

**PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION AS
DETERMINANTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES
IN MALE JUVENILE DELINQUENTS**

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed to investigate the impact of parental acceptance and rejection on psychological difficulties in juvenile delinquents. A sample of 100 juvenile delinquents aged 13-17 years was included. Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (Malik, 2011) and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) were used. The results of simple linear and multiple regression analysis indicate that all three types of paternal rejection (i.e. hostility/ aggression, indifference/ neglect, and undifferentiated rejection) and also the paternal acceptance significantly predicted psychological difficulties in juveniles. However, of all subtypes of maternal rejection, only indifference/neglect significantly predicted psychological difficulties whereas maternal acceptance failed to predict psychological difficulties in juveniles. Research findings suggest that fathers' expression of rejection and acceptance has a substantial and major impact on their children's emotional and psychological growth.

Keywords: PARTheory, Psychological, Difficulties, Juveniles

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitional phase in which one transforms from child to adult with visible emotional and biological changes. It is acknowledged as a phase of life between the onset of puberty and the development of social independence (Steinberg, 2014). During this period, adolescents face various difficulties and issues. Not addressing or handling their issues wisely by the parents, can lead the adolescents towards juvenile delinquency. The person under eighteen years of age who breach the law by committing a crime is considered as a juvenile delinquent (Sahmey, 2013).

Juvenile delinquency is very common nowadays. A report was presented in United States Deal in 2009 showing that around 1.5 million delinquency cases were accused of criminal law violations (Statistical Briefing Book, 2008). The individual less than 18 years of age conducts several crimes (e.g. corporal threats, stealing, killing etc.). Evidence pertaining to Pakistan shows that there are 1500 to 2000 boys in Pakistani prisons. Pakistan is one of the 12 countries that impose life imprisonment or the death penalty on boys. As of the end of 2004, there were a total of 2359 children. The majority of boys were behind the bar. In the state context, Punjab leads with 1501 prisoners, followed by Sindh and KP. The same study showed that up to 2100 children were on trial, accounting for 82.5% of their total fitness (Mahmood & Cheema, 2004).

Researchers showed that the family environment and living conditions e.g. low socioeconomic status (Ferdoos & Ashiq, 2015), low educational level (Nisar et al., 2015), and above all the level of parental acceptance and rejection (Taha et al., 2004) majorly contribute in the outbreak of misconduct and delinquency. Parental acceptance-rejection (PARTheory) involves two dimensions. First is related to parental (paternal and maternal) acceptance, which incorporates warmth, fondness, love, and care. Second, is parental (paternal and maternal) rejection, suggesting that they lack feelings or behaviors mentioned above, and the existence of negative feelings and behaviors (Rohner et al., 2012).

Parenting practices of parents of delinquents and non-delinquents vary. Neglectful and authoritarian parenting positively predicts delinquency, whereas the best parenting style is the authoritative style (Moitra & Mukherjee, 2010). A strong parent-child relationship will eventually result in positive outcomes among children i.e. better self-esteem, open communication between parent and child, and fewer behavioral and psychological problems. These all are linked with perceived warmth

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and affection from parents to their children (Child Trends, 2002). Fathers' involvement enables children to be emotionally secured; self-assured; motivated to have positive interpersonal networks and to provide love and care to peers. They are comparatively well adjusted and can positively relate with others at home, school or in the neighborhood (Yeung et al., 2000). The higher the family functioning the lower the juvenile delinquency will be (Saputra, 2017).

Studies conducted in Pakistani culture also demonstrate a link between parental acceptance and rejection and children's outcomes. For instance, Lila and associates (2007) examined perceived paternal and maternal acceptance and children's outcomes. It was found that boys mostly experienced more paternal acceptance and no significant direct effect of perceived paternal acceptance on behavioral problems was evident. It suggests that higher levels of parental warmth are positively linked with adolescent's outcomes (Hoskins, 2014). Hussain et al. (2013) investigated perceived childhood paternal acceptance-rejection among adults having psychological problems and those who are psychologically healthy. Results showed that male participants of clinical population experienced more paternal rejection in their childhood than non-clinical participants.

To completely understand adolescent delinquency, it is essential to pay attention to the social aspect in which the family forms the basic system (Steinberg, 1990). Previously, it is assumed from various family competency models such as the Circumplex model (Olson, 1993), the Beavers system model (Beavers & Hampson, 1993) and the McMaster model (Epstein et al., 1983) that unhealthy familial interpersonal relationships especially with parents initially lead to minor deviant behaviors and subsequently transform into major crimes. Relatively, recent findings corresponded with former research conclusions that the factors influencing juvenile delinquency and their well-being are: the family structure and relationships with parents (Petts, 2009); the familial and social environment in which the children grow up (Wallman, 2010); and the non-functioning of parents as role models (Mohammad et al., 2015).

Children exhibit varying reactions to the environmental stressors. Some children direct their emotional problems outward into externalizing behaviors or psychological difficulties while others direct their feelings into depressive, anxious or other inner-directed states (Williams, 2017). Psychological difficulties are referred as a group of behavioral problems that are manifested in child's behavior and reflect his negative actions on the external environment (Liu, 2004). Literature shows that psychological difficulties are consist of disruptive, hyperactive and

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aggressive behaviors (Hinshaw, 1987). Betz (1995) found that behavioral problems experienced by the children are a major risk factor in a development of juvenile delinquency, adult crime and violence.

Adolescence is the transitional phase and a process of personality development where a lot of changes take place in individuals' life which make them emotionally and psychologically vulnerable. Unresolved conflicts in case of lack of communication with parents, differences in parent-child interaction, or both can have significant repercussions for adolescents' behavioral and psychological outcomes. Although the vulnerabilities may be triggered by other environmental factors, however, the roots still lie within the family. The review of the extant literature signifies the importance of parental acceptance and rejection in relation to psychological difficulties experienced by adolescents which eventually relate to other vulnerabilities including juvenile delinquency. Evidences suggest that children and adolescents involvement in delinquencies threatens the well-being and safety of society including their own families, friends, and other children around them (Puzzanchera et al., 2010). Envisaging the significance of parental acceptance and rejection and eventual repercussions for adolescents' life, the present study is an endeavor to study a sample of juvenile delinquents suggesting that they are having some unresolved conflicts which lead them towards delinquency. Hence, the research should answer the question that among parents who and how influences more and occupies a more significant role in the development of psychological difficulties leading to delinquent behaviors. More specifically, the present research is focused to explore the pattern of relationship between parental (paternal and maternal) acceptance and rejection perceived by a juvenile with psychological difficulties.

Contemplating the extant literature review, the following hypotheses were framed:

1. Paternal rejection (i.e. hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection) would predict psychological difficulties in juvenile delinquents.
2. Paternal acceptance would predict psychological difficulties in juvenile delinquents.
3. Maternal rejection (i.e. hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection) would predict psychological difficulties in juvenile delinquents.
4. Maternal acceptance would predict psychological difficulties in juvenile delinquents.

METHOD

Participants

A purposive sample of 100 juvenile delinquents, with an age range of 13-17 years ($M=16.05 \pm SD=.999$) was recruited from District Jail, Lahore and Bostral Jail, Faisalabad. They belonged to lower and middle socioeconomic status. The other unique demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

The selection of participants was based on following inclusion and exclusion criteria:

- Participants with both parents alive were included
- Participants with a minimum duration of 6 months in jails were included
- Participants, who can read, write and understand Urdu were included
- Individuals with any physical illness or problem were excluded.

Measures

Demographic Sheet

Demographic Sheet gathered information including: age, gender, socio-economic status, family structure, number of people in a family, residence, education, father's occupation, father's monthly income, birth order, and history of any psychological or physical problem (if any).

Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire

Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) (Malik, 2011) is a self-report measure developed by Rohner (2005) to assess an individual's perceptions of parental acceptance-rejection. It is comprised of two sets of scales; PARQ for father and PARQ for mother, each of them includes subscales: warmth/affection (20 items), hostility/aggression (15 items), indifference/neglect (15 items), and undifferentiated rejection (10 items). The PARQ is scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale with response categories "Almost always true" (scored as 4) and "Almost never true" (scored as 1). Some items are reversed scored (7, 1, 21, 28, 35, 42, & 49). High scores indicate that the participant perceives his parents as rejecting. Urdu version of PARQ (Malik, 2011) was used in the study which is suggested to be a psychometrically reliable instrument with subscales alpha coefficients .90 for

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father version and .86 for mother version (Malik 2011). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha of PARQ (M) was .86 and .86 for the PARQ (F).

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997) was a concise behavioral screening questionnaire for the ages of 3-16 years. It was present in numerous versions to cover the needs of researchers, clinicians, and educationalists. All versions of the SDQ have 25 attributes, some positives and some negatives. These 25 attributes are divided into five scales: *Emotional symptoms* (5 items), *Conduct problems* (5 items), *Hyperactivity/inattention* (5 items); *Peer relationship problems* (5 items); and *Prosocial behavior* (5 items). The SDQ is a 3-point Likert-type scale having response categories of "Not true (0)" and "Certainly true (2)". Items 7, 11, 14, 21, and 25 were reversed scored. The Cronbach's alpha values for SDQ are as such: .73 for overall scale; .78 for emotional symptoms; .77 for conduct problems; .81 for hyperactivity/inattention; .60 for peer relationship problems; and .77 for prosocial behavior. Its test-retest reliability is .62. The Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .65.

Procedure

The study was conducted in Central Jail Lahore and Borstal Jail Faisalabad. Firstly, Institutional approval was taken from the institution to research within their premises. After seeking consent from participants the data was collected in an individual setting. Participants were briefed about the study and assured the confidentiality of information. Followed by, the Demographic Sheet, Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire were administered. During administration, participants were facilitated and encouraged to discuss any related queries to make them at ease. Further, they were also briefed about their right to withdraw participation.

Scoring & Statistical Analysis

Scoring of the research measures was done following the standard procedures and guidelines. Any forms that were unfinished or incomplete were discarded. Simple Linear Regression analysis and Multiple Regression analysis were used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

Table 1
Summary of demographic characteristics of sample, (N=100)

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Age		
14-15	25	25
16-17	75	75
Residence		
Urban	86	86
Rural	14	14
Education		
Middle	25	25
Matric	66	66
Intermediate	9	9
Father's Occupation		
Government	12	12
Private	32	32
Workers	56	56
Father's Monthly Income		
4000-8000	22	22
9000-14000	36	36
15000-25000	32	32
27000-50000 and above	10	10
Mother's Occupation		
Working	5	5
House Wife	95	95
Number of Family Members		
3-6	39	39
7-10	46	46
11-20	15	15
Family Structure		
Nuclear	89	89
Joint	11	11

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Table 1
Continued

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Number of Siblings		
1-5	36	36
6 and Above	64	64
Birth Order		
First Born	50	50
Middle	44	44
Youngest	6	6
Duration in Jail		
6-10 months	48	48
11-15 months	32	32
16-20 months	7	7
21-25 months	8	8
26-30 months and above	5	5
Type of Crime Committed		
Drug Usage	8	8
Fighting	2	2
Firing	9	9
Fraud	13	13
Harassment	3	3
Kidnapping	4	4
Multiple	3	3
Murder	24	24
Rape	8	8
Robbery	4	4
Stealing	20	20
Illegal Weapon	2	2
Age	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
13-17 years	1.75	.43

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Table 2
Psychometric Properties of Major Constructs of the Study

Scales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>α</i>
Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (Mother)	118.89	29.45	69-167	.86
Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (Father)	123.18	29.72	66 – 193	.86
Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire	25.38	6.47	11 -39	.65

Table 3
Multiple Regression Analysis with Paternal Rejection as Predictor of Psychological Difficulties in Juvenile Delinquents (N=100)

Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Constant	12.13	2.34		5.18	.00
Hostility/Aggression	.21	.11	.34	2.02	.04*
Indifference/Neglect	.35	.11	.49	3.33	.00*
Undifferentiated Rejection	-.45	.16	-.43	-2.79	.01*
<i>R</i> ²	.25				
<i>ΔR</i> ²	.25				
<i>F</i>	10.79*				

**p* < .05

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Table 4
Linear Regression Analysis with Paternal Acceptance as Predictor of Psychological Difficulties in Juvenile Delinquents (N=100)

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Constant	3.84	34.46				
Paternal Acceptance	-.39	.09	-.24	.11	17.26	.00*

**p* < .05

Table 5
Multiple Regression Analysis with Maternal Rejection as Predictor of Psychological Difficulties in Juvenile Delinquents (N=100)

Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Constant	12.43	1.91		6.51	.00
Hostility/Aggression	-.02	.11	-.04	-.176	.86
Indifference/Neglect	.46	.11	.71	4.09	.00*
Undifferentiated Rejection	-.22	.16	-.25	-1.37	.17
<i>R</i> ²	.26				
ΔR^2	.25				
<i>F</i>	11.11*				

**p* < .05

Table 6
Linear Regression Analysis with Maternal Acceptance as Predictor of Psychological Difficulties in Juvenile Delinquents (N=100)

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Constant	19.61	2.95				
Maternal Acceptance	-.01	.05	-.03	.00	.09	.76

p > .05

DISCUSSION

Juvenile delinquency is a problem that is affecting the population in the whole world. Ironically, Pakistan is among those countries where in the world the prevalence of juvenile delinquency is comparatively high (Fakhar, 2014). Total, 1,383 juvenile offenders were allegedly confined to detention centers in the four provinces at the end of 2013. Punjab had the highest number (783), trailed by Sindh (276), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (217), and Balochistan (107) (Mansoor, 2014). Evidences highlight the role of parental acceptance-rejection in context of psychological difficulties experienced by adolescents and their eventual repercussion. In this regard, the present study was an endeavor to examine the impact of parental acceptance-rejection on psychological difficulties in juvenile delinquents. The key findings are as followed.

Pertaining to ‘Hypothesis 1’, the results of (Table 3) the present study reveal that paternal rejection (i.e. hostility/ aggression, indifference/ neglect, and undifferentiated rejection) explained 25% variance in the scores of psychological difficulties. Of three predictors entered in the model, all three i.e. hostility/ aggression, indifference/ neglect, and undifferentiated rejection appeared to be the significant predictors of psychological difficulties in juvenile delinquents. Further, Regarding “Hypothesis 2”, the results (Table 4) reveal that paternal acceptance explained 11% variance in the scores of psychological difficulties hence, found to be the significant predictor of psychological difficulties in juvenile delinquents.

These findings are consistent with findings from previous studies. To illustrate, Imam and Shaik (2005) found that children who perceived their fathers as more accepting and loving are more likely to have good psychological

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adjustment as compared to those who experienced paternal rejection. Solangi (2012) investigated, children who perceived less warmth and more rejection from their fathers were found as having increased proneness toward delinquent behavior and psychological difficulties.

This implies that children having high perceived paternal acceptance in childhood will be psychologically adjusted in adulthood or later life. In our culture, male children identify themselves with their father hence the fathers' role is found to be more significant than mothers'. Adolescents are prone to psychological difficulties when they observe that fathers exhibit negative behaviors. Consequently, the child learns to behave negatively towards the environment and people around him. Lack of communication and decreased quality time spent together to make the child unable to express his negative feeling of being hurt or rejected by his father. Ultimately, the child will release his aggression on minors or other people around him. He may fight with them, use abusive language and get involved in illegal acts, or break societal laws. Conflicting relationship of parents with each other, for example, argumentative behavior and conflicts between parents. Father ventilates all of his aggression on children without understanding its consequences. In return, the child will show conduct problems, emotional problems, problems in a peer relationship, and also shows inattentive behavior in a school or other environment.

Undifferentiated rejection showed by the parents, refers to circumstances where individuals perceive that their parents are rejecting. Where the expression of rejection is not unaffectionate, or aggressive, however, a kind indifference attitude towards children. Parents provide easy access to television or mobile phones to the children, whereas, they overlooked teaching the child about ethical values and spent less time on their moral education. Parents do not maintain a proper check and balance on their children and do not monitor them while they are watching television. Presently, violent content is displayed on kids' shows, films, and so forth. Idols are represented as hostile figures. They are projected as recipients of acknowledgement and endorsement from others and they become well-known. Therefore, this type of content harms young people's minds and they get inclined towards the expression of physical and verbal aggression towards others and are prone to develop hyperactivity and conduct problems.

Pertaining to 'Hypothesis 3', the results of (Table 5) the present study reveal that maternal rejection (i.e. hostility/ aggression, indifference/ neglect, and undifferentiated rejection) explained 26% variance in the scores of psychological

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difficulties. Of three predictors entered in the model, only indifference/ neglect, appeared to be the significant predictor of psychological difficulties in juvenile delinquents. Furthermore, regarding “Hypothesis 4”, the results (Table 6) reveal that maternal rejection explained 0% variance in the scores of psychological difficulties hence, found to be the insignificant predictor of psychological difficulties in juvenile delinquents.

These findings are consistent with findings from previous studies which have demonstrated that maternal rejection does not contribute directly to psychological distress and social problems in children (Tillman & Juntunen, 2013) and there is no interaction between mother warmth and behavioral control (Caron et al., 2006). Our findings signify the vital role of indifference/neglect in maternal rejection in relation to psychological difficulties. When children do not receive proper attention from their mothers and experience indifferent attitudes, they exhibit undesirable behaviors to gain maternal attention. Later on, the behaviors are not only limited to mothers, however, children learn to behave negatively, in general, to gain attention.

Further, our findings suggest that other maternal aspects do not contribute towards psychological difficulties. Maybe there is the presence of other factors other than maternal acceptance and rejection which leads to psychological difficulties among juveniles. Poor economic conditions may lead to psychological difficulties among adolescents. Mothers may find that fulfilling the basic or physiological needs to be more important than the psychological needs of the children. However, non-fulfillment of children's psychological needs eventually can cause the development of psychological difficulties. Most participants who participated in the research belong to lower socioeconomic status (Table 1). Due to poor economic conditions parents do not pay much focus on their children's education rather they pay attention to fulfilling their basic needs such as food, shelter, etc. Because of this child's educational needs are rejected by the parents and the children remained deprived of getting a good education. Lack of education will further deteriorate his economic conditions. To get rid of poor living conditions an individual will opt the wrong ways, such as to commit a crime. It will also give rise to the development of psychological difficulties among those children who perceive parental rejection.

To conclude, the current study was conducted on juveniles and aimed to analyze the impact of parental acceptance and rejection on psychological difficulties among juveniles. All the participants in the study comprised of male

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individuals. Our findings suggest the role of fathers' acceptance rejection to be more significant. In cultures like Pakistan, male adolescents relate more with their fathers. The way the adolescents perceive acceptance or rejection received from their father during childhood will determine their personalities later in life. Most population living in developing countries belongs to the lower working class and they faced poor economic conditions. Hence, fulfillment of basic needs become parents' priority as compared to their children's behavioral, emotional or psychological needs.

The current study has certain limitations. The sample size was small. A large number of the sample should be taken for future researches. Secondly, only male juveniles were taken for the study. It is recommended for upcoming researchers to include both genders in their study, so that the differences can be analyzed among studied variables. Most of the participants belonged to lower and middle socioeconomic status. It is recommended for future researches to take participants or juveniles who belong to higher socioeconomic status and who are involved in various delinquent behaviors. Information from the parents of juvenile delinquents was not taken, only adolescents perceived paternal acceptance-rejection was assessed. For future studies, it is advised that parents of the juveniles should be interviewed as well to gain information regarding perspectives related to their children's personalities.

Despite limitations, the current study has numerous implications. It will provide a basic guideline for forensic and clinical psychologists while formulating therapeutic interventions and any other training program specifically for juveniles. Trainings can be organized for parents, in order to give them insight that how their behavioral patterns can have a long-lasting effect on their children's well-being throughout their lives. It can also be beneficial for school and educational psychologists to figure out those children who are experiencing various psychological difficulties as early as possible. Because if they remain unidentified then they can get involved in serious criminal behaviors in adolescence and adulthood. Programs can be developed in the future to teach children about right and wrong behaviors. It has been observed that due to lack of knowledge and unavailability of a person to tell the child about the difference between ethical and moral values. They get under influence of peer pressure and opt the wrong way. Special programs or informative material can be broadcast on television or newspapers to educate the children. Restriction of inappropriate material or criminal behaviors on these sources can be quite beneficial.

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