

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERCEIVED PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE -REJECTION AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY SCORES: A STUDY OF CRIMINAL AND NON-CRIMINAL ADOLESCENTS[#]

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The study was designed to examine relationships between perceived parental acceptance-rejection and juvenile delinquency scores of criminal and non-criminal adolescents. Abbreviated Maternal and Paternal Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ, Ahmed & Gielen, 1987) and Juvenile Delinquency Inventory (JDI, Khan, Khan, & Hussain, 1982) were administered on Sindhi and Urdu-speaking criminals and non-criminals. The results found total juvenile delinquency scores to be positively associated with the total perceived parental acceptance-rejection scores. The mean differences indicated that the criminal adolescents perceived both their fathers and mothers to be significantly more aggressive, more neglecting, more rejecting as compared to the non-criminal adolescents. The findings of this research are consistent with universalistic postulates of parental acceptance and rejection theory developed by Rohner (1975).

Juvenile criminal behaviour has for the past several decades been studied in highly industrialized societies. American psychologists found strong link between harsh parental rearing style and juvenile delinquency since late thirties (for example, Andry, 1962; Glueck & Glueck, 1950; Lander, 1941; Nye, 1958; Symonds, 1938). These studies found that the primary cause of juvenile delinquency for male is extremes of parental behaviour, either extremely protective or extremely rejecting.

More systematic research on parental acceptance-rejection started with the work of Rohner (1975) at the University of Connecticut (U.S.A). Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (PART, Rohner, 1975)

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begins with assumption that all human beings have a generalized need for positive response (i.e., love, approval, warmth, and affection) from the people most significant to them. This need for positive response is basic for normal development, and withdrawal of warmth and affection is significant by itself to produce negative consequences for emotional and personality functioning (Rohner, 1975, 1986). PART predicts that rejected children world over tend more than accepted children to be hostile and aggressive; to be dependent; to have an impaired sense of self-esteem and self-adequacy; to be emotionally unresponsive; and to have negative world view.

The postulates of parental acceptance and rejection theory are supported by converging evidence from numerous psychological studies conducted with different versions of Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) and Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ) (e.g. Babree, 1997; Bello, 1985; Haque, 1987, 1988; Ibrahim, 1988; Kithara, 1986, Paulcheng, 1983; Riaz, 1991, 1996; Rohner & Chaki-Sircar, 1988; Rohner, Hahn, & Rohner, 1980; Rohner, Roll, & Rohner, 1980, etc.). Numerous research and clinical reports support the expectation that rejection has been implicated in a wide range of psychiatric and behavioural disorders, including delinquency and conduct problems (Rohner, 1986).

The research in the important field of crime and juvenile delinquency has been quite sparse in Pakistan, except the works of Tariq who has published a number of articles and monographs (see Tariq, 1986, 1987, 1989; Tariq & Durrani, 1983). His work (Tariq, 1991) in addition to other measures, used Socialization Scale of California Personality Inventory (SSCPI) to determine the home environments of the professional and non-professional criminals. Among other things, the results indicated that professional criminals as compared to non-professional reported to have more frequently received harsh treatments from their parents.

The present study was undertaken to assess the styles of parenting as perceived by the adolescent criminals and non-criminals and to relate such styles to criminal personality dispositions as measured through Juvenile Delinquency Inventory (JDI) (Khan, Khan, & Hussain, 1982). The inventory aims at differentiating juvenile criminal adolescents from the non-criminals. The paper assumes that the scores of the adolescent criminals who perceive their fathers/mothers to be rejecting will be positively associated with the scores of JDI. It is also hypothesized that there will be significant mean differences between the scores of adolescent criminals and non-criminals on both PARQ and JDI.

METHOD

Sample

The sample comprises of 100 male juvenile criminal and non-criminal adolescents. Both the groups were equal in numbers. Among the criminal adolescents, 20% were from upper middle class, 32% from middle class, and 66% belonged to working class (poor) families. Thirty-seven criminal adolescents were from Central Prison Hyderabad, while 13 were from Nara Jail Hyderabad. The mean age of criminal and non-criminal adolescents were 18.3 and 18.1 years, respectively. Fifty percent of the criminal adolescents were non-literate, whereas non-literates among their fathers and mothers were 74% and 94%, respectively. Fifty-six per cent of juvenile criminals belonged to rural areas, while 44% were from urban areas. Fifty-eight per cent of the respondents of the criminal group were Sindhi-speaking, while other ethnic groups represented in the study were 30% Urdu-speaking, and 12% Balochi-speaking. The non-criminal respondents were randomly selected from various colleges of Hyderabad District.

Instruments

The instruments used in this study were Sindhi and Urdu versions of the abbreviated Maternal and Paternal (Mother and Father PARQ) Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaires (Ahmed & Gielen, 1987) and Juvenile Delinquency Inventory (JDI) developed by Khan, Khan, and Hussain (1982). The Urdu translations of the Mother and Father PARQ were accomplished by the second author, using back-translation techniques; whereas Sindhi translation was made from the Urdu versions, using the direct translation technique by the first author. The split-half reliability of JDI and Maternal and Paternal PARQ were found to be highly significant. (JDI = 0.81; Mother PARQ = 0.85; Father PARQ = 0.82). Mother and Father PARQ measures the way adolescents from 14-17 years of age perceived their mother's and father's treatment of themselves during childhood years. All the four scales of adolescent PARQ (Mother and Father), totaling 32 items each were used in this study. The subscales measure Parental Warmth/Affection (8 items); Parental Hostility/Aggression (8 items); Parental Neglect/Indifference (8 items); and Parental Rejection (8 items). The self-report questionnaire items are scored on a 4-point Likert-like scale "Almost Always True" assigned a score of 4, and "Almost Never True" assigned a score of 1. In order to avoid response set bias, some of the items are keyed in the opposite direction and they are reverse scored.

Procedure

An interview with each juvenile criminal was conducted by the first author to develop a rapport with the respondent, and misunderstanding, if any, about the administration of the questionnaire was removed. In this regard, 12 visits to Central Prison Hyderabad, and Nara Jail Hyderabad were made. After ensuring that the respondents were fully satisfied about the purpose of the study, the PARQ, and JDI were administered. As indicated earlier, 50% of all the respondents were non-literate, therefore, questions were read to such respondents and their responses were recorded. The non-criminal adolescents were administered the questionnaires in their colleges.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To examine the relationships of the total JDI scores to total adolescent PARQ (Mother/Father) scores, the coefficients of correlation (Product-Moment) were computed (Table 1). The results show that the total JDI scores of criminal adolescents, and total PARQ (Mother, referent) are highly significant ($r = .97$). It also indicates that the total JDI scores of the juvenile criminals and total PARQ (Father, referent) are highly related ($r = .95$). Further, the total PARQ (Mother, referent), and total PARQ (Father, referent) of juvenile criminals are positively related ($r = .95$) to each other. Thus it is evident from our data that juvenile delinquency scores of the criminal respondents are highly associated with both the maternal as well as paternal acceptance-rejection scores.

Table 1

Correlations between total PARQ (Mother, referent), total PARQ (Father, referent), and total JDI scores of criminal respondents (n = 50)

Juvenile Criminal Respondents	JDI Scores <i>r</i>
<i>Total PARQ</i>	
(Mother, Referent)	0.97*
(Father, Referent)	0.95*
(Father, Referent) and (Mother, Referent)	0.95*

* $p < .001$

To compare the results of criminal and non-criminal adolescents in terms of their perceptions of their mothers acceptance-rejection

behaviour, *t*-tests were used. (Table 2). It is interesting that both the groups (i.e., criminals and non-criminal adolescents) differed significantly from each other on five variables of the adolescent PARQ (Mother, referent).

Table 2

Means, standard deviation, and t-values for PARQ scores of (Mother/Father, Referent) and JDI scores of criminal and non-criminal adolescents

PARQ	Criminals (<i>n</i> = 50)		Non-criminals (<i>n</i> = 50)		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
(Mother, Referent)					
Less Warmth/ Affection	13.06	3.71	11.86	3.16	1.74
Hostility/Aggression	16.04	5.66	12.44	3.53	3.82***
Neglect/Indifference	13.86	5.97	10.92	3.57	2.99**
Rejection/Undifferentiated	15.88	5.88	12.02	3.98	3.84***
(Father, Referent)					
Less Warmth/Affection	13.74	5.09	12.18	4.39	1.64
Hostility/Aggression	16.00	6.36	13.20	5.10	2.41*
Neglect/Indifference	13.80	6.15	11.54	4.62	2.16*
Rejection/Undifferentiated	14.94	6.20	12.26	4.74	2.43*
Total PARQ	54.06	21.01	45.72	16.40	2.21*
JDI					
Total JDI	62.22	8.80	57.17	5.72	3.41***

df=98; **p*<.05; ***p*<.01; ****p*<.001

Criminal adolescents perceived significantly more Hostility/Aggression, Neglect/Indifference, and Rejection/Undifferentiated (perceptions of being unloved) during their childhood years which is evident from their highly significant *t*-values on Hostility/Aggression (*t* = 3.82), Neglect / Indifference (*t* = 2.99), and Rejection/Undifferentiated (*t* = 3.84) scales of mother referent. It is apparent from the results that the criminals perceived less warmth (*t* = 1.74) than those of non-criminal adolescents (Table 2).

To compare the results of criminal and non-criminal adolescents in terms of perceptions of their father's acceptance-rejection behaviour, *t*-tests were used (Table 2). Criminal adolescents were also found victims but to a lesser degree of paternal Hostility/Aggression ($t = 2.41$), Neglect/Indifference ($t = 2.16$), and Rejection/Undifferentiated ($t = 2.43$).

The results of criminal and non-criminal adolescents in terms of their JDI scores show that both groups differed significantly ($t = 3.41$) from each other. The findings, therefore, reveal that the JDI is a good measure which could differentiate between Juvenile criminals and non-criminals.

It should be noted that although parental control dimension (i.e., permissiveness-restrictiveness) may be an important predictor of the development of delinquent ways of life, but the present research is primarily concerned with warmth dimension of parenting (Rohner, 1986), and its relationships with delinquent behaviour. The parental acceptance-rejection theory asserts that parental rejection (perception of being unloved) by itself seems to be sufficient to produce often massive and damaging consequences for adolescents who were rejected as children.

The results of the present study, therefore, support the hypothesis that adolescent criminals who perceive their fathers/mothers as more rejecting will have greater tendency towards juvenile crimes.

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