27.0944 | 3.71122 | -1.120 |
| HA | 10.9944 | 3.22957 | 11.1111 | 3.65080 | -.321 |
| IN | 9.5389 | 2.80933 | 9.7111 | 2.92072 | -.570 |
| UR | 6.3556 | 2.13673 | 6.4056 | 2.38875 | -.209 |
| LS | 19.2333 | 3.84344 | 21.6556 | 5.71123 | -4.721 |
| DEPR | 6.5500 | 2.96021 | 6.8833 | 2.26036 | -1.201 |

Table 7 : Means, Standard Deviations and t-ratio for the father form (n=360)

| | MALES (n=180) | | FEMALES (n=180) | | T-RATIO |
|------|---------------|---------|-----------------|---------|---------|
| | MEAN | SD | MEAN | SD | |
| WA | 26.0000 | 4.12649 | 26.5611 | 4.36999 | -1.253 |
| HA | 10.9611 | 3.62543 | 9.2944 | 3.09026 | 4.694 |
| IN | 9.9333 | 3.24011 | 9.7722 | 3.10852 | .481 |
| UR | 6.1278 | 2.19962 | 5.8056 | 1.98626 | 1.459 |
| LS | 19.2333 | 3.84344 | 21.6556 | 5.71123 | -4.721 |
| DEPR | 6.5500 | 2.96021 | 6.8833 | 2.26036 | -1.201 |

DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to study the relationship between parental acceptance and rejection of adolescents in relation to depression and life satisfaction. Also, the study aimed to evaluate the gender differences among the 360 adolescents. This study plays an important role in highlighting the importance of parent-child interaction in one's overall development.

Bringing up a child in today's world is a herculean task. It involves a lot of emotional and physical exertion in parents. It is a process in which a person shows warmth, affection and caring behaviour towards their children. Parenting practices are defined as specific behaviour that parents use to socialize their children (Darling & Sternberg, 1993). Through these parenting practices, parents deal with their children and it automatically affects their children's behaviour positively or negatively.

But, the parent-child conflict increases as children move into adolescence. Although this trend is not inevitable, it is common and can be quite distressing for parents and adolescents (Larson, 1995). Adolescents may see their parents as having turned harsh, controlling, and irrational. Parents may wonder why their formerly cooperative and responsible children now

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seem hostile and destructive. These perspectives often feed on one another, increasing misunderstanding on both sides. Many parents and adolescents report a decrease in closeness during this time. Hence, it is important to study the implications of these interactions.

According to Kim and Nolan (2003) adolescents have severe risk to develop behavioral problems, e.g. depression and aggression, when they actually feel that they are rejected by their parents. Sometimes parents' rejection can make their children a victim to negatively perceive themselves and evaluations which leads them to be depressed. Noack and Puschner (2005) found that perceived parental rejection is strongly associated with adolescent depression. According to Khaleque and Rohner (2002) adolescent's point of view about their parental warmth and rejection are often related to their internal problems like depression.

Despite increasing amounts of time spent with peers, the quality of family relationships appears to be most important to adolescents' lives. Thus, it seems critical to determine which specific features of families serve as determinants of optimal well-being, including their life satisfaction (Antaramian, Huebner & Valois, 2008).

Wasif, Noot, Aqeel and Rohail (2015) conducted a study on 100 adolescents. The results revealed that for the mother, moderate correlation was found between depression and perceived parental rejection ($r=.36$), where as in the case of the father, a very strong positive correlation ($r=.97$) was found. Wasif et al. (2015) *investigated link between perceived parental rejection and depression among adolescents in age range of 13 to 19 years. The results revealed that perceived parental rejection was significantly positively correlated with depression among adolescent students. Results of the study also highlighted that both males and females equally face depression when their parents reject them.*

Shin and Johnson (1978) defined life satisfaction “as a global assessment of person's quality of life according to his chosen criteria”. Similarly, Veenhoven (1991) defined life satisfaction as “the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his life-as-a-whole favourably.”

Sastre and Ferriere (2000) explored the satisfaction of 50 adolescents who had been removed from their families and placed in children's homes and 50 matched adolescents living with their parents in intact families. Compared to individuals living in intact families, individuals placed in children's homes rated their satisfaction almost 1.2 points lower on a 5-point scale.

Khan, Hassain, Husain and Gul (2011) conducted a study on 152 young adults from Rawalpindi. They found that 66% of the participants reported acceptance from the mother as compared to the 60% of the participants who reported acceptance from their fathers. Further, Rejection from mother as compared to the father's rejection was linked more closely with low life satisfaction ($r=-.197$; $p=.01$). Reduced self-efficacy ($r=-.267$; $p=.001$) and poorer self-concept ($r=-.321$; $p=.000$). Dwairy (2004) also found that male participants received more rejection from their fathers in comparison to the of the female participants.

Yasmin and Hossain (2014) revealed that parental rejection was found to be negatively associated with life satisfaction and self esteem scores in their study. This result also suggests that maternal rejection has greater impact on self esteem and life satisfaction than paternal rejection. The close affection bond with mothers and their children develop higher life satisfaction in their children.

CONCLUSION

Parent-child interaction is like a stepping stone in one's life development. It is essential to form a positive bond in this phase of a child's life. Parental acceptance-rejection significantly regulates the psychological and mental wellness and functioning of adolescents.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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