

## **Explaining Rejection Sensitivity among Adolescents as predicted by Perceived Differential Treatment of Parents**

**Arooj Arshad\*<sup>1</sup>, Rizwan Ali Khadim<sup>2</sup>, Afsheen Masood<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> School of Creative Arts, University of Lahore, Pakistan; <sup>2</sup> Lahore Business School, University of Lahore, Pakistan; <sup>3</sup> Institute of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab, Pakistan  
E--mail: [arooj.arshad@soca.uol.edu.pk](mailto:arooj.arshad@soca.uol.edu.pk).

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### **Abstract**

The aim of the present research was to investigate the relationship between differential parenting and rejection sensitivity in 200 (male=95; females=105) adolescents. It was hypothesized that differential parenting (Maternal/Paternal affection and control) was likely to predict rejection sensitivity (anxious & angry expectation) in adolescents. Differential Parenting Treatment subscale of Sibling Inventory of Differential Experiences (Daniels,&Plomin, 1985) and Children Rejection Sensitivity Scale (Downey, & Feldon, 1996) were used. The results revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between maternal/paternal affection and anxious expectation domain of rejection sensitivity while maternal/paternal control was negatively related with angry expectation domain of rejection sensitivity in adolescents. Maternal affection, maternal control, paternal affection, paternal control were more significant predictors of anxious expectation (39%) domain of rejection sensitivity than angry expectation (22%) domain among adolescents after controlling for the effects of covariates. The finding of the study was helpful for the family advisors to teach parents not to practice discrimination in their child rearing towards any of their kid in light of the fact that can be prompt create feeling to be dismisses from their critical connections. More over these discoveries were useful for school guides to consolidate educational modules uniquely outline to lessens rejection.

**Keywords:** Differential Parenting, Rejection Sensitivity, Adolescents

### **Introduction**

Parenting is a great responsibility and a child grows into what he gets from their parents. A child grows from the emotional and social support, appraisal and encouragement from their parents while parents criticism, friendliness, lack of support and time leads to behavioral problems (Tamrouti-Makkink, Dubas, Gerris, & Van Aken, 2004). Parents especially in Asian countries treat their child differently; behave more positive with one child and more negative with other (Rauer&Brendal, 2007). As adolescence is a much sensitive phase of human development where besides rapid physical changes many psychological processing are operating at that phase child became more closer to his/her parents and hence at that point any difference in parental treatment is being compared with his/her siblings. The child who receives negative treatment develops fear to speak about themselves because they thought they were rejected by their peers too as they were being rejected always from their parents, that develops the sensitivity towards rejection from other significant relationships as they age. These children always fear to speak in front of their parents and share their thoughts with peers and teachers (Juffer, Marian & Kranenburg, 2012). However, it has been predicted that differential parenting increased hostility from both more and less favored siblings (Yahav, 2006; Sheehan, & Noller, 2002). Less favored children have weakened

relationships (Downey, Lebolt, Rincon & Freitas, 2008), feeling of anxiety, and become rejection sensitive (Jenkin, Rashbash & Conner, 2003). So, it is interesting to investigate the relationship between differential parenting and rejection sensitivity in adolescence.

Mainly, rejection sensitivity as the feeling of anxiety, expectation of anger characterized by readily perception and exaggeration to reject when faced with potential rejection by others and that aggressive children's inclination to perceive intentional hostility in the behavior of their peers towards them, shows the change of expectations of rejection (Downey, lebolt, Rincon & Freitas, 2000). When the expected rejection is assumed, than the individual may perceive everything negatively, they come to feel anxious and expect the rejection. Adolescence that has developed defensive expectations of rejection as a result of having experience rejection, in the beginning from parents and subsequently from peers, will be more sensitive to develop rejection sensitivity from society (Sperry, 2008).

The concept of rejection sensitivity as aroused from differential treatment of parents is provided by Bowlby (1973) in an extension of his attachment theory arguing that, child's expectations or beliefs about the availability and responsiveness of the parents are incorporated into working models of self (a model based on perceptions of the worthiness of the self to be noticed and cared for) and other (a model based on perceptions of the likelihood of the parents being caring and responsive). Whenever built up, these disguised working models constitute an interpretive framework through which past child rearing encounters come to impact the way future social conduct is deciphered and caught on. Parental practices that are warm, responsive, and stable encourage the improvement of secure parental connection while child rearing that is dismissing or conflictingly responsive and accessible offers ascend to frail parental connection showed by youngster evasion of, on the other hand inner conflict by incorporating doubts about others or others acceptance and support.

Social cultural context of Asian countries about differential parenting asserts that girls get more protective environment and parental attention because girls are expected to stay at home and spend more time with their family members (Kausar, & Kazmi, 2011). Whereas, boys are allowed to socialize and spend more time outside with their friends, whereas girls are not accepted to be socialize. Additionally, boys are more appraised than girls because they are considered to be the future bread earners of their family so that creates the feeling of rejection in girls and this pattern might generalize for other significant relationship (Saqiq, Munaf & Seema, 2012).

### **Objectives of the study**

The main aim of this research was to examine the relationship between differential parenting and rejection sensitivity in adolescences. It was hypothesized that maternal / paternal affection likely to be a positive relationship with rejection sensitivity (anxious expectation and angry expectation) in adolescences. It was hypothesized that maternal / paternal control likely to be a negative relationship with rejection sensitivity (anxious expectation and angry expectation) in adolescences. Another assumption maternal / paternal affection and control was predictor of rejection sensitivity (anxious expectation and angry expectation) in adolescences.

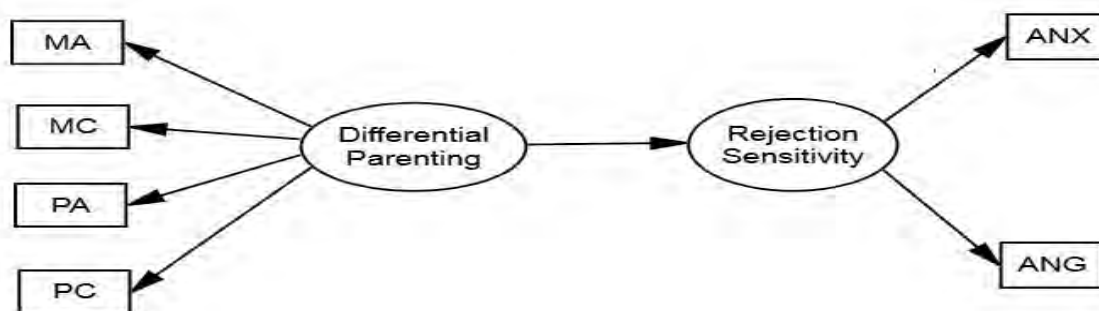
### **Methodology**

#### ***Sample***

The total sample consisted of 200 adolescence with (n = 95, 46.1%) males and (n=105, 51.0%) females within the age range of 12-16 years (M=14.28; SD=1.10) were recruited using convenient sampling technique from different private schools. The selected classes were chosen;

class 8 (25.7%), class 9 (25.7%) and class10 (45.6%). Moreover, the adolescence living with their parents were included only in the study also any participant having any physical and mental disabilities were excluded and those adolescence living with single parents or with other guardian and without parents were also excluded from the study.

Note. MA= Maternal Affection; MC= Maternal Control; PA= Paternal Affection; PC= Paternal Control; ANX anxiety



Expectations; ANG= Angry Expectations

Figure 1: Model Explaining Rejection Sensitivity in Adolescents

Table 1: Showing the Demographic Characteristics of Adolescents (N = 200)

Characteristics	<i>f</i>	%
<b>Family system</b>		
Nuclear	130	63.1
Joint	67	32.1
<b>Class</b>		
8	53	25.7
9	53	25.7
10	94	45.6
<b>Performances in class</b>		
Above average	44	21.4
Average	154	74.8
Below average	2	1.0
<b>Number of Sibling</b>		
1-4	136	66
5-8	59	29
<b>Birth Order</b>		
1-4	188	91
5-8	09	05

**Assessment Measures**

1) **Sibling Inventory of Differential Experience:** According to Daniels and Plomin (1985) differential parenting defined that the environment that gives the different experiences to

children throughout growing up in a same family or they has been treated differently from their parents and their own siblings. The Differential parenting treatment was based on 5 Likert scale, included 9 items, ranking from 1 (towards siblings than me ) to 6 (towards me much more) the child responses the answer separately for mothers and fathers items, which measure the parent's affection and control in their differential parenting. (Daniels & sPlomin, 1985). The reliability was on the original scale was Cronbach alpha = .77 and the reliability of the scale used in the current study were .71.

2) **Children Rejection Sensitivity Scale:** Downey and Feldom (1996) refers rejection sensitivity were defined to as the overall respond of inclination to oversensitively to expect, recognize and overreact, behave to a particular situation. They were 12 items and based on six likert scale 1 (not nervous) to 6 (very nervous). Scoring of the Children rejection sensitivity were first reverse the items of both anxiety expectation and angry expectation from item 2 and 12 the scores item of anxious expectation were multiply by the children the scores of expected likelihood of rejection and then multiple the scores of angry expectation with expected likelihood of rejection. Response were summed with the total of both scores of anxiety and angry expectation .Finally, the scores of three domains gave an average to provide a total scores of rejection sensitivity. The reliability of Cronbach alfa = .83 were the higher scores of rejection sensitivity from the original scale and the reliability of the scale in current study was .80.

3) **Demographic Information Questionnaire:** The demographic information questionnaire includes questions about age, gender, education, number of siblings, family system, father/mother , both or other, class performances, any physically/ mental disability and number of best friends

#### ***Procedure***

Initially, the researcher visited different schools then those schools that allow to collect information from their students were selected. First, the authority letter was sign by the principals to conduct the research after that researcher was provided a proper class and the questionnaire were distributed among the students. The researcher enters the class room and after giving brief information about the nature of research informed consent was obtained from the participants. Then, Demographic Information, Questionnaire and Differential Parenting and Rejection sensitivity scale were distributed to the participants under the supervision of the researcher. The participants were briefed about how to fill the questionnaire; moreover, few participants has some problems in understanding the rating scale that was instructed in detail to each participant. The participants were cooperating and excited after receiving the questionnaire. Then researcher interprets the assessment measure and concluded the result about differential parenting and rejection sensitivity.

#### **Results**

The reliability analysis was carried out for differential parenting and rejection sensitivity scale using Cronbach's alpha.

Table 2 indicates that the reliability values of the scales were enough to carry out further analysis according to the hypotheses.

It was hypothesized that there were likely to be a positive relationship in differential parenting and rejection sensitivity. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the relationship of study variables that were given in table 3.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients for the Study Variables (N = 200)**

Variable	<i>k</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range of scores		Cronbach's $\alpha$
				Actual	Potential	
MA	06	3.05	.61	1.40-5.40	5-30	.65
MC	06	3.05	.63	1.00-5.25	4- 24	.63
PA	06	3.13	.53	1.20-4.60	5- 30	.61
PC	06	3.09	.60	1.50-5.25	4 -24	.61
ANX	06	30.69	9.43	11.99-55.00	144	.75
ANG	06	33.06	8.70	12.00 -56.00	144	.79

**Table 3: Correlation among Study Variables (N =200)**

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	.122	.053	-.01	.10	.19*	-.04	.10	.11*
2. Gender	-	.26**	-.16*	-.12	-.11	.18*	.38**	.20**
3. FS		-	-.01	-.06	-.11	-.05	-.17*	-.14*
5. MA			-	.41**	.32**	.26**	-.24**	-.18*
6. MC				-	.28**	.36**	.15*	.12*
7. PA					-	.25**	.18**	.13*
8. PC						-	-.16*	-.08*
9. ANX							-.	.76**
10. ANE								-

Note = MA = Maternal Affection, MC = Maternal Control, PA = Paternal Affection, PC = Paternal Control, ANX= Anxious Expectation, ANG = Angry Expectation, Gender, Male =1, Female =2, FS= Family System, 1 = Nuclear, 2 = Joint, \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

The results indicate that age is significantly related with paternal affection and angry expectation that further indicated that with the increase in age the paternal affection increases and on the same way the angry expectation domain of rejection sensitivity increases. The gender has positively correlated with maternal affection indicated that girls receive more maternal affection while boys receives more maternal control as indicated by the negative correlation between gender and maternal control, whereas gender is found to be negatively correlated with anxious and angry expectation that highlighted that rejection sensitivity in terms of both anxious and angry expectation is more perceived in girls compared to boys. Moreover, family system has significant negative correlation with anxious and angry expectations which reveals that adolescents living in nuclear family system experiences more rejection sensitivity.

In addition, the findings also revealed that maternal/ paternal affection is negatively related with rejection sensitivity while maternal / paternal control was found to be positively related with rejection sensitivity indicated that with the increase in parental control (Maternal/paternal) adolescents develop more feelings of rejection.

Furthermore, it was hypothesized that differential parenting (maternal, paternal affection and maternal, paternal control) significant predict rejection sensitivity after controlling for the effects of demographic variables, so, Hierarchical Regression analysis was conducted and the findings were given in table 4.

The result of table 4 revealed that one model explained 56% variance in anxious expectation with  $F(7,192,199) = 7.202$ ,  $p = .000$  was significant. When demographic variables i.e., age, gender,

and family system were added in the block 1, the model explained 17 % variance in anxious expectation with  $F = (3, 196) = 13.43, p = 0.000$  was significant. When maternal affection and maternal control were added in Block 2, the model explained 19% variance in anxious expectation with  $F = (2, 194) = 2.040, p = .133$  was non-significant. When paternal affection and paternal control were added, the model explained 11% variance in anxious expectation with  $F = (2, 192) = .295, p = .745$  was non-significant. The results show that after controlling for the possible effect of age, gender and family system, differential parenting explains 39% variance in anxious expectation domain of rejection sensitivity.

**Table 4: Showing Hierarchical Regression analysis predicting control effects of Demographics and Independent Variable on Rejection Sensitivity**

Predictors	Rejection Sensitivity			
	Anxious Expectation		Angry Expectation	
	$\Delta R^2$	B	$\Delta R^2$	B
<b>Step 1</b>	.17***		.06***	
Age		.12***		.11***
Gender		-.33***		-.13
Family System		-.075		-.11
<b>Step 2</b>	.19***		.11***	
Mother				
Maternal affection		.13***		.10***
Maternal control		-.03*		.02*
<b>Step 3</b>	.20***		.11***	
Father				
Paternal affection		.07***		.06***
Paternal control		.05***		.01*
Total $R^2$	.56***		.28***	

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ , Gender, Male = 1, Female = 2, Family System, Nuclear = 1, Joint = 2

Results revealed on second model explained 28% variance in angry expectation with  $F = (7, 192, 199) = 2.731, p = .001$  was significant. When demographic variables i.e., age, gender, and family system were added in the block 1, the model explained 9 % variance in angry expectation with  $F = (3, 196) = 4.801, p = .003$  was significant. When maternal affection and maternal control were added in Block 2, the model explained 11% variance in anxious expectation with  $F = (2, 194) = 2.040, p = .133$  was non-significant. When paternal affection and paternal control were added, the model explained 11% variance in angry expectation with  $F = (2, 192) = .295, p = .745$  was non-significant. Overall the model shows that differential parenting (maternal, paternal affection and paternal, maternal control) were a significant predictors of rejection sensitivity angry expectation domain of rejection sensitivity after controlling for the possible effect of demographic variables but differential parenting is the better predictor of anxious expectation (39% variance) than angry expectation (22% variance) domain of rejection sensitivity.

### Discussion

As the current study aimed to highlight the predictors of rejection sensitivity in adolescence, besides focuses on the consequences of rejection sensitivity, the study postulated that one of the

pertinent predictor of rejection sensitivity among adolescence might be differential treatment of parents in terms of parental affection and control. The results of the study significantly revealed that parental (maternal & paternal) affection was found to be negatively related anxious and angry expectations of rejection sensitivity and the findings were in line with the study hypothesis. Furthermore, these findings are in line with the previous research by Kowal and colleagues (2002) reported that differential parenting can be harmful to all children within the family. However, it should be noted that differential parenting does not appear to impact all children in a family equally; disfavored children tend to be impacted more negatively by differentiation than their favored siblings. The finding shows that early adolescence who received maternal/ paternal control as compare to his siblings reported jealousy between their siblings (Rauer, & Volling, 2007), showed poor performance and low self-esteem, receive rejection from the environment and couldn't maintain a romantic relationship with their partner in future (Towers & Neiderhiser, 2005).

Moreover, the results also reveals that as per gender mother show more affection towards boys while more control on girls and therefore girls felt more rejection compared to boys and these findings were also in line with the previous researches stated that over the period of time, the continuously experiences of differential parenting have a poor effect on disfavored child's as they develop mind set of receiving negative arguments from others as compare to their siblings and their being sensitive with negative expectation from others might hurt the child more (Meunier, Bisceglia, & Jenkins, 2012).Owing to the sociocultural context of Asian countries, where the concept of differential parenting is different for boys and girls, here girls are brought up with more protective environment and parental attention as parents expected from them to stay at home and spend more time with their family members (Kausar, & Kazmi, 2011), whereas, boys are allowed to socialize and spend more time outside with their friends (Saqiq, Munaf&Seema, 2012; Lemonda, Briggs, & Mcclowry, 2009).

Although this research provides support for the relationship between differential parenting and rejection sensitivity, there are some limitations that should be highlighted to be worked upon in future research. Due to correlational nature of the current study; it is difficult to draw cause and effect relationship among study variables. In order to establish cause and effect relationship, longitudinal studies need to be carried out. The study cannot be generalized to the whole adolescence population as the sample consisted of only school students which only cover the literate urban adolescents. Future researches also can address the difference in parenting of adolescents with working and non-working parents. Through this research, was beneficial for the family counselors to educate parents not to incorporate differences in their parenting towards any of their child because that can lead to development of rejection from their later significant relationships. It was also helpful for school counselors to incorporate curriculum specially design to reduce rejection sensitivity and seminars should be conducted to give awareness about proneness towards rejection sensitivity in adolescences.

### **Conclusion**

The present research aimed to predict rejection sensitivity by the differential parenting practices among adolescents and the results were in accordance with the study hypothesis. As the finding of the current study indicated that there was a positive relationship between maternal/ paternal affection with rejection sensitivity (anxious expectation and angry expectation) while maternal/ paternal control negatively related with rejection sensitivity among adolescences which leads to the acceptance of study hypothesis. As in Asian society parents tend to differentiate their children and show love, affection to one of their favorite child. Some parents expect more from their

child and this high expectation from one child leads to the negligence and sometimes to the development of rejection sensitivity among them. It has been seen in the study, that father show less affection with their child as compare to mothers because in Asian societies fathers were considered to have more control over their children's as father give less time to show affection and love. In the nutshell the study conclusively reveals the significant contribution of differential treatment of parents towards their children and the resultant development of rejection sensitivity among adolescence so the parents should be conscious about their treatment with their children as rejection sensitivity expectation in early life span predicted later perceptions of rejection from significant relationships and thus affecting the overall personality of the individual.

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