

## CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN MOTHER AND CHILD WITH REGARD TO ACCEPTANCE-REJECTION AND CHILDREN PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the relationship among maternal acceptance-rejection and children psychological adjustment. This study also aimed to investigate association between maternal acceptance and children acceptance, difference between perception of children about maternal acceptance and rejection and gender differences in psychological adjustment of children. The sample consisted of 250 secondary school students aged between 12 to 16 residing in Dhaka City. Among them 125 were girls and 125 were boys with a mean age of 14.19 years ( $SD=1.1$ ). A questionnaire package comprised of Bangla versions of child version (short form) of the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire both Father and Mother, the child version (short form) of the Personality Assessment Questionnaire, Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire for Mother. The reliability analysis revealed internal consistency of all four measuring instruments (Cronbach alpha were .71, .84, .78, .83 respectively for Child PARQ Father, Child PARQ Mother, Parent PARQ Mother and psychological adjustment). Independent sample *t* test revealed significant gender difference in Child PARQ Father, Child PARQ Mother and psychological adjustment. Child PARQ (Father) score of female children ( $M=40.64$ ) is noticed higher than that of male children ( $M=38.30$ ). Again the mean score of Child PARQ (Mother) of female children ( $M=43.92$ ) is higher than that of male children ( $M=39.18$ ). Correlation analysis showed significant association of Child PARQ Father, Child PARQ Mother and Parent PARQ Mother with psychological adjustment of female participant ( $r = .38, .50, .34$  respectively). Correlation analysis showed significant association of Child PARQ Father, Child PARQ Mother and Parent PARQ Mother with psychological adjustment of male participant ( $r = .30, .51, .47$  respectively).

**Key words:** acceptance-rejection, psychological adjustment, parent and children

### INTRODUCTION

Family is an essential and compulsory support system to any child and seems to play a profound role in the physical, mental, and social development of the child. Among

all of the family members, as parents are considered the closest to the children, they need to receive positive feelings for their healthy development from both of their

parents (Rahman, Begum, &Nahar, 2021; Özbiler, 2016). Literature reviews point out that the realization of acceptance by the beloved one of one's life is strongly associated with mental and physical health (Eisenberger& Cole, 2012) as well as better psychological adjustment (Uddin, Kubra, &Ferdous, 2021; Carrasco, Delgado, &Holgado-Tello, 2019; Carrasco, &Rohner, 2013). Psychological adjustment can be defined as people's ability to accommodate with the environment, which indicates that the individual has ample mechanisms so that he or she can feel better, can respond completely to the demands of the environment, and can acquire his/her goals or objectives (Madariaga, Arribillaga, &Zulaika, 2014).

Generally, it is evident in many research that the children's psychological adjustment is strongly associated with child's perception of parental acceptance-rejection, namely the way children receives positive and warm responses from their parents (Li, & Meier, 2017; Özbiler, 2016; McKinney, Donnelly, &Renk, 2008). Parental acceptance-rejection theory (PART theory) attempted to illustrate the major causes, consequences, and correlates of parental acceptance-rejection (Rohner, Khaleque, &Cournoyer, 2012).As a supporting evidence of PART theory Rohner and Khaleque (2002) have found that children's psychological adjustment is associated with their experience of maternal acceptance. Much of the cross-cultural research evidence also supported that parental acceptance-rejection is strongly associated with individuals' psychological adjustment (Khaleque& Ali, 2017; Khaleque, &Rohner, 2012; Khaleque, &Rohner, 2002).

From the very beginning, child development research included data on both parent and from various cultures. As a result, many studies have found parents as a momentous

person regarding children's development. Children need to accept warm and positive responses from their parents and much of variability regarding psychological, social, and behavioral adjustment can be elucidated by the quality of parent-child interactions (Özbiler, 2016; Dural, &Yalcin, 2014; Rohner, et al, 2012). Although, many factors are associated with child development, the relative significance of father and mother involvement for child adjustment is still under discussion. Because, parents did not make similar contribution to children's psychological problem or psychological adjustment. In some studies, it is evident that paternal rejection is responsible for children's psychological maladjustment (Li, & Meier, 2017; Ali, Khaleque, &Rohner, 2015; Khaleque, &Rohner, 2012), whereas in other research it is evident that maternal acceptance-rejection makes greater contribution to children's adjustment/maladjustment (Carrasco, Delgado, &Holgado-Tello, 2019; Özbiler, 2016).

Additionally, parental acceptance-rejection has different effects for boys and girls in developing problem behavior and psychological adjustment (Akse, Hale, Engels, Raaijmakers, &Meeus, 2004; Feinberg, Howe, Reiss, & Hetherington, 2000). For example, Giotsa, and Touloumakos (2014) reported that girl's psychological adjustment is strongly associated with maternal acceptance. Ramírez-Uclés, González-Calderón, del Barrio-Gándara, and Carrasco, (2018) have found that children's perception of parental acceptance-rejection seems to have more sturdy impact on daughters than on sons. They have also reported that rejection from mother contributed to the development of negative self-esteem whereas rejection from father contributed to the development of emotional instability of girls rather than boys.

Nowadays, the importance of parental warmth and acceptance on children's social and emotional adjustment is widely accepted. Although parental acceptance-rejection has considerable impacts on children's adjustment, sometimes the contribution of one parent (father/mother) become more apparent than the contribution of another.

However, vast majority of research attempted to analyze the parent-child relationship in terms of parental acceptance-rejection without dissociating the father from the mother. Although, some researchers suggested that mother's and father's acceptance-rejection may have different impact on the psychological adjustment of the children. Additionally, information in parent-child relationship research generally come from the perception of single source, that is, from either parents or children (Gracia, 2002). It is very much necessary to explore parental acceptance-rejection from the perspective of both parent and child because, parents' and children's perception of parental acceptance rejection behavior may not be identical (Gracia, Lila, & Musitu, 2005). Moreover, using two independent measures regarding parental acceptance-rejection (one is child's perception of parental acceptance-rejection and another is parents' perception of acceptance-rejection) may avoid probable shared variance in the measurement of associations among psychological adjustment and maternal acceptance.

### Research question of the study

Drawing from these literature search, the present study tried to answer following research questions:

1. Is there significant gender difference between boys and girls in the perception of parental acceptance-rejection and psychological adjustment?
2. Is there any relationship between maternal perception of acceptance-rejection and children's perception of maternal acceptance-rejection?
3. Whether there is any relationship between child's perception of maternal acceptance-rejection and child's psychological adjustment.
4. Is there any relationship between mother's perception of acceptance-rejection and child's psychological adjustment?

### Hypotheses of the study

The hypotheses of the present study were the followings:

1. There would be significant gender difference between boys and girls in the perception of parental acceptance-rejection and psychological adjustment.
2. Child's perception of maternal acceptance-rejection would be positively correlated with mother's perception of acceptance-rejection.
3. Child's perception of maternal acceptance would be positively correlated with psychological adjustment of children.
4. Mother's perception of acceptance about herself would be positively correlated with child's psychological adjustment.

## METHODS

### Sample

The sample of this study comprised a total number of 250, evenly distributed by gender, and were selected purposively from different secondary schools in Dhaka City. Among them 50% were boys and 50% were girls. Mean age of the sample was 14 years ranging from 18 through 26 years. Educational levels of the sample varied from VII to XI grade. The majority of the sample was from middle class (i.e., middle income)

families. The respondents were selected on the basis of convenience, willing consent, and availability.

### Measures

Following instruments were used in this present study including some demographic and personal information like age, gender, class, family member, number of siblings, birth order, education and occupation of father and mother.

### **The Adult Parental Acceptance–Rejection Questionnaire: Mother and Father Versions (Adult PARQ: Mother and Father)**

The Adult PARQ: Mother and Father version (short forms) were used to assess adult's remembrance about their maternal and paternal acceptance and rejection during childhood. The mother and father versions of the Adult PARQ short form consists of 24 items. The two versions are virtually identical except for reference to "mother's" behavior versus "father's" behavior. Both versions ask respondents to reflect on their mothers' or fathers' behavior toward them during their childhood. Both the questionnaires measure adults' perceptions of maternal and paternal warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection. Examples of test items on the both version of the PARQ short form include, "My mother/father makes me feel wanted and needed(perceived warmth or affection); "My mother/father goes out of her/his way to hurt my feelings" (perceived hostility or aggression); "My mother/father ignores me as long as I do to bother her/him" (perceived indifference or neglect); "My mother/father does not really love me" (perceived undifferentiated rejection). The sum of the four PARQ subscales (with the warmth/affection subscale reverse-scored to create a measure of coldness/lack of affection) constitutes a measure of overall

perceived maternal and paternal acceptance–rejection. The possible scale score ranges from a low of 24 to a high of 96. The midpoint of the PARQ is 60. Score at or above the scale midpoint indicates more parental rejection than acceptance and below the midpoint indicates more parental acceptance than rejection. In this study, alpha coefficient for the Adult PARQ Mother was .87 and that of the Adult PARQ Father was .91. The PARQ has been used in over 2000 studies worldwide and is known to have robust reliability and validity for use in cross-cultural research (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002; Rohner, 2005). The alpha coefficients for the mother version have been found to range from .76 to .97 and for the father version range from .81 to .97 (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005).

### **The Child version (short form) of the Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (Child PARQ).**

This questionnaire was originally developed by Rohner, Saavedra and Granum in 1980. The child PARQ was designed to be used with children from about 7 through whatever age they continue to be in more-or-less continuous or ongoing contact with their parents. The Child PARQ is a 60-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess youths' perceptions of their mothers' and their fathers' love-related (accepting) behaviors toward them. The measure is composed of four subscales. The short form of the measure includes the Childhood PARQ containing 24 items, 8 in the warmth/affection dimension, 6 in the hostility/aggression and indifference/neglect dimension, and 4 in the undifferentiated rejection dimension. Individuals have to respond to on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from (4) "almost always true" through (1) "almost never true". The short form of Child PARQ was translated into Bangla by Uddin in 2018a.

Possible scores on the short forms range from a low of 24 (maximum perceived acceptance) through a high of 96 (maximum perceived rejection). Khaleque and Rohner (2002) summarized the reliability of the Child, Adult, Parents version of the PARQ in a meta-analysis. The mean of weighted alpha coefficient for Child was .89 and extensive evidence about the convergent, discriminate, and construct validity of the PARQ is provided by Rohner (2005).

### The Child version (short form) of Personality Assessment Questionnaire (Child PAQ)

The Child PAQ consists of seven subscales assessing self-reports about seven personality dispositions as construed in IPARTheory's personality sub theory. These dispositions include: (1) hostility and aggression, including physical aggression, verbal aggression, passive aggression, and problems with the management of hostility and aggression, (2) dependence, (3) self-esteem, (4) self-adequacy, (5) emotional responsiveness, (6) emotional stability, (7) worldview. The two versions are almost identical except that the adult version contains 63 items (nine items per scale), whereas the child version contains 42 items (six items per scale). Individual has to respond to each item on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from (4) "almost always true me" to (1) "almost never true of me."

Total score on the Child PAQ spreads from 42 (excellent psychological adjustment) to 168 (serious psychological maladjustment). The Child PAQ has been found to be reliable and valid for use in international research, with an overall mean weighted alpha coefficient across 1,115 respondents in six international studies of .83. However, Child PAQ was translated into Bangla by Uddin (2018b) obtaining a Cronbach's alpha of .79.

### Procedure

Data were collected from the secondary school students in Dhaka City with the formal permission taken from school authority. Rapport was established before administering the mentioned questionnaires. Formal instructions, both oral and written, were given along with the assurance of confidentiality of information. On the other hand, the data from the mother were taken from home or other place of the respected participants. On completion of the task, each participant was thanked for his/her sincere cooperation.

### RESULTS

Data were inputted by SPSS version 20.0. In order to clarify research objectives, data were analyzed by t-test to see whether there is any gender difference and by Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine the relationship between variables. The findings of this research are presented accordingly.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Gender Difference in Perceived Paternal Acceptance, Maternal Acceptance, and Psychological Adjustment (N= 250).**

| Variable               | Female (n =125) |       | Male(n =125) |       | t    | df  | p    |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------|--------------|-------|------|-----|------|
|                        | Mean            | SD    | Mean         | SD    |      |     |      |
| 1. Child PARQ (Mother) | 43.92           | 11.40 | 39.18        | 8.51  | 3.73 | 248 | .000 |
| 2. PAQ                 | 99.59           | 13.40 | 93.97        | 12.28 | 3.46 | 248 | .001 |

The findings presented in Table 1 reveals that there is significant gender difference among

boys and girls regarding perceived maternal acceptance (Boys:  $M = 39.18$ ,  $SD = 8.51$ ,

Girls:  $M = 43.92$ ,  $SD = 11.40$ ), and psychological adjustment (Boys:  $M = 93.97$ ,  $SD = 12.28$ , Girls:  $M = 99.59$ ,  $SD = 13.40$ ).

That is, boys perceived their mother as more accepting than girls and boys had relatively better psychological adjustment than girls.

**Table 2. Correlations among Paternal acceptance, Maternal Acceptance**

| Variable                | 1     | 2     | 3     |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Child PARQ (Mother)  | -     | .66** | .51** |
| 2. Parent PARQ (Mother) | .60** | -     | .47** |
| 3. PAQ                  | .50** | .34** | -     |

*Note:* correlations above the diagonal pertain to boys and correlations below the diagonal pertain to girls.

\*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

Results presented in Table 2, obtained from correlation analysis, show that both girls' ( $r = .60$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and boys' ( $r = .66$ ,  $p < .01$ ) perception of maternal acceptance was strongly correlated with the mother's perception of acceptance. That is, the mother who perceives themselves as more accepting, their children also perceive them as more accepting and vice versa. Results also show that maternal acceptance is strongly associated with psychological adjustment of both girls ( $r = .50$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and boys ( $r = .51$ ,  $p < .01$ ). That means, perceived acceptance by mother in earlier years is associated with better psychological adjustment in adolescent period. Finally, results also revealed that the mother who perceive themselves as more accepting, they contributed greatly to the child's psychological adjustment (girls:  $r = .34$ ,  $p < .01$ ; boys:  $r = .47$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Parents are necessary support systems and seems to play a momentous role in the development of the child. As children grow, their need to accept positive and warm responses from their near and dear one also develop. Specially, children need positive responses from their mother. Consequently, it is highly important for a mother to be warm and non-hostile to their children so that healthy parent-child relationship can build up (Lila, Garcia and Garcia 2007; Khaleque and

Rohner 2002). The present study investigated the relationship perceived maternal acceptance-rejection and adolescent's psychological adjustment. More specifically, this study tried to look at the contribution of maternal acceptance-rejection to the child's psychological adjustment/maladjustment.

However, the first question of this study was to investigate whether there is any significant gender difference between boys and girls regarding perceived parental acceptance-rejection and psychological adjustment. The findings revealed significant gender difference among boys and girls regarding perceived maternal acceptance (Boys:  $M = 39.18$ ,  $SD = 8.51$ , Girls:  $M = 43.92$ ,  $SD = 11.40$ ), and psychological adjustment (Boys:  $M = 93.97$ ,  $SD = 12.28$ , Girls:  $M = 99.59$ ,  $SD = 13.40$ ). That is, boys perceived their mother as more accepting than girls and boys had relatively better psychological adjustment than girls. Although this finding is contradictory relating to previous research, one study (Ramírez-Uclés, et al., 2018) have reported that children's perception of parental acceptance-rejection seems to have more sturdy impact on daughters than on sons.

The second objective of this study was to explore the relationship between maternal perception of acceptance-rejection and children's perception of maternal acceptance-

rejection. Results from the correlation analysis showed that both girls' ( $r = .60, p < .01$ ) and boys' ( $r = .66, p < .01$ ) perception of maternal acceptance was strongly correlated with the mother's perception of acceptance. That is, the mother who perceives themselves as more accepting, their children also perceive them as more accepting and vice versa. It was necessary to investigate the correlation between mother's perception of acceptance-rejection and child's perception of maternal acceptance-rejection because previous researchers (Gracia, Lila, & Musitu, 2005) had suggested that child's perception of acceptance and mother's perception of acceptance may not be identical. Thus, this finding will be used as a further supporting evidence of future research.

The third and most important objective of this research was to investigate whether there is any relationship between child's perception of maternal acceptance-rejection and child's psychological adjustment. Results from the correlation table showed that maternal acceptance is strongly associated with psychological adjustment of both girls ( $r = .50, p < .01$ ) and boys ( $r = .51, p < .01$ ). That means, perceived acceptance by mother in earlier years is associated with better psychological adjustment in adolescent period. Previous findings (Ramírez-Uclés, et al., 2018; Ali, Khaleque, & Rohner, 2015; Carrasco, Holgado, & del Barrio, 2014) also support the present findings regarding correlational analysis. The fourth and final objective of this study was to investigate whether there is any relationship between child's psychological adjustment and mother's perception of acceptance-rejection. As hypothesized, study findings revealed that the mother who perceive themselves as more accepting, they contributed greatly to the child's psychological adjustment (girls:  $r = .34, p < .01$ ; boys:  $r = .47, p < .01$ ). The mother who perceives themselves as accepting,

clearly support their children in adverse life situation and show positive regard to their children which in turn boost up psychological adjustment of children. Further research is recommended here.

## CONCLUSION

Various studies have confirmed the association between parental acceptance-rejection and child's psychological adjustment. This study also tried to explore the relationship between maternal acceptance-rejection and psychological adjustment of children. The findings showed that maternal acceptance creates an interpersonal context of love and warmth which increases child's ability to cope with the environment in general. Although, this study is not free of limitations such as, less sample size, participant's tendency to avoid inappropriate option, and unwillingness to express personal information, the findings of this research may be useful for researchers, practitioners, and policy makers. Understanding the relationship between parental acceptance-rejection and child's psychosocial development at early stages can assist making necessary prevention and intervention program within a family setting. Furthermore, parents, teachers, and professional will be able to help the children in developing better psychological adjustment.

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