

# A STUDY OF PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE–REJECTION IN RELATION TO AGGRESSION AND SELF ESTEEM AMONG ADOLESCENTS

Dr Roshan Lal\* Prof Anuradha Bhandari\*\* & Amit Kumar\*\*\*

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Panjab University, Chandigarh

Professor, Department of Psychology, Panjab University, Chandigarh

Research Scholar, Panjab University, Chandigarh

## *Abstract*

The present study was aimed to explore the relationship between aggression and self-esteem of adolescents 'perception of parental acceptance and rejection'. For this purpose a total sample of 120 adolescents (60 males and 60 female) were collected. The participants were 16 to 18 years old .The data was collected from private schools of Mandi Gobindgarh and Khanna (Punjab) using the purposive sampling technique . Short form of Parental Acceptance–Rejection Questionnaire (Rohner 2005), Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992) were used to collect data from adolescents. Inter correlation analysis was used to explore the relationship between variables and t-test was used to assess the gender differences. Results and implications are discussed.

Keywords: parental acceptance-rejection; aggression; self-esteem; adolescents.

## **INTRODUCTION**

According to Colman (2003) adolescence is the period of development from the onset of puberty to the attainment of adulthood, beginning with the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics usually between 11 and 13 years of age continuing through the teenage years and terminating legally at the age of majority, usually 18 years of age. Adolescence is essentially characterized by a sudden spurt in physical growth. Many also experience substantial changes in their social lives, reasoning abilities and views of themselves (Bernstein, Penner, Clarke-Stewart & Roy 2006).

Parent–child relationships are among the most important relationships for adolescents. Adolescence is a period of rapid biological, cognitive, and neurological changes which have a salient impact on psychosocial functioning and relationships. During adolescence, parent–child relationships are thought to become more equal, interdependent, and reciprocal, changes that co-occur with a temporary decrease in the quality of the relationship and an increase in conflict. Indeed, adolescents report that their parents are less supportive in early

to middle adolescence, and they gradually perceive their parents as less powerful and controlling over the course of adolescence.

Parenting has two components (Weiten & Lloyd, 2004). Parental acceptance and parenting control. Parental acceptance means accepting their child and providing all basic needs, caring attitude, warmth and affection. Parenting control is strictness toward their child. As the child grows parental control starts increasing. Due to more parental acceptance in infancy, strong relationship develops between the child and the parents.

Parental Acceptance refers to the affection, warmth 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.

Parental Rejection, on the other hand refers to withdrawal of affection, love or warmth by the child towards their parents. It includes three major forms (Rohner & Rohner, 1975) i.e. a) Hostility and aggression ; b) Indifference and neglect; and c) Undifferentiated rejection. 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. For example physical or psychological non-availability of the parent may be seen as emotional unresponsiveness or failing to attend the physical needs of the child (Koçkar, 2006). 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).

Parental acceptance-rejection affects child's key components of cognitive and emotional development. These components include self-esteem, aggression, to name few. Therefore, it is meaningful to study these variables in relation to parental acceptance-rejection.

### **Aggression**

The role of parental rearing behaviors on occurrence of anger and hostility has been explored by several research studies. According to Essau and Conradt (2004) aggression in adolescence might be displayed openly or could be hidden (Kruti & Melonashi, 2015). It is defined as a subjective and a negative state which includes

emotional experiences, behavioral patterns, and cognitive phenomena (Sukhodolsky, Kasinove, & Gorman, 2004).

Houston and Vavak (1991) asked adults to describe their parents' behavior. It was found that individuals who were less accepted, more harshly controlled, and more interfered were more likely to experience high level of hostility. Other research studies have revealed that when they feel rejected by parents, teenagers manifest internalizing and externalizing problem behavior, such as depression and aggression to a larger extent (Buehler & Gerard 2002; Chang, Schwartz, Dodge, & McBride-Chang, 2003; Chen, Liu, & Li, 2000; Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994).

## Self esteem

The individual trajectories of global self-esteem may be predicted by adolescents' feelings of closeness to and acceptance from significant others, such as parents and peers (Leary et al., 1998). Even though adolescents often spend less time with their parents than they did when they were children, close and supportive relationships with their parents are still important sources of positive self-esteem (Mattanah et al., 2011). Hans (2008) in his study found that parenting styles had different influences on self-esteem among high school students.

Adumitroaie and Dafinoiu (2013) examined the connection between the perception of parental rejection and psychological adjustment of the teenagers whose parents have left abroad to work. 284 high school students registered in the 9th-12th grades in three different schools participated in the study. The comparisons between environments showed that mother's migration has the highest impact on the teenagers left behind. The teenagers whose mothers have left abroad feel rejected by their mother, they are more aggressive, and have a lower self-esteem and a negative vision over the world. Father's migration determines an increase of self-esteem and of the perception of parental acceptance.

## OBJECTIVES

To study:

1. Parental acceptance-rejection in relation to self-esteem and aggression among adolescents.
2. Gender differences on parental acceptance-rejection, self-esteem and aggression.

## **HYPOTHESES**

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

1. Parental acceptance is positively related to self-esteem and negatively correlated with physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility among adolescents.
2. Parental rejection is negatively correlated with self esteem and positively correlated with physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility among adolescents.
3. There are gender differences on parental acceptance-rejection, self esteem, physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility among adolescents.

## **METHOD**

### **Sample**

The sample of the study comprised of 120 adolescents of age 16 to 18 years. The sample was further divided into 60 males 60 females. The sample was collected from schools of Mandi Gobindgarh, and Khanna using Purposive sampling technique. An exclusion criteria was also set indicating that students suffering from severe mental and physical health problems and single parent's child will be excluded from the present study.'

### **Design**

The present study is a correlational study involving 120 adolescents (60 males and 60 females) of age 16-18 years who were approached and the questionnaires were filled using the Purposive Sampling technique.

### **Measuring tools**

The following psychological tools were used

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

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, Warmth/Affection (WA); Hostility/Aggression (HA); Indifference/Neglect (IN); and Undifferentiated Rejection (UR).

2. Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

The scale is a ten item Likert scale with items answered on a four point scale - from strongly agrees to strongly disagree. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale presented high ratings in reliability areas; internal consistency was 0.77, minimum Coefficient of Reproducibility was at least 0.90

### 3. Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992)

It is a 29 item Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*extremely unlike me*) to 5 (*extremely like me*). It consists of 4 factors namely Physical Aggression (PA); Verbal Aggression (VA); Anger; Hostility. The test-retest reliability of this questionnaire was 0.78.

#### Statistical analysis

Keeping in view the objectives of the study correlation analysis was used to study the correlates of parental acceptance- rejection in students. T-test was also used to find the gender differences.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to explore the relationship between aggression and self-esteem of adolescents 'perception of parental acceptance and rejection. Also, the study aimed at discovering the gender differences among adolescents.

**Table 1 : Correlations for the total sample on the mother form (n=120)**

	WA	HA	IN	UR	SE	PA	VA	ANGER	HOSTILITY
WA	1	-.20*	-.22*	-.13	.031	-.12	-.059	-.10	-.08
HA		1	.57*	.55**	-.29**	.17	-.18	.06	.15
IN			1	.41**	-.27**	.042	-.25**	.07	-.10
UR				1	-.31**	.060	.051	.11	.16
SE					1	-.25**	-.06	-.25**	-.38**
PA						1	.31**	.45**	.43**
VA							1	.53**	.24**
ANGER								1	.48**
HOSTILITY									1

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

Parenting has been implicated as a risk factor for the development of childhood low self-esteem (Rohner, 1986). Interestingly, Rosenberg (1963) has shown that among the students who received poor report cards, those who said their mothers scolded or criticized them, had higher self-esteem than those who said their mothers paid them no attention, or seldom commented on their marks.

In 2014, Yasmin and Hossain carried out a study and found the inter correlations of the subscales and total PARQ. For the Mother form , self - esteem and life satisfaction indicated that mother's reverse warmth/affection has significant negative correlation with self - esteem ( $r = - 0.322$ ,  $*p < 0.05$ ) but no significant correlation with life satisfaction ( $r = - 0.025$ ), Hostility/aggression has significant negative correlation with self esteem ( $r = - 0.417$ ,  $*p < 0.05$ ), and negative but no significant correlation with life ( $r = 0.055$ ), Indifference/neglect has significant negative correlation with self esteem ( $r = - 0.300$ ,  $*p < 0.05$ ), and

negative but not significantly correlated with life satisfaction ( $r = -0.109$ ), Undifferentiated/rejection has negative correlation with self esteem ( $r = -0.172$ ) and life satisfaction ( $r = -0.098$ ), Total mother PARQ score has significant negative correlation with self esteem ( $r = -0.717$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ ) and life satisfaction ( $r = -0.515$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ ) and self esteem has significant positive correlation with life satisfaction ( $r = 0.503$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ ) (Yasmin & Hossain, 2014).

**Table 2: Correlations for the total sample on the father form (n=120)**

	WA	HA	IN	UR	SE	PA	VA	ANGER	HOSTILITY
WA	1	-.20*	-.41**	-.16	.03	-.04	.09	-.04	-.04
HA		1	.37**	.44**	-.16	.12	-.10	.02	.16
IN			1	.24**	-.17	-.05	-.04	.15	.12
UR				1	-.11	-.17	-.11	-.00	.01
SE					1	-.25**	-.06	-.25**	-.38**
PA						1	.31**	.45**	.43**
VA							1	.53**	.24**
ANGER								1	.48**
HOSTILITY									1

Basit and Sara (2013) conducted a study examining relationship of parental acceptance-rejection with self-esteem in adolescents. Findings revealed a positive correlation between parental acceptance-rejection and self-esteem. Parentally accepted adolescents had higher self-esteem and parental rejection was found to be associated with lower self-esteem.

The inter correlations of the subscales and total PARQ for the Father form were found. Scores on self - esteem and life satisfaction indicated that father's reverse warmth/affection has significant negative correlation with self esteem ( $r = -0.315$ ,  $*p < 0.05$ ) and negative but no significant correlation with life satisfaction ( $r = -0.125$ ), hostility/aggression has significant negative correlation with self esteem ( $r = -0.316$ ,  $*p < 0.05$ ), and negative but not significantly correlated with life satisfaction ( $r = -0.052$ ), indifference/ neglect has significant negative correlation with self esteem ( $r = -0.295$ ,  $*p < 0.01$ ), and negative but no significant correlation with life satisfaction ( $r = -0.095$ ), undifferentiated/rejection has negative correlation with self esteem ( $r = -0.156$ ) and negative correlation with life satisfaction ( $r = -0.211$ ), total father PARQ score has significant negative correlation with self - esteem ( $r = -0.775$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ ) and life satisfaction ( $r = -0.438$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ ) and self - esteem has significant positive correlation with life satisfaction ( $r = 0.503$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ ) (Yasmin & Hossain, 2014). The findings also revealed that mother's hostility/aggression was more influential for offspring's self - esteem.

**Table 3 : Correlations for the males on the mother form (n=60)**

	WA	HA	IN	UR	SE	PA	VA	ANGER	HOSTILITY
WA	1	.326*	.421**	-.234	.111	-.175	-.074	-.111	-.083
HA		1	.498**	.404**	-.132	.226	-.155	-.017	.106
IN			1	.280*	-.054	.041	-.152	.089	-.145
UR				1	-.183	.182	.160	.222	.276*
SE					1	-.376**	-.197	-.315*	-.357**
PA						1	.313*	.390**	.529**
VA							1	.542**	.300*
ANGER								1	.443**
HOSTILITY									1

**Table 4 : Correlations for the males on the father form(n=60)**

	WA	HA	IN	UR	SE	PA	VA	ANGER	HOSTILITY
WA	1	.323*	.301*	-.174	.153	-.232	-.026	-.165	-.095
HA		1	.483**	.393**	-.106	.198	-.149	.108	.121
IN			1	.283*	-.126	.044	.163	.256*	.034
UR				1	.020	-.018	-.100	.166	-.016
SE					1	-.376**	-.197	-.315*	-.357**
PA						1	.313*	.390**	.529**
VA							1	.542**	.300*
ANGER								1	.443**
HOSTILITY									1

**Table 5 : Correlations for females on mother form (n=60)**

	WA	HA	IN	UR	SE	PA	VA	ANGER	HOSTILITY
WA	1	-.066	-.001	-.017	-.043	-.012	-.029	-.144	-.143
HA		1	.623**	.657**	-.423**	.117	-.214	.126	.192
IN			1	.521**	-.469**	.047	-.375**	.039	-.068
UR				1	-.423**	-.068	-.074	.011	.052
SE					1	-.111	.112	-.167	-.397**
PA						1	.298*	.540**	.316*
VA							1	.537**	.155
ANGER								1	.499**
HOSTILITY									1

**Table 6: Correlations for females on father form (n=60)**

	WA	HA	IN	UR	SE	PA	VA	ANGER	HOSTILITY
WA	1	-.012	.517**	-.134	-.083	.198	.251	.086	.005
HA		1	.304*	.520**	-.284*	-.006	-.046	-.021	.310*
IN			1	.211	-.214	-.160	-.298*	.044	.186
UR				1	-.263*	-.390**	-.131	-.177	.068
SE					1	-.111	.112	-.167	-.397**
PA						1	.298*	.540**	.316*
VA							1	.537**	.155
ANGER								1	.499**
HOSTILITY									1

**Table 7 : Means, Standard Deviations and t-ratio for the mother form (n=120)**

	MALES (n=60)		FEMALES (n=60)		T-RATIO
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	
WA	25.8	3.75	27.38	2.72	-2.65
HA	11.17	3.16	10.95	3.94	.33
IN	9.35	2.68	9.50	2.93	-.29
UR	6.57	2.01	6.62	2.31	-.12
SE	18.88	4.18	18.43	4.20	.59
PA	24.71	6.10	24.35	5.61	.32
VA	16.73	5.42	16.65	4.04	.010
ANGER	18.95	5.54	20.18	5.41	-1.23
HOSTILITY	22.45	5.83	23.65	5.45	-1.17

Parenting styles were also found to relate with gender differences. Where Dwairy (2004) found that parents behaviour towards girls was more authoritative and less authoritarian than boys, Openshaw, Thomas and Rollins (1984) found that as compared to male adolescents, parental influence were stronger for female adolescents. In fact, Hussain, Alvi, Zeeshan, and Nadeem, (2013) found evidence for the existence of gender differences in PARQ.

For the mother from, in warmth subscale, it has been observed that the mean scores (=32.34) of male participants is higher than the mean scores (=30.19) of female participants ( $t=2.06$ ,  $p=0.04$ ), and this difference is statistically significant. In hostility subscale, it has been observed that the mean scores (=23.01) of male participants are higher than the mean scores (=21.71) of female participants ( $t=1.98$ ,  $p=0.049$ ), and this difference is statistically significant. In indifference subscale, it has been observed that the mean scores (=22.49) of male respondents are higher than the mean scores (=20.87) of female participants ( $t=2.61$ ,

$p=0.009$ ), and this difference is statistically significant. In undifferentiated rejection subscale, there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of male participants and female participants. From the perspective of maternal acceptance/rejection total scores, the mean scores ( $=92.44$ ) of male participants is higher than the mean score ( $=86.72$ ) of the female participants ( $t=2.35$ ,  $p=0.019$ ), and this difference is statistically significant. Considering these findings, it has been observed that the female participants perceive their mother as warmer, less hostile and less indifferent than male participants, in general perceived maternal acceptance of female participants is more than that of male participants (Dural & Yalcin, 2014).

Further, gender difference for aggression are evident with school age with males being more aggressive than females Cohen, J., Moffitt, T. E., Taylor, A., Pawlby, S. J., & Caspi, A. (2005). Later research involving 73,498 adolescents also found gender differences between genders; physical aggression of boys was higher than the girls and the verbal aggression of girls was higher than boys Card, N. A., Stucky, B. D., Sawalani, G. M., & Little, T. D. (2008). Similar results for physical and verbal aggression of males and females were also reported in another study of the University of California (Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2012).

**Table 8 : Means, Standard Deviations and t-ratio for the father form (n=120)**

	MALES (n=60)		FEMALES (n=60)		T-RATIO
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	
WA	26.12	3.61	26.55	3.48	-.67
HA	10.92	3.61	8.90	2.83	3.40
IN	9.55	3.16	9.85	3.49	-.494
UR	6.17	2.07	5.99	1.91	.50
SE	18.22	1.48	18.43	4.20	.59
PA	24.71	6.99	24.35	5.61	.32
VA	16.73	5.42	16.65	4.03	.10
ANGER	18.95	5.54	20.18	5.41	-1.23
HOSTILITY	22.45	5.83	23.65	5.45	-1.17

Malik (2010) study gender showed no gender differences on the respondents' scores of PARQ Questionnaire for father and mother. Similar results were found by Khan (2017) who in addition also found that the boys consider themselves to be accepted and loved by their parents, especially fathers as compared to the adolescent girls.

On the contrary Dural and Yalcin (2014) found significant gender differences for the father form of PARQ. For the father form, in warmth subscale, it has been observed that the mean score ( $=38.87$ ) of male participants is higher than the mean score ( $=33.25$ ) of female participants ( $t=4.12$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and this difference is statistically

significant. In hostility subscale, it has been observed that the mean score ( $=23.92$ ) of male participants are higher than the mean score ( $=20.82$ ) of female participants ( $t=3.32$ ,  $p=0.001$ ), and this difference is statistically significant. In indifference subscale, it has been observed that the mean score ( $=27.45$ ) of male participants is higher than the mean score ( $=2.25$ ) of female participants ( $t=3.32$ ,  $p=0.001$ ), and this difference was statistically significant. In undifferentiated rejection subscale, it has been observed that the mean score ( $=15.40$ ) of male participants is higher than the mean score ( $=13.58$ ) of female participants ( $t=3.41$ ,  $p=0.001$ ), and this difference was statistically significant. From the perspective of paternal acceptance/rejection total scores, it has been observed that the mean score ( $=105.64$ ) of male participants is higher than the mean score ( $=92.68$ ) of female participants ( $t=4.28$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and this difference was statistically significant. Considering these findings, it has been observed that the female participants perceive their father as warmer, less hostile and less indifferent than male participants, in general perceived paternal acceptance of female participants is more than that of male participants

Also, Kumar and Verma (2016) conducted a study to investigate the adolescent aggression in relation to peer pressure and family environment. Results showed that there is no significant difference between boys and girls on aggression. A study reporting prevalence data on aggression among American adolescents 15-18 old, found that 32.8% of them showed physical aggression outside school, (40.7% of them were males and 24.4% females). In -school physical aggression was shown by 12% of adolescents, of which 16% were males and 7.8% females (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, 2012).

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

- For the mother form Warmth/ Affection (WA) was found to negatively relate with Hostility/Aggression (HA); Indifference/Neglect (IN). HA was found to positively correlate with IN and UR and negatively correlate with SE. IN positively correlated with UR and correlated negatively with SE and VA. Where UR was found to negatively correlate with SE. SE r was found to negatively correlate with PA, Anger and Hostility dimensions of Anger. Lastly, all the Aggression variables were found to positively correlate with each other.
- For the father form, WA positively correlated with HA and IN. On the rejection dimensions, HA was found to positively correlate with IN and UR. SE was found to negatively correlate with 3 dimensions of anger i.e. PA, Anger and Hostility. Similar to the mother form, all dimensions of anger positively correlated with each other.
- No conclusive gender differences emerged on any of the variables for both the father form and mother form.

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