Original Article

Perceived Maternal Acceptance-Rejection as a Predictor of Emotional Intelligence in Adolescence

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ABSTRACT

Background: Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in the psychological development of adolescents, influencing their social behaviors and academic achievements. Previous research has established a connection between parenting styles, particularly maternal acceptance or rejection, and the development of EI in children. The warmth and support provided by a mother are essential elements that contribute significantly to the nurturing of EI during adolescence.

Objective: This study aimed to investigate the predictive role of perceived maternal acceptance-rejection on the emotional intelligence of adolescents in Karachi, Pakistan, contributing to the existing body of knowledge by focusing on a non-Western context.

Methods: The study was approved by relevant institutional review boards and adhered to ethical standards. A total of 600 adolescents, aged 13-17 years, were selected from various schools in Karachi, maintaining an equal distribution between genders. Participants were assessed using the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) Child Form for mothers and the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Adolescent Short Form (TEIQ-ASF). Data were analyzed using SPSS version 21.0, with linear regression analysis employed to examine the relationship between perceived maternal acceptance-rejection and EI.

Results: The internal consistency of the scales was confirmed, with Cronbach's alpha values of .91 for the PARQ and .84 for the TEIQ-ASF. Linear regression analysis revealed a significant predictive relationship between perceived maternal acceptance-rejection and emotional intelligence ($R = .213$, $R^2 = .045$, $F = 28.506$, $p < .05$). Specifically, maternal rejection was negatively associated with the EI scores of adolescents, indicating that higher levels of perceived rejection correlated with lower levels of EI.

Conclusion: The findings underscore the importance of maternal acceptance in the development of emotional intelligence among adolescents. These results suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing maternal acceptance could potentially foster the development of EI, thereby contributing positively to the psychological well-being and social functioning of adolescents.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Maternal Acceptance-Rejection, Adolescents, Parenting Styles, Psychological Development.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical period for psychological and biological development, heavily influenced by the quality of the parent-child relationship. This phase is characterized by shifts in family dynamics that can present challenges to the well-being of adolescents. A strong emotional connection between parents and their children has been identified as a protective factor against engaging in risky behaviors, underscoring the importance of parental warmth and acceptance. Studies have shown that such a nurturing environment fosters higher emotional intelligence (EI), contrasting with the negative outcomes associated with parental aggression, indifference, or rejection (1, 2). Conversely, environments lacking in emotional warmth are correlated with an increased likelihood of problematic behavior (3), highlighting the significant impact of parental relations on the development of EI. Notably, parental warmth and acceptance have been associated with fostering higher emotional competence in adolescents, as opposed to the effects of parental aggression and rejection (4, 5).

The Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (PAR Theory), put forth by Rohner and Lansford, investigates the dynamics of parental acceptance and rejection, and their influence on children's and adolescents' development. This theory explores how these parental

behaviors affect interpersonal relationships and emphasizes the universal significance of warmth in the parent-child bond (6). PAR Theory posits that the quality of this relationship, especially the warmth and love shared, is crucial across cultures for healthy development. Individuals who perceive parental rejection are more likely to struggle with anxiety, insecurity, and a diminished sense of self-worth, demonstrating the profound impact of early parental interactions on personality development (7, 8). The theory further suggests that the mother's role as the primary caregiver is vital in shaping the child's early emotional experiences and attitudes towards others later in life (9).

The continuity and quality of the parent-child relationship, from childhood through adolescence, play a significant role in shaping an individual's perception of the world and interpersonal relationships. Perceiving maternal acceptance is associated with enhanced self-confidence and positive mental representations of the world, whereas perceived rejection can lead to low self-esteem and a negative worldview (10). This dichotomy underscores the critical role of maternal acceptance or rejection in a child's psychological adaptation and self-perception. Research within the framework of PAR Theory has highlighted the long-term psychological adjustment issues that can arise from perceived parental rejection, emphasizing the importance of nurturing parental behaviors in the development of healthy coping mechanisms and social skills (11, 12).

Emotional intelligence, as conceptualized by Goleman, includes a range of competencies such as self-awareness, emotional management, and empathy, crucial for effective interpersonal relationships (13). The development of EI is significantly influenced by the child's early experiences with their parents, with studies indicating that a supportive and emotionally warm parental environment contributes to higher EI. This body of research suggests a link between parental acceptance and the development of key emotional competencies in children and adolescents (14, 15). The influence of parenting on EI is further supported by findings that demonstrate a positive correlation between high EI and academic success, highlighting the role of parental support in fostering both emotional and academic achievements (16, 17, 18, 19, 20).

In light of the central role parents play in their children's lives, particularly in cultures with strong family orientations, this study aims to explore the predictive role of perceived maternal acceptance-rejection on adolescents' emotional intelligence. Focusing on the Pakistani context, where research on the implications of parental approval or rejection is scant, this study seeks to contribute to the understanding of how maternal behavior influences EI. The investigation into perceived maternal acceptance-rejection and its impact on EI is particularly relevant given the limited attention this area has received within Pakistani social dynamics and the broader discussion on mental health concerns in the region. Through examining the perceived maternal acceptance-rejection model, this research aims to address a significant gap in the literature, testing the hypothesis that there is a predictive association between perceived maternal acceptance-rejection and emotional intelligence in adolescents.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study commenced following the acquisition of necessary approvals from the departmental research committee and the Board of Advanced Studies and Research at the University of Karachi. This preliminary step ensured adherence to ethical standards and institutional guidelines, setting the foundation for the research process. The participant pool consisted of 600 adolescents, equally divided between genders, with 300 males and 300 females, all within the age range of 13 to 17 years. These individuals were selected based on their current enrollment in grades 6 through 10, across various schools, and were characterized by a diverse socioeconomic background encompassing middle-class, lower-middle-class, and upper-middle-class families. A significant proportion of the sample, approximately 64.30%, were students in grades 8 and 9, while the family structure predominantly comprised nuclear families (65.3%), highlighting a setting where parental involvement in child-rearing was prevalent with minimal extended family interference. The research methodology included a demographic information form that gathered data on age, gender, birth order, number of siblings, academic grades, family structure, religion, educational level, and socioeconomic status of the parents. This comprehensive approach facilitated a nuanced understanding of the participants' backgrounds and their potential impact on the study's outcomes. For the assessment of emotional intelligence, the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF), developed by Petrides and Furnham, was employed. This instrument, which evolved from an initial focus on 15 different traits to a more streamlined version emphasizing four factors (self-control, well-being, sociability, and emotionality), utilized a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). The TEIQue-ASF demonstrated high reliability and internal consistency, as evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83, further validated by an internal consistency score of α = .735 (39, 40).

The Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) focusing on maternal attitudes was also integral to this study. Introduced by Rohner, the PARQ measures maternal behaviors within dimensions of hostility, approval, undifferentiated rejection, and negligence through a 24-item scale with four subscales. Responses were recorded on a Likert-type scale with values indicating

varying degrees of agreement or disagreement. A lower cumulative score suggested maternal acceptance, whereas a higher score indicated rejection, with the scale exhibiting a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.92, indicating robust internal consistency (6, 41).

The procedure for data collection involved obtaining consent from school authorities and participants after a thorough briefing on the study's purpose and ethical considerations. Emphasizing confidentiality, participants were assured of their anonymity and the exclusive use of collected data for this study. The administration of the TEIQue-ASF was followed by the Child Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (Short Form) and its maternal variant. The study was conducted in Karachi, Pakistan, with ethical considerations meticulously observed in alignment with the Helsinki Declaration. Participants were informed about their right to withdraw at any point without any obligation to complete the study.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25, allowing for a detailed examination of the relationship between perceived maternal acceptance-rejection and emotional intelligence among adolescents. This analytical approach facilitated the identification of predictive associations and the evaluation of underlying patterns within the data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the study's objectives.

RESULTS

In the conducted study, the reliability of the research measures was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded significant results. The Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) Child Form for mothers, consisting of 24 items, demonstrated a high level of internal consistency with an alpha value of .91, indicating a reliable measure of maternal acceptance-rejection (Table 1). Similarly, the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Adolescent Short Form (TEIQ-ASF), with 30 items, also showed strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of .84. These values underscore the robustness of the tools used in capturing the constructs of interest in the adolescent population.

The relationship between maternal acceptance-rejection (MA-R) and emotional intelligence (EI) was further explored through linear regression analysis. The predictor, MA-R, was found to have a positive correlation with EI, evidenced by an R value of .213. This suggests a modest but significant relationship between the two variables. The R^2 value of .045 indicates that approximately 4.5% of the variance in emotional intelligence scores can be explained by variations in maternal acceptance-rejection. The F statistic of 28.506, with a significance level of $p < .05$, further confirms the statistical significance of the model, demonstrating that maternal acceptance-rejection is a meaningful predictor of emotional intelligence in adolescents (Table 2).

Further examination of the regression coefficients revealed that the constant term in the model was 154.087, with a standard error of 2.598, which was highly significant (T = 59.32, $p < .00$), indicating a strong model intercept. The coefficient for MA-R was-0.336, with a standard error of 0.063, and a Beta value of-0.213. This negative coefficient suggests that higher scores of maternal rejection are associated with lower scores of emotional intelligence among adolescents, with the relationship being statistically significant (T =-5.339, $p < .00$). The negative Beta value reinforces the inverse relationship between maternal acceptance-rejection and emotional intelligence, highlighting the impact of maternal behavior on the emotional development of adolescents (Table 3).

Table 1 Cronbach's Alpha for the Research Measures

Measures	No of items	Alpha (α)
PARQ Child Form (mother)	24	.91
TEIQ (ASF)	30	.84

Table 2 Linear Regression Analysis with Maternal Acceptance-Rejection (MA-R) as Predictor of Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Predictor	R	R²	F	Sig.
MA-R	.213	.045	28.506	.00*

*p < .05

Table 3 Coefficients for Linear Regression with Maternal Acceptance-Rejection (MA-R) as Predictor of Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Model	B	SE B	Beta (ß)	T	Sig.
Constant	154.087	2.598		59.32	.00
MA-R	-0.336	0.063	-0.213	-5.339	.00

DISCUSSION

In this study, the exploration into the correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and perceived maternal acceptance or rejection in adolescents yielded significant insights. Utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 for data analysis, the linear regression outcomes affirmed the hypothesis that perceived maternal acceptance-rejection functions as a predictor of EI. This finding is in line with Kamrani and Malik's research, which demonstrated a robust positive correlation between maternal warmth, encompassing emotional and social support, and the development of EI in children (42). These authors further elaborated on the enduring impact of parenting styles, emphasizing that the initial warmth experienced from the mother at birth plays a foundational role in shaping a child's perceptions of caregivers and family members over time. Their studies also revealed that neglect or rejection from mothers correlates with lower competence and behavioral issues in children, thereby reinforcing the critical association between adolescent EI and maternal acceptance (42).

Naz and Kausar's work complemented these findings by pointing out the direct link between parental emotional support and the enhancement of EI in children. They argued that parenting aimed at fostering high self-esteem, psychological well-being, and emotional stability plays a pivotal role in mitigating the risk of pathological dispositions in youth. The presence of high emotional stability and positive self-esteem acts as a buffer against such tendencies (43). However, variations in findings across studies could stem from children's perceptions of parental behavior—specifically, viewing parents as disciplinarians rather than rejecters, which could alter the perceived dynamics of acceptance and rejection (44). This discrepancy underscores the complexity of understanding the multifaceted influences on EI development, suggesting that factors beyond maternal acceptance warrant further investigation.

The study's conclusions affirm that adolescents who perceive acceptance from their mothers tend to display higher levels of EI compared to their counterparts who experience less acceptance or outright rejection. It is important to recognize that research conducted in the Pakistani context may yield different results from studies in Western countries, given the distinct cultural and social landscapes. This discrepancy highlights the necessity for researchers to consider the diverse socio-economic factors that influence parental behaviors and perceptions in various settings.

Acknowledging the contributions of the principals of schools in Karachi for facilitating data collection and the authors of the scales used in this study is essential. Their cooperation was instrumental in the successful execution of this research.

The investigation into the relationship between maternal acceptance-rejection and adolescent EI, while illuminating, is not without its limitations. The study's reliance on self-reported measures introduces the potential for bias, and its cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality. Additionally, the sample drawn from a single city in Pakistan may not fully represent the diverse experiences of adolescents across different regions and cultures.

Future research should aim to address these limitations by incorporating longitudinal designs to track changes over time and expanding the sample to include diverse populations. Moreover, exploring additional factors that may influence the development of EI, such as paternal involvement, peer relationships, and educational settings, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of this complex phenomenon. Recommendations for practice include the development of interventions targeted at enhancing parental acceptance, as well as educational programs aimed at promoting EI in adolescents, taking into account the nuanced cultural contexts in which they are implemented.

CONCLUSION

These results collectively provide compelling evidence of the predictive association between perceived maternal acceptance-rejection and emotional intelligence in adolescents. The findings emphasize the importance of nurturing maternal relationships in the development of emotional intelligence, suggesting that interventions aimed at promoting maternal acceptance could have beneficial effects on the emotional competence of adolescents.

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