

# Perceived Childhood Paternal Acceptance-Rejection Among Adults

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To determine the childhood perceptual difference of paternal acceptance-rejection between those having psychological disorders and non-clinical population during adulthood.

**Study Design:** Comparative study.

**Place and Duration of Study:** Karwan-e-Hayat, Psychiatric Care and Rehabilitation Centre, Keamari, Karachi, Pakistan, from January to August 2011.

**Methodology:** To test our hypotheses, 69 participants were selected from Karwan-e-Hayat Psychiatric Care and Rehabilitation Centre, Karachi on the basis of purposive sampling technique and 79 from Karachi city on the basis of convenient sampling technique. To measure their perceived paternal acceptance-rejection during childhood, Adult Parental acceptance-rejection questionnaire (PARQ)/control: father-short form (Urdu translation) was administered. The statistical analysis of data was done with the predictive analytics software (PASW).

**Results:** One hundred and forty eight (78 males and 70 females) participants with mean age of  $31.28 \pm 9.54$  years were included. Out of them 69 (40 males and 29 females) were clinical cases of depression, mania and psychosis with mean age of  $33.26 \pm 9.51$  years. Seventy nine (38 males and 41 females) were normal individuals with mean age of  $29.54 \pm 9.29$  years of the demographics corresponding to the clinical population. Independent t-test revealed a significant difference in perceived childhood father acceptance-rejection between clinical and non-clinical population ( $p < 0.05$ ) and significant gender difference ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** The studied clinical population and male participants perceived to be more rejected by their father during their childhood than non-clinical population and female participants.

**Key words:** *Childhood. Perceived father acceptance-rejection. Adulthood. Clinical population. Non-clinical population. Mental illness.*

## INTRODUCTION

Parental acceptance-rejection is a well known theory of socialization given by Rohner,<sup>1</sup> attempts to describe, explain and predict the antecedents, correlations and consequences of parental behaviour upon the psychological adjustment of their offspring.<sup>2</sup>

Role of parental acceptance-rejection have been observed in different psychological problems including social and emotional development, that psychological problems ranges from infantile autism to chronic illnesses like schizophrenia.<sup>3</sup> Veneziano found that father's acceptance was significantly related to the self reported psychological adjustment of both European and African Americans.<sup>3</sup>

In Pakistani culture, research was conducted by Imam and Shaik in order to assess the effect of the presence and absence of father's love on personality development and psychological adjustment of children. Findings

indicated that there was a significant relationship between perceived parental acceptance-rejection and psychological adjustment of children regardless of their gender. Furthermore, the difference on personality assessment questionnaire was also significant for boys, hints that those male children who experienced father's love have good psychological adjustment as compared to those male children who did not experience father's love.<sup>4</sup> As reported by participants' their perceived father's over protection and parental rejection were positively related with their higher level of anxiety as compared to low parental rejection.<sup>5</sup> According to the findings of the study conducted by Munaf and Sardar, parental rejection has significant positive correlation with depressive state; when parental rejection increased, the level of depressive states also increased and increased parental emotional warmth during childhood has lead to decreased depressive symptoms in adulthood.<sup>6</sup>

The rationale of the study was to compare the paternal acceptance and rejection as perceived by the patients of depression, mania and psychosis with control group. It would be helpful to understand the causative role of father's rejection in the development of psychopathology in Pakistani culture. On the basis of the finding of this study, recommendations would be provided for mental health professionals to consider the importance of paternal role in the development of mental illness so that

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they would counsel their clients, parents and other fostering figures especially fathers in this perspective.

On the basis of literature review, two hypotheses were formulated. The first, patients of depression, mania and psychosis perceived to be more rejected in their childhood by their father than non-clinical population. Secondly, males would perceive more paternal rejection during their childhood than females.

The objective of the study was to evaluate these hypotheses through adult parental acceptance rejection questionnaire (PARQ).

## METHODOLOGY

This is a comparative, descriptive study which was conducted at Karwan-e-Hayat, Psychiatric Care and Rehabilitation Centre, Keamari, Karachi, Pakistan. The study was carried out from January to August 2011. All participants were included through non-probability sampling. After approval from Hospital's ethical committee and departmental permission, clinical cases of depression, mania and psychosis were selected from Karwan-e-Hayat Psychiatric Care and Rehabilitation Centre, Karachi on the basis of purposive sampling technique. Normal individuals corresponding demographics to the clinical population were approached from Karachi city on the basis of convenient sampling technique.

In clinical population, patients of depression, mania and psychosis were included; patients who were unable to understand the questionnaire due to high level of severity of their mental illness were excluded.

The control group consisted of mentally normal participants were briefly interviewed by trained and experienced clinical psychologists in order to rule out the history of any possible psychiatric condition. Those reported of having such conditions or seeking treatment for emotional disturbance were not included in the sub-sample of normal participants.

Matric was considered the minimum qualification level for both samples so that participants would easily respond to self reporting questionnaire. Participants with below matric were excluded.

After getting written consent from participants, their demographic information including age, gender, clinical status, and educational level were obtained. Adult parental acceptance-rejection questionnaire/control: father-short form (adult PARQ/control: father - short form, Rohner, Urdu translation by Munaf, Kamrani and Hussain)<sup>7</sup> was administered to only consented participants. This is a Likert type self report questionnaire measures the adult's perception of childhood father's acceptance-rejection. This questionnaire takes 5 – 10 minutes to complete.

Data was entered and analyzed in predictive analytics software (PASW 18). Mean and standard deviation,

and independent sample t-test were computed for comparison of mean values between two groups and level of significance  $p \leq 0.05$  was considered significant.

## RESULTS

Participants characteristics are shown in Table I. Mean perceived childhood paternal acceptance-rejection score for clinical population was  $48.18 \pm 12.34$  and  $37.46 \pm 9.36$  for the non-clinical population ( $p < 0.05$ ). Additionally, the mean score for male participants was  $45.03 \pm 12.02$  and  $39.59 \pm 11.53$  for females participants ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table I:** Participants' characteristics.

Demographics	Clinical sample	Non-clinical sample
Males	40	38
Females	29	41
Clinical Diagnosis		
Depression	21	Not Applicable
Mania	19	
Psychosis	29	
Education		
Matric	41	9
Intermediate	24	39
Graduation and above	4	31
Occupation		
Government job	4	7
Private job	11	38
Business	13	29
Other	41	5

## DISCUSSION

The present research evaluated the possible explanatory influence of father's behaviour during childhood in the later mental health of people. For this purpose, a comparative research was designed to compare the mean values of perceived childhood father acceptance-rejection between clinical and non-clinical population. The study findings were statistically significant which implies that people who are suffering from psychological problems/mental illnesses tend to be perceived to be more rejected by their father during their childhood as compared to normal people.

In the history, the role of father in offspring's development has been relatively ignored by researchers as compared to mothers' role. Silverstein and Phares reviewed dissertation abstracts from 1986-1994 and concluded that only fewer studies (10.5%) focused fathers as compared to mothers (59.5) while 30% studies included both parents.<sup>8</sup> In contemporary literature, the role of father in the psychological adjustment of children holds sufficient importance. Both cross cultural and intercultural studies merely emphasize the physical availability of father but they ignore the paternal warmth in the offspring's development. A single paternal availability is less important

predictor as compared to the paternal warmth, and paternal warmth is the robust predictor of offspring's psychological functioning than maternal warmth.<sup>9</sup>

In Pakistan, childhood perceived father acceptance-rejection is significantly related to the psychological adjustment during adulthood. The psychological adjustment included low level of hostility/aggression, dependency, negative self esteem, negative self adequacy, emotional instability, emotional unresponsiveness, and negative world view. The group rejected by the father during childhood tends to have higher level of hostility/aggression, negative self esteem, negative self adequacy, emotional instability, emotional unresponsiveness, and negative world view as compared to accepted group.<sup>10</sup> Psychological maladjustment mean scores were higher among adults who perceived their father as rejecting during their childhood than those adults who perceived their father as accepting.<sup>11</sup> All these findings are consistent with what we have found in the present study where clinical population perceived to be more rejected by the father during childhood than regular population.

The second hypothesis that addressed the gender differences in terms of perceived childhood paternal acceptance and rejection was also statistically significant. These findings are consistent with other empirical evidences reported by other researchers in Pakistan; Hussain and Munaf, and Najam and Kausar reported that there was a significant gender differences in perceived paternal acceptance and rejection.<sup>12,13</sup> Sorbring *et al.* revealed that males are receiving more physical punishment and less instrument than females and both boys and girls agree that their parents treat boys more severely than girls. Similar findings were reported by Chyung and Lee.<sup>14,15</sup> Therefore, it is recommended for parents especially fathers to take care during their handling of children by minimizing their rejection and maximizing acceptance in order to foster psychologically healthy offspring.

The present study is important in understanding the possible causes of mental illness in Pakistan by emphasizing the role of paternal behaviour during childhood. It has some limitations as well; the study sample is relatively small and clinical cases were selected only from Karachi city. Keeping in view these limitations, it is recommended to replicate the study by including large sample size and clinical cases of mental illnesses from all provinces of Pakistan to increase the scope of this study.

### CONCLUSION

The present findings revealed that the clinical population tended to perceive to be more rejected by their father during childhood than non-clinical population. Additionally,

male participants tended to perceive higher rejection during childhood from their father than did female participants.

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