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University Students' Perception of Acceptance & Rejection

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University Students' Perception of Acceptance & Rejection

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Abstract - The purpose of this study was to extend the existing body of knowledge on the perception of acceptance and rejection among the university students. A conceptual framework which illustrates three dimensions of acceptance and rejection including parental, siblings and peer group was developed. The present research was a descriptive study which used an indigenous research inventory to measure acceptance and rejection. The study was carried out on a sample of 100 university students and it explored the impact of demographic variables including gender, age, birth order, and family income level on determining the level of acceptance and rejection. Result of the study revealed that the phenomenon of university students' acceptance and rejection does exist among. Male students experience higher parental and siblings rejection than females. Students from higher income families experience higher rejection compared to students from low income families. The findings also indicated that different demographic variables contribute significantly in determining the perceived level of acceptance and rejection.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomena of perception of the acceptance and rejection affect a person from psychologically and behaviourally and consequently it influences emotional and social health (Leafgran, 1989). University students' academic learning typically takes place in a social context. Their perception of acceptance or rejection is shaped by a combination of cognitive and social learning processes and it can influence their normal learning activities (Patrick, 1997; Welsh, Parke, Widaman, & O'Neil, 2001). In the university years, a number of important changes occur in student's social worlds. These shifts produce both new demands and new opportunities for adult social and emotional growth. Peer groups enlarge and mostly the students become free of adult supervision, including their older siblings and even parents. The experience of acceptance refers to the warmth, love, affection, care, comfort, concern, nurturing and support that a person can experience from parents, siblings and peers. In the context of parent-child relationship, acceptance can be defined as love, care, support or simply affection that parents feel

and communicate toward their children and others.

Physical and verbal expressions are considered as two principle behavioural expressions. The physical expressions include hugging, caressing, approving glances, kissing, smiling, and other such signs of compliment, approval or support. The verbal expressions of acceptance include praising, complimenting, saying nice things to or about the child or other person, perhaps singing songs or telling stories to a young child, and the like. Acceptance is also characterized by the absence or minimal presence of rejection (Waltres j. & Stinnett, (1971).

On the other hand rejection is the absence or withdrawal of feeling of love and behaviours marked by the presence of a different physically and psychologically destructive acts. It can be observed by cold, unaffectionate, hostile, aggressive, indifferent neglecting and rejecting behaviours. Such behaviours may hurt a person physically or emotionally. Rejection occurs when an individual is deliberately excluded from a social interaction. A person can be rejected on an individual basis or by an entire group of people. It can be either active such as bullying, teasing, ridiculing, ignoring a person or giving the "reticent medication." The experience of being rejected is subjective for the recipient. While humans are social beings, some rejection is an inevitable part of lifespan. Yet, rejection can become a problem when it is prolonged, when the relationship is important, or when the individual is highly sensitive to rejection. Experience of rejection can lead to a number of psychological problems such as low self-esteem, aggression, loneliness, and depression. It can also lead to feelings of insecurity and an intensified sensitivity to imminent rejection.

Parental acceptance-rejection is commonly represented along a continuum representing the condition of the adoration bonds between parents and their offspring with the physical, verbal, and symbolic behaviours that they use to convey their feelings. One end of this continuum represents warmth dimension whereas the other end is marked by parental rejection demonstrated in the form of physically and psychologically hurtful actions. Empirical evidence demonstrates that children who do not receive adequate parental love tend to be psychologically maladjusted and exhibit poor self-esteem and self-adequacy and are

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likely to develop a negative worldview. Rejected children often perceived other individuals as untrustworthy, unfriendly, threatening and even dangerous. All such misconceptions negatively influence their interpersonal relationships and psychological wellbeing (Rohner, Khaleque, Cournoyer, 2009). Maslow suggested that the need for love and belongingness is fundamental for human motivation. All humans, even introverts need to be able to give and receive warmth to be psychologically strong. Coie (1990) stated that rejected individuals are likely to have lower self-esteem, and to be at greater risk for internalizing psychological problems like depression while some rejected individuals display externalizing behavior and show aggression rather than depression. Children with problems are more likely to be rejected and this rejection may lead to even greater problems for them. Parental acceptance is defined as parent's willingness to see a child's strength, weaknesses, potentials and limitations. Parental involvement matters because parental warmth or acceptance appears to be crucial to the development of children's self-esteem (Mruk, 2003). Parental rejection is known as absence of acceptance and lack of warmth is detrimental to children's self-esteem. Rohner (1986) presented parental acceptance-rejection theory (PAR Theory), which described the 4 causes, effects and other correlates of perceived parental acceptance-rejection. It is exploratory research for universals pertaining to the antecedents, consequences, and other associates of interpersonal acceptance and rejection. It accentuates a global perspective of sampling widely across all known socio-cultural groups of the world, including across all languages, ethnicities, socioeconomic status, ages, sex, and other related variables. Moreover, Rohner employed multi-method and multi-procedure approach to the study of acceptance-rejection and to the search for universals.

Pfouts (1976) stated that the relationship with siblings is an independent source of variance in the child's personality development. One of the most striking qualities of sibling relationship is their dual nature of positive and negative attributes; moreover, this relationship is also seen among the most volatile of human relationships as they are rooted in ambivalence. Sibling rivalry is seen as the basis for most of the negative aspects of sibling relationship such as emotional struggles involving issues of sibling anger, identity and competition for the recognition and approval from their parents. However, sibling acceptance is attached with a number of positive features such as, closeness, supportiveness, care giving and companionship.

Although this world is by no means independent from the family, the school, and other social institutions, there are unique features of peer relationships that set the world of peers apart from children's other

socialization experiences. Contexts for peer interaction also increasingly include remote electronic contact by computer (e-mail, "instant messaging," and on-line "chatting"), an area that, to our knowledge, has not yet received focused research attention despite the growing number of anecdotal reports from parents of the many hours their children spend in such activities. According to Bierman, most students who are rejected by their peers display low rates of social behavior, high rates of aggressive, disruptive, inattentive, immature and socially anxious behavior. He further stated that well-liked children show social expediency and know when and how to join play groups. Those who are at risk for rejection are more likely to rush in obtrusively, or hang back. Students experiencing higher rejection may find it hard to concentrate, worry about themselves, feel pressure to do well to pass the exams and may push themselves which may be counter-productive for them. It can also lead to conduct disorders, externalizing behavior, drug abuse and delinquency (Light et al., 1989). Most of the previous research, however, in this area has been done in the western culture context. Very few researches were available in the field of acceptance and rejection in the context of Pakistan. The present research is therefore, designed to investigate the university students' perception of acceptance and rejection as experienced by them as they interact with their parents, siblings and peers. The study further examines the relationship of gender, age, number of siblings, birth order and family income in determining the perception of acceptance and rejection.

II. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. The phenomenon of acceptance and rejection does exist among the university students.
2. Age is positively associated with the students' perception of acceptance.
3. Female students perceive more rejection than male students.
4. The perceived level of acceptance is higher in students from higher income families.
5. Students who are the last born in their families perceive higher level of rejection.
6. Number of siblings is inversely related to perceived acceptance.
7. The female university students are more accepted by their peer groups than the male students.

III. METHODOLOGY

The acceptance and rejection inventory was developed through a standardized procedure. A sample of 20 students was collected from the local universities for item generation purpose. 75 items were generated from this source and after weeding out the repetitions, the remaining items were converted into 52 statements to comprise the initial pool. These statements were

presented to 3 judges including one educationalist and two psychologists for qualitative item analysis in terms of accuracy and appropriateness of contents. As a result the statements were further reduced to 40. The psychometric properties of the scale were determined by administering it on a random sample of 50 students including 28 males and 22 females. In order to determine the validity of rating scale the data was subjected to principle component analysis. Factor loading less than .35 was considered as non-significant. A total of 35 items were retained in the acceptance and rejection inventory. Total variance explained by all 3 factors was 57.2864 and were named as parental acceptance scale, siblings acceptance scale and peers acceptance scale. Item-total correlations were computed in order to determine the Reliability of acceptance and rejection inventory. The results reveal

that all items have significant correlation with the total score on the inventory, ranging from .39 to .92. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient yields an internal consistency coefficient of .83 for the entire 35 items. It ranges from .81 to .86. The inter-correlations of the subscales as well as with the total scale analysis indicated that all subscales have significant correlation with each other and with the total score on acceptance inventory. The results of alpha reliability coefficients and inter-correlations of the subscales indicated that this inventory has enough reliability and content validity to measure the perception of parental, siblings and peers acceptance and rejection for the present sample. Norms were established through percentile analysis to interpret the scores obtained by an individual on acceptance inventory

Table 1 : Percentile Ranks of Acceptance Inventory Based on 35 items (N=100).

Percentile	Scores
5	73
10	91
15	93
20	96
25	100
30	102
35	104
40	107
45	115
50	116
55	119
60	125
65	129
70	131
75	132
80	138
85	140
90	141
95	143

Table 1 shows the range of score on acceptance inventory, it ranged from 73 to 143. It also highlights the percentile ranks of respondent's scores on the acceptance inventory.

A random sample of 100 university students was collected from various local universities. Respondent's age ranged from 20 to 28 years, their

family's income level ranged from Rs. 20,000 to Rs.100,000. The respondents were contacted at their respective departments. After obtaining their consent the purpose of study was explained to them and acceptance and rejection inventory was given to them with the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. They were asked to complete it in one sitting.

Table 2 : Levels of Acceptance and Rejection.

Levels of Acceptance and Rejection n Percentage	n	Percentage
Rejection	31	31%
Moderate Acceptance	47	47%
High Acceptance	22	22%

The results indicate that 31% students experience rejection, 47% experience moderate acceptance whereas 22% students experience high level of acceptance.

Table 3 : Comparison of Mean and SD of the Student's Scores on Acceptance and Rejection Inventory for Variables Gender, Age, Birth order and Income ($N=100$).

Subscales	<u>Gender</u>				<u>Age</u>			
	Male		Female		20-25 years		26 and above	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Parents	54.5	2.6	60.3	7.4	60.5	10.9	56.7	2.3
Siblings	23.1	5.3	24.1	3.6	24.8	1.1	23.3	4.2
Peers	24.2	8.3	29.2	4.9	28.1	4.7	27.5	3.1
Total	101.8	15.2	113.6	15.9	113.4	18.19	107.5	9.6

	<u>Birth Order</u>											
	<u>1st</u>		<u>2nd</u>		<u>3rd</u>		<u>4th</u>		<u>5th</u>		<u>Last</u>	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Parents	60.1	6.3	50.1	5.3	59.5	8.4	59.3	8.3	60.5	3.1	68.6	4.1
Siblings	26.2	3.2	22.4	5.3	25.3	3.8	23.5	6.3	27.5	4.2	30.1	3.2
Peers	28.1	4.4	19.1	7.2	28.7	2.1	26.1	2.1	23.4	2.1	20.1	2.1
Total	114.4	13.9	91.6	17.8	112.5	14.3	108.9	16.7	110.4	9.4	118.8	9.4

	<u>Income</u>			
	30000 to 60000		More than 60000	
	M	SD	M	SD
Parents	61.4	3.4	55.1	3.1
Siblings	24.8	2.1	21.4	2.3
Peers	26.5	3.4	26.8	2.4
Total	101.7	8.9	103.3	7.8

Table # 3 illustrates that the male students reported the scores for rejection by their peers were the higher. As far as the peer acceptance is concerned female university students experience more peer acceptance than the male university students. Age wise differences in the respondents' scores revealed that students whose age ranged from 26 and above experienced more rejection. Student's with age ranging from 20-25 years, experience higher peer and siblings

acceptance. Overall the first born child experienced higher acceptance whereas, the last born experienced higher rejection. The last-born experienced higher peer acceptance than the first born. Moreover, third, fourth, and fifth born children experience higher siblings acceptance than first and last born children. The students from low income families experienced higher rejection as compared with students from the higher income families.

Table 4 : One-Way Analysis Of Variance scores on Acceptance Inventory for the Variables Age, Income, birth order ($N=100$).

Source	df	F	P
Age	97	5.147	.008***
Income	96	4.246	.007***
Birth order	91	3.34	.05***

* $P < .01$

Table 4 indicates a highly significant difference between the scores of students belonging to different age groups, $F(3, 97) = 5.147$, $P < .008^{**}$, income $F(4, 97) = 4.246$, $P < .007^{**}$ and birth order, $F(9, 97) = 3.34$, $P < .05^{**}$.

IV. DISCUSSION

The present research investigated the university students' perception of acceptance and rejection as result of interaction with their parents, siblings and

peers. The relationship of gender, age, number of siblings, birth order and family income with the perception of acceptance and rejection was examined. The study found that as a whole, majority of respondents experience moderate acceptance (41%) and only 22% students experienced high level of acceptance, whereas, 31 % respondents reported experiencing rejection. Overall female students experience higher rejection as compared to their male students. Overall male students experienced higher rejection from their peer group. Age was found significantly related to the perception of acceptance and rejection. The students aged 26 years and above experience higher rejection. The students aged 20-25 years experience higher peers and siblings acceptance. Previous research has highlighted the significance of peer rejection for adolescent's concurrent and subsequent adjustment as peer group provide a sense of identity to adults (Hamburg, 1992). Rejection experienced by peers envisages different problems in adulthood, such as, dropout, misbehavior, and psychopathology. Negative response of peers is usually linked with rule-violating behavior. In all cultures, adolescents have learned to become adults by following, imitating, and interacting with peer group.

Another important variable in this study was birth order as it can affect the perception of acceptance and rejection. Birth order play a very important role in determining the direction of relationship with siblings, as older siblings are more likely to perceive themselves as responsible, nurturing and dominating while younger siblings are more likely to report being nurtured and dominated somehow older sibling are more likely to dominate (Bierman, 2003). In the context of Pakistan the average family size is a bit large. A family with higher number of siblings has its advantages and disadvantages. For example, one has to share many things with siblings or experience siblings' attitude. The literature perused on peer rejection indicates the significance of peer rejection for adolescent's concurrent and subsequent adjustment as it envisages different psychological problems in the adulthood. Peers also play a vital role in maintaining rejected status. Moreover rejected adults experience more negative prospect, behaviors and explanation of their own actions than other do. Interestingly, the results revealed that the first-born child experiences higher acceptance and the last born experience higher rejection. These results are in line with research results drawn by Copper Smith (as, cited in Mruk, 2003) suggesting that birth order can have an impact on self-esteem as first born slightly enhances the acceptance. It seems that first and only children receive more attention from and interaction with parents than those who arrive late, which other ordinal positions.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The study identified that the phenomena perception of acceptance and rejection of parental, siblings and peer does exist and affects students' personality development and adjustment in their lives. The conclusions drawn from the study included; male university students experience higher rejection as compared to female students, age is positively associated with rejection, female university students experience higher peer acceptance than male students. Birth order affects the level of acceptance and rejection as the first born child experience higher acceptance and the last born experience higher rejection. Moreover, third, fourth, and fifth born children experience higher siblings acceptance than first and last born children and students from low income families experience higher acceptance as compared to the students from higher income families. The present research was an attempt to increases an understanding of perception of acceptance and rejection of the university students. Further studies may look into acceptance and rejection from other angles such as, self-esteem, stress and academic achievement of students at various levels in wider jurisdiction.

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