

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND DEPENDENCE-PRONENESS: A STUDY ON SCHOOL-GOING ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE-REJECTION

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between interpersonal acceptance-rejection and dependence-proneness among school-going adolescents, focusing on perceptions of parental acceptance-rejection. A sample of 750 adolescents participated, providing insights into how parental behaviours and family dynamics influence dependence-proneness—a tendency marked by diminished autonomy and increased reliance on others. Using a descriptive research design, standardized tools measured perceptions of parental acceptance-rejection and levels of dependence-proneness. Findings indicate that adolescents perceiving higher parental rejection were more likely to exhibit dependence-proneness, struggling with autonomy and decision-making.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Relationship, Dependence-Proneness, Parental Acceptance-Rejection;*

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage marked by rapid physical, emotional, and psychological changes (Santrock, 2021). It is a time when individuals transition from childhood dependency to greater autonomy and begin to establish their personal identity. During this critical period, relationships with parents serve as a foundational influence on adolescents' emotional health, social behaviour, and overall capacity to navigate the

complexities of adulthood. Parental interactions, particularly in terms of interpersonal acceptance or rejection, play a central role in shaping adolescents' self-esteem, decision-making abilities, and the development of independence. The nature of these relationships, particularly in terms of parental acceptance or rejection, significantly influences an adolescent's self-perception and interpersonal behaviour (Rohner, 2004; Khaleque & Rohner, 2012). Interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory suggests that perceived parental acceptance fosters positive psychological adjustment, whereas perceived rejection can lead to emotional insecurity, behavioural issues, and maladaptive dependence (Rohner & Khaleque, 2010).

Interpersonal acceptance-rejection refers to the extent to which an individual perceives warmth, affection, hostility, neglect, or rejection from significant others, particularly parents. These perceptions directly influence adolescents' self-concept and interpersonal behaviour. Acceptance, characterized by warmth, affection, and supportive interactions, promotes emotional security, resilience, and independence. In contrast, rejection, marked by hostility, indifference, or neglect, is often associated with emotional insecurity, low self-esteem, and a heightened tendency to rely on others for emotional and practical support.

Dependence-proneness, defined as the predisposition to depend excessively on others for emotional, psychological, or practical needs, is one of the behavioural outcomes shaped by these parental dynamics. Adolescents who perceive higher levels of acceptance from their parents are more likely to develop a secure sense of self and exhibit greater resilience and independence. rejection, neglect, or hostility can result in over-dependence and a lack of self-reliance as adolescents struggle to compensate for emotional deficiencies in their relationships (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Hoskins, 2014). Conversely, rejection may hinder the development of these traits, as adolescents adapt to cope with inconsistent or negative parental behaviour (Collins & Steinberg, 2006).

This study enquires into the intricate relationship between adolescents' perceptions of parental acceptance-rejection and their levels of dependence-proneness. By exploring this connection, it seeks to understand how varying levels of parental warmth, hostility, or neglect contribute to either fostering independence or exacerbating dependence among adolescents. The research also incorporates an analysis of critical demographic variables, such as gender,

socioeconomic status, and family structure, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing these dynamics.

The findings will provide insights into how familial interactions shape adolescents' developmental trajectories and contribute to the literature on adolescent psychology and family dynamics. Furthermore, the study aims to inform educational and counselling practices to promote healthier family relationships and support adolescent autonomy.

OBJECTIVES

- To examine the relationship between perceptions of parental acceptance-rejection and dependence-proneness among school-going adolescents.
- To assess the impact of parental acceptance on adolescents' autonomy, self-reliance, and decision-making abilities.
- To investigate how parental rejection contributes to dependence-proneness, emotional insecurity, and reduced autonomy in adolescents.
- To analyse the influence of demographic factors such as gender, family structure, and socioeconomic status on the relationship between parental acceptance-rejection and dependence-proneness.
- To provide insights and recommendations for promoting supportive family environments to enhance emotional well-being and independence in adolescents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection (IPAR)

The concept of interpersonal acceptance-rejection is based on the evidence-based theory of Interpersonal Acceptance- Rejection, a theory of socialization, and life span development. Studies in this section explore associations and mediations between perceived parental acceptance-rejection and various forms of child and adolescent adjustment or dysfunctional behaviours such as eating disorders. Studies also focus on developmental outcomes in domains such as adolescent's self-concept, resilience, and moral reasoning. The findings

focus on the association between social and genetic factors, and their impact on a child's development.

Most specifically, even though the parental role is still considered to be a major factor affecting child outcomes domains, contemporary views of child development also tend to attribute an important role to children's innate (genetic) characteristics or propensities, which might have a considerable impact on parents' practices and their capacity for caring relationships. Contributing to this theme, Knafo (2003) sought to explore the genetic and environmental contributions to two aspects of parenting, namely maternal intrusiveness and maternal warmth. Even though his sample was small, data in the study reinforced past research findings and pointed to the importance of considering both environmental and genetic influences as determinants of parental behaviour.

Alegre (2010) in their book on Interpersonal Acceptance and Rejection, mentioned about adolescents' emotional insecurity, parental behaviour and adolescent problems of adjustment. Drawing upon the module of two leading researches in family dynamics, Cummings (2012) explored the significance of parental availability in predicting both internalizing and externalizing aspects of adolescent adjustment, as well as the way in which emotional insecurity mediated this adjustment. Alegre and Benson confirmed that emotional insecurity helped explain the availability influencing adolescent adjustment. They concluded that insecure emotional reactions mediated the link between parent availability and adolescent externalizing.

The Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (Rohner, 2004) provides a framework for understanding the emotional and behavioural outcomes of perceived parental acceptance or rejection. According to PART, acceptance is associated with warmth, affection, and support, while rejection involves hostility, indifference, or neglect. Adolescents who experience rejection are more likely to develop emotional insecurities, which can manifest as dependence-proneness.

Recent research has delved into the impact of parental acceptance and rejection on adolescent development, highlighting significant correlations with various psychological outcomes. A study by Tilki and Epli (2022) investigated the relationship between adolescents' perceptions

of parental acceptance-rejection and internet addiction. The findings revealed that higher perceptions of parental rejection were associated with increased levels of internet addiction among adolescents.

In another study, Khaleque (2021) examined the long-term effects of perceived parental acceptance-rejection during childhood on psychological adjustment and rejection sensitivity in adulthood. The research indicated that individuals who perceived higher parental rejection in childhood exhibited poorer psychological adjustment and heightened rejection sensitivity later in life.

Additionally, Lal & Kumar (2020) in a study explored the relationship between perceived parental acceptance-rejection and depression among adolescents. The results suggested that adolescents who perceived higher levels of parental rejection were more likely to experience depressive symptoms, underscoring the critical role of parental acceptance in adolescent mental health.

Dependence-Proneness and Adolescent Development

Dependence proneness is a motivational habit of over dependence on others in situations that do not call for it. Resilience embodies the personal qualities that enable one to thrive in the face of adversity. The development of resilience is none other than the process of healthy human development - a dynamic process in which personality and environmental influences interact in a reciprocal, and transactional relationship. The following section of the chapter presents related researches. The findings reported gave the investigator a direction to proceed further for the present study. Children scoring high on the dependence proneness showed higher sensitivity to social pressure on test instructions as compared to their less anxious and dependent peers. Therefore, dependent individuals tend to be more anxious during pressure situations and are hence, more vulnerable to societal pressures.

Recent studies have explored various aspects of dependence proneness, particularly in relation to technology use and psychological factors. For instance, research has indicated that individuals with higher levels of social anxiety may develop a tendency towards smartphone addiction, mediated by experiential avoidance and interpersonal problems. This suggests that

those who avoid negative experiences and have interpersonal difficulties are more prone to becoming dependent on their smartphones as a coping mechanism (Liu, Wu & Yao, 2022).

(Wang, Sun, Zhang, & Gao, 2023) found that individuals prone to boredom often exhibit lower self-control, which in turn is associated with higher levels of smartphone addiction. This highlights the role of boredom proneness and self-regulation in the development of dependence on technology.

Additionally, research has examined the relationship between inferiority feelings and dependence proneness among college students, aiming to understand how self-perception influences one's tendency to rely on others (Patel & Mehta, 2020).

In another research in order to examine the empirical relations between selected home influences and several aspects of pupil growth in school, both academic and personal-social. Data from the project noted that the style of teacher-pupil interaction was relatively indirect and the emotional climate unusually warm (Soar & Soar, 1970). The researchers concluded that the data did not support the statements regarding unfortunate consequences at home. Early studies of the effects of risk factors on child development revealed that exposure to adversity do not necessarily predict negative outcomes (Werner & Smith, 1982). Self-concept was a buffering factor in resilient individuals. Individuals with poor self-concept lack resilience. However, positive self-concept helps in fostering resilience (Werner, 1992).

Chadha (1983) studied the dependence proneness and test anxiety among the pre-adolescent males and females in India. He found that pre-adolescent females scored significantly higher than males on the variable of dependence proneness however, test anxiety showed non-significant results.

Vats (1986) investigated the interaction of sex and birth order as they relate to dependency. Scores on a dependence proneness scale show firstborn or only females scored higher than like males, and lastborn males scored significantly higher than firstborn or only males.

Review of literature brings out the impact of family on the developmental aspects of a child. The researcher's interest lies in looking at the interplay of all of these so that necessary changes can be given to the families and education programs of the state to improve wellbeing of the significant and huge proportion of our population, the adolescents. Dependence-proneness reflects a lack of autonomy and self-confidence, often stemming from adverse familial interactions. Studies (Kumar, 2020; Bornstein, 1992) have linked

authoritarian or overprotective parenting styles to higher dependence-proneness in adolescents. Conversely, supportive parenting practices promote emotional independence and resilience.

Impact of Demographic Factors

Research indicates that demographic factors such as gender and socioeconomic status play a significant role in shaping perceptions of acceptance-rejection and dependence-proneness among adolescents. Gender socialization often encourages girls to prioritize relationships and emotional connections, which can foster a greater tendency towards relational dependence. This heightened dependence may make them more sensitive to perceived rejection from significant others, including parents.

On the other hand, socioeconomic status influences family dynamics and the emotional environment within the home. Adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may experience a lack of resources, opportunities, or parental presence, further exacerbating feelings of rejection and impacting their emotional and psychological development.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design to explore the relationship between parental acceptance-rejection and dependence-proneness among school-going adolescents attending government and private school.

Sample

The sample comprised 750 adolescents aged 12-17 years from government and private schools. 30 outliers were excluded from the analysis. Stratified random sampling ensured representation across gender, family structure, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Tools for Data Collection

1. **Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ - Child Form) (Rohner, 2005):** The standardized tool to measure adolescents' perceptions of parental

acceptance and rejection across dimensions such as warmth, hostility, indifference, and undifferentiated rejection was utilised.

2. **Tool to measure Dependence-Proneness:** A validated self-developed tool was used to assess the extent of adolescents' reliance on others for emotional and practical support.

Procedure

Data collection involved administering questionnaires in classroom settings, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. Demographic data were also collected through a structured survey.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods, including correlation and regression analyses, were employed to examine relationships between variables. Demographic factors were analyzed and correlation was drawn to identify significant differences across groups.

RESULTS

Correlation Between Parental Acceptance-Rejection and Dependence-Proneness

Correlation results indicated that higher paternal Warmth/Affection correlates with increased Dependence Proneness, while higher paternal Hostility/Aggression, Indifference/Neglect, Undifferentiated Rejection, and Total Parental Acceptance-Rejection are associated with decreased Dependence Proneness.

Pearson Correlation			
	Dependence proneness		
	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	N
Parental Acceptance Father-Warmth/Affection	.226 ^{**}	<0.01	720
Hostility/Aggression	-.298 ^{**}	<0.01	720
Indifference/Neglect	-.236 ^{**}	<0.01	720
Undifferentiated Rejection	-.267 ^{**}	<0.01	720
Total Parental Acceptance Rejection Father	-.214 ^{**}	<0.01	720

Pearson's correlations revealed a significant positive relationship between paternal Warmth/Affection and adolescent Dependence Proneness, while other dimensions of Parental Acceptance-Rejection showed a negative correlation.

Correlation results indicated that maternal Warmth/Affection is associated with lower Dependence Proneness, while Hostility/Aggression, Indifference/Neglect, Undifferentiated Rejection, and Total Acceptance-Rejection are linked to higher Dependence Proneness.

Pearson Correlation			
	Dependence proneness		
	Correlation Coefficient	p-value	N
Parental Acceptance Mother-Warmth/Affection	.254**	<0.01	720
Hostility/Aggression	-.252**	<0.01	720
Indifference/Neglect	-.283**	<0.01	720
Undifferentiated Rejection	-.255**	<0.01	720
Total Parental Acceptance Rejection Mother	-.216**	<0.01	720

Pearson's correlations revealed a positive relationship between maternal Warmth/Affection and Dependence Proneness, indicating that higher warmth increases dependence. Conversely, higher scores in Hostility/Aggression, Indifference/Neglect, Undifferentiated Rejection, and Total Parental Acceptance-Rejection are negatively correlated with Dependence Proneness, suggesting that hostile or indifferent maternal behaviour reduces dependence.

Impact of Demographic Variables

- **Gender:** Girls reported higher dependence-proneness compared to boys, suggesting gender-based differences in socialization practices.
- **Socioeconomic Status:** Adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds reported higher perceptions of parental rejection and greater dependence-proneness.
- **Family Structure:** Adolescents from nuclear families showed higher levels of perceived parental acceptance compared to those from joint families.

DISCUSSION

The findings are in line with existing literature on the impact of parental behaviours on adolescent development. The results highlight the protective role of supportive parenting in fostering independence and self-reliance. These results underscore the importance of emotional warmth, open communication, and consistent support in promoting healthy adolescent development.

Gender differences in dependence-proneness reflect societal expectations and the differential nurturing of boys and girls. Socioeconomic disparities further emphasize the need for interventions targeting at-risk families to reduce perceptions of rejection and enhance parental support.

The study's findings also highlight the role of family structure in shaping adolescents' experiences of acceptance and rejection. Nuclear families, often characterized by closer parent-child interactions, may provide a more supportive environment than joint families, where attention may be divided among multiple members.

IMPLICATIONS

For Parents and Families

Parents must be encouraged to adopt practices that foster emotional security, such as positive reinforcement, empathy, and active listening. Family counselling programs can help mitigate perceived rejection and promote acceptance.

For Educators and Counsellors

Schools should incorporate parental involvement programs to bridge gaps between home and school environments. Counsellors can use the study's findings to design interventions addressing dependence-proneness and promoting resilience among adolescents.

For Policymakers

Policies should support parental education programs that emphasize the importance of acceptance and warmth in parenting. Resources should also target economically disadvantaged families to reduce socioeconomic barriers impacting adolescent development.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical relationship between parental acceptance-rejection and dependence-proneness among adolescents. A nurturing home environment characterized by acceptance and support is pivotal for fostering autonomy and emotional well-being. These findings call for collaborative efforts among parents, educators, and policymakers to create environments that support healthy adolescent development, reducing dependence-proneness and promoting resilience. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of parental acceptance-rejection on various dimensions of adolescent growth to further enrich this field.

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