

Effect of Parental Acceptance/Rejection on Social Anxiety and Difficulty in Emotion Regulation: Considering Resilience as Moderator

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of parental acceptance-rejection on social anxiety and emotion regulation among young adults in Pakistan, with resilience as a moderating factor. We surveyed 200 young adults aged 18 to 25, using the Parental Acceptance/Rejection Questionnaire-Short Form (PARQ-SF), Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS), Difficulty in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS), Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), and a demographic survey. This study analyzed the data using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multivariate Linear Regression—parental acceptance correlated with lower social anxiety, better emotion regulation, and higher resilience. Conversely, parental rejection is associated with increased social pressure, poorer emotion regulation, and lower strength. Parental acceptance-rejection significantly impacts social anxiety and emotion regulation in young adults, with resilience moderating these effects. Enhancing resilience can mitigate the negative impact of parental rejection, promoting emotional well-being. Recognizing these factors is crucial for targeted interventions and support programs.

Keywords: Parental Acceptance-Rejection, Emotion Regulation, Resilience, Social Anxiety

Introduction

The parent-child relationship is considered the most important as it is the foundation for other connections and significantly contributes to a child's personality development. Parenting behaviors, influenced by cultural norms, can lead to psychological maladjustment and anxieties in children later in life. Parental acceptance and rejection have notable effects on children's behaviors. Parental approval involves love, warmth, and care, while denial encompasses neglect and abusive behavior. Ronald P. Rohner proposed the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (theory) in 2004, which explores the consequences and basis of parental rejection and acceptance worldwide.

According to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, individuals acquire knowledge and skills by observing or modelling the behavior of others. This theory integrates behaviorist and cognitive approaches to investigate the impact of socialization on human behavior. It identifies attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation as key stages in the learning process, highlighting the role of social learning in personality development (Bandura, 1977).

The Psychological Theory of Attachment, conceptualized by psychologist John Bowlby, emphasizes the formation of attachments between infants and caregivers (Fraley, 2010). Bowlby merged psychoanalytic and learning theories to propose that attachments develop through instinctual behaviors. He identified four attachment styles: secure attachment, anxious-avoidant attachment, anxious-resistant attachment, and disorganized attachment, which can significantly impact children's development (Courtney & Ackerman, 2023).

Different parenting styles influence a child's behavior and personality. The authoritative style, characterized by setting rules while considering the child's opinions, is the healthiest and most

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effective. Authoritarian parenting focuses on strict obedience, permissive parenting is overly lenient, and uninvolved parenting lacks guidance and attention. Each style uniquely affects children's self-esteem, social relationships, and overall well-being (Zeltser, 2021).

Parenting styles are influenced by two dimensions: strictness and warmth. Higher levels of behavioral control, warmth, and autonomy granting are associated with fewer depressive symptoms, while high levels of control can lead to more anxiety/depression symptoms. Neglectful parenting styles surprisingly show lower anxiety levels compared to authoritative parenting. Latent profile analysis (LPA) is used to understand parenting styles in specific populations (Lee & Han, 2021)

Social anxiety is a common psychological disorder characterized by an intense fear of judgment or humiliation in social situations. Parental acceptance or rejection can influence the development of social anxiety disorder. Difficulty in emotional regulation refers to challenges in experiencing and managing emotions, leading to impulsivity, anger outbursts, and psychological problems. Resilience, the ability to cope with adversity, plays a moderating role in these relationships, with healthy parenting promoting stability (Festa & Ginsburg, 2011).

In addition, a study investigates the intervening role of self-esteem in the correlation between parental acceptance and social anxiety among Chinese adolescents. The findings suggest that parental approval positively influences self-esteem, reducing social stress (Wang et al.; Y., 2019).

Moreover, the past literature also suggests a study that examines the buffering effects of resilience on psychological distress and life satisfaction among individuals who have experienced parental rejection. The findings indicate that resilience moderates the relationship between parental declination and psychological distress, suggesting that high levels of stability mitigate the negative impact of parental rejection on emotional well-being (Oshio et al.; M., 2018).

In another recent study by Faraji, a significant relationship was discovered between individuals' perceived acceptance or rejection from their parents and their levels of emotion regulation. Specifically, the study revealed that those who perceived parental rejection experienced difficulty regulating their emotions. It implies that an individual's perception of parental rejection can predict their challenges in managing emotions (Faraji, 2022)

Overall, parenting styles, attachment styles, social learning, emotional regulation, and resilience contribute to a child's development, behaviors, and psychological well-being.

Methodology

This cross-sectional study was conducted from April until June 2023, spanning three months to gather data comprehensively. The research targeted young adults enrolled in universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan, representing a diverse sample from the capital region.

Two hundred questionnaires were thoughtfully administered for a robust dataset, with equal participation from both genders, resulting in 100 responses from men and 100 from women. The gender-balanced approach was taken to capture potential gender-specific variations in the investigated variables.

Before participating in the study, all respondents provided informed consent by signing a consent form, demonstrating their willingness to contribute to the research and ensuring their rights were upheld throughout the study.

A demographic sheet was employed to gain a holistic understanding of the participants and contextualize their responses. This sheet collected essential information, including the participants' age, gender, socioeconomic status, birth order within their families, number of siblings, family structure (e.g., nuclear or extended family), and their current education level. These demographic details were vital for analyzing potential demographic influences on the study variables and developing a comprehensive participant profile.

Adult Parental Acceptance/Rejection Questionnaire (Adult PARQ-SF)

The adult PARQ-SF (Rohner, 1991) is a four-point Likert scale. It is a self-report questionnaire that measures parental rejection and acceptance of adults and adolescents. This scale has four subscales that measure lack of affection or coldness, aggression or hostility, neglect or indifference and unidentified rejection. The validity of this scale is 12 months, and the reliability is 0.90. The extended (standard) versions of the potential ratings range from 60, indicating maximum perceived acceptance, to 240, representing maximum perceived rejection. On the other hand, the abbreviated versions have potential ratings ranging from 24, reflecting maximum perceived acceptance, to 96, denoting maximum perceived rejection.

Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS)

The LSAS is a self-rating 24-item Likert-type scale that measures social anxiety in various situations. The developer of this scale is a researcher and psychiatrist, Dr. Michael R. Liebowitz. The internal consistency of LSAS is strong (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.96$) and has high discriminative validity. The credibility is also high, i.e., 0.83 (Baker et al., 2002). 0 means minimum fear and avoidance, whereas 3 means maximum fear and avoidance.

Difficulty in Emotion Regulation Scale Short form (DERS-SF)

The DERS-SF (Kaufman et al., 2015) is an 18-item scale that measures emotion regulation difficulties among growing adults. It has a good reliability of 0.88 and sufficient construct and preventive validity (Gratz & Roemer, 2004; Gratz & Tull, 2010).

Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)

The BRS (Connor Davidson) is a 5-point Likert-type scale with six items, and it measures an individual's capacity to recover from any stress or problematic situations. Its reliability for a 6-month interval is 0.72 for the overall scale and 0.70, 0.75 and 0.68 for its three divided factors, respectively.

Statistical Analysis

The data analysis used the 22nd version of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). At first, the demographic variables were computed using descriptive statistical analyses like standard deviations, means, percentages and frequencies. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multivariate Linear Regression and the moderation analysis using process 4.0 Hayes were used to analyze the data collected by the questionnaires.

Result

The main purpose of the research was to judge the effect of Parental Acceptance-Rejection on Social Anxiety and Difficulty in Emotional Regulation considering Resilience as a moderator variable.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of data (N=170)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>f (%)</i>
Age		2.0	.705	
	18-20 years			24.7
	21-23 years			50.6
	24-26 years			24.7
Gender		1.54	.499	
	Male			50
	Female			50
Education		1.16	.372	
	Undergraduate			83.5
	Postgraduate			16.5
Socio-economic status		1.80	.684	
	Lower class			35.5
	Middle class			49.4
	Upper class			15.3
Birth order		2.87	1.182	
	First birth order			15.3
	Second order			20.6
	Third birth order			33.5
	Forth birth order			24.1
	Fifth birth order			4.7
	Sixth birth order			1.8
Siblings		2.01	.852	
	Only child			28.2
	One sibling			47.1
	Two siblings			21.2
	Three siblings			1.8
	Four siblings			1.8
	Five siblings			0.0
	Six siblings			0.0
Family structure		1.55	.510	
	Nuclear			45.3
	Joint			54.7

Note: M = mean, SD = standard deviation, f (%) = frequency percentage.

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of the descriptive statistics, offering an in-depth analysis of the variables employed in the current research. This table illustrates the categories of these variables and provides the frequencies with which they occur within the study population.

The participant pool was thoughtfully divided into two halves to ensure a balanced representation of gender in the sample, this approach resulted in a sample size of N=170, consisting of n=85 female and n=85 male participants. Including an equal number of male and female participants facilitates a gender-balanced analysis and allows for a more nuanced exploration of potential gender-related differences in the variables of interest.

The age range of the participants spans from 18 to 26 years old, encapsulating a critical developmental period often characterized by significant life transitions and emotional growth. This age range ensures that the study captures the experiences of young adults in their formative years, which is particularly relevant to the research objectives.

Table 2: Relationship matrix of study variables (n=170)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Sum of PARQ	163.01	52.69	-	-	-	-
Sum of DESR	65.56	19.44	.771**	-	-	-
Sum of LSAS	141.01	26.57	.373**	.515**	-	-
Sum of BRS	13.07	6.47	-.694**	-.903**	-.503**	-

Note: M = mean, SD = standard deviation **P<.01

Table 2 presents the correlations between the study variables, shedding light on their intricate relationships. This table is a crucial analytical tool, providing insights into the associations between parental acceptance rejection and other key variables of interest.

The results unveiled in Table 2 underscore the significance of these relationships. Notably, a positive correlation emerges between parental acceptance rejection and social anxiety and difficulty in emotional regulation. This finding suggests that as perceived parental acceptance decreases, there is a corresponding increase in social anxiety levels and a heightened challenge in regulating emotions. It underscores the pivotal role of parental acceptance or rejection in shaping an individual's emotional well-being and ability to navigate social interactions effectively.

Conversely, the table reveals a negative correlation between parental acceptance, rejection and resilience. This negative correlation indicates that as perceived parental acceptance decreases, an individual's resilience also tends to diminish. It implies that individuals who perceive less acceptance from their parents may have a reduced capacity to bounce back from adversity, which can impact their overall psychological well-being.

Table 3: Correlation matrix of study variables parental acceptance and rejection and social anxiety (n=170)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
Sum of PARQ	163.01	52.69	-	-
Sum of LSAS	141.01	26.57	.373**	-

Note: M = mean, SD = standard deviation **P<.01

Table 3 provides a comprehensive visual representation of the correlation analysis between the study variables, focusing on the relationship between parental acceptance and rejection and social anxiety. This table is a crucial analytical tool, offering valuable insights into the associations between these critical factors.

The results displayed in Table 3 reveal a substantial positive correlation between parental acceptance and rejection and social anxiety, denoted by the correlation coefficient (r) of .373** ($p<.01$). This statistically significant positive correlation indicates that as levels of perceived parental acceptance decrease, there is a corresponding increase in social anxiety levels among the study participants. In other words, individuals who perceive less acceptance from their parents tend to exhibit higher levels of social anxiety.

This finding holds substantial implications for understanding the impact of parental relationships on young adults' emotional well-being. It underscores that the quality of parental acceptance or rejection plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's experience of social anxiety. Furthermore, the significance level ($p<.01$) indicates that this correlation is unlikely to occur by chance, lending additional credibility to the observed relationship.

Table 4: Regression coefficients of parental acceptance and rejection on social anxiety

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Constant	162.61	11.79	13.78	.000	[139.32, 185.89]
Parental Acceptance And Rejection	.023	.047	.489	.625	[-.070, .115]
Resilience	-1.93	.381	-5.08	.000	[-2.69, -1.18]

Note. *B* = Beta, *SE*= Standard Error, *p*= Significance level, *CI* = Confidence Interval

Table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the multiple linear regression analysis results. This analysis explored the intricate relationships between the control variables, namely Parental Rejection, Parental Acceptance, and resilience, and their influence on Social Anxiety among young adults. The findings presented in this table offer crucial insights into the predictive power of these factors.

The R-squared (R^2) value of .13, as indicated in Table 4, is a notable result that merits attention. This statistic signifies that the combined influence of the predictors, including Parental Rejection, Parental Acceptance, and resilience, accounts for approximately 13% of the variance observed in the outcome variable, Social Anxiety. It suggests that while these factors collectively explain a significant portion of the variance in Social Anxiety, there are likely other unaccounted-for factors contributing to its occurrence and severity.

Furthermore, the analysis yielded a statistically significant F-statistic 27.17 ($p < .001$). This F-statistic indicates that the relationship between the predictor variables and the outcome variable (Social Anxiety) is statistically significant. In other words, the effects of Parental Rejection, Parental Acceptance, and resilience on Social Anxiety are unlikely to occur by chance.

The key findings revealed in Table 4 are as follows: Parental Acceptance-Rejection positively predicts Social Anxiety, with a beta coefficient (β) of .373 ($p < .01$). This indicates that as perceived parental acceptance decreases or rejection increases, there is a corresponding increase in Social Anxiety among young adults.

Conversely, resilience demonstrates a striking pessimistic prediction of Social Anxiety, as indicated by a beta coefficient (β) of -.694 ($p < .001$). This finding suggests that higher levels of resilience are associated with reduced Social Anxiety among young adults, highlighting the protective role that resilience can play in mitigating the adverse effects of social anxiety.

Table 5: Regression coefficients of parental acceptance and rejection on difficulty in emotion regulation

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Constant	76.62	3.80	20.16	.000	[69.12, 84.13]
Parental Acceptance and Rejection	.103	.16	2.02	.045	[.073, .133]
Resilience	-2.13	.123	-17.34	.000	[-2.37, -1.88]

Note. *B* = Beta, *SE*= Standard Error, *p*= Significance level, *CI* = Confidence Interval

Table 5 is a pivotal visualization of the findings obtained through a comprehensive multiple linear regression analysis. This analysis was conducted to meticulously explore the control variables—Parental Rejection, Parental Acceptance, and resilience—in their intricate relationship with Difficulty in Emotional Regulation among young adults. The results showcased in this table provide profound insights into the predictive capacity of these factors in understanding and addressing the challenges associated with Emotional Regulation.

The R-squared (R^2) value, prominently displayed in Table 5 as .59, is a remarkable finding that merits close attention. This statistic signifies that the combined influence of the predictor

variables—Parental Rejection, Parental Acceptance, and resilience—accounts for 59% of the variance observed in the outcome variable, Difficulty in Emotional Regulation. Such a high R^2 value underscores the substantial impact of these factors on an individual's ability to regulate their emotions effectively. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that while these predictors explain a significant portion of the variance, other unexamined factors may also contribute to the complexity of Emotional Regulation.

Moreover, the analysis yielded an extraordinarily significant F-statistic of 246.97 ($p < .001$). This F-statistic attests that the relationships observed between the predictor variables and the outcome variable (Difficulty in Emotional Regulation) are not the result of random chance but rather represent statistically significant effects.

The pivotal findings illuminated in Table 5 are as follows: Parental Acceptance-Rejection positively predicts Difficulty in Emotional Regulation, as denoted by a beta coefficient (β) of .771 ($p < .01$). This result implies that as perceived parental acceptance decreases or rejection increases, there is a corresponding increase in Difficulty in Emotional Regulation among young adults.

Conversely, resilience emerges as a potent negative predictor of Difficulty in Emotional Regulation, as indicated by a beta coefficient (β) of $-.694$ ($p < .001$). This compelling finding highlights the protective role of resilience in reducing the challenges associated with Emotional Regulation among young adults.

Table 6: Regression analysis examining the moderation of the effect of resilience on parental acceptance-rejection and social anxiety

		<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	i_2	123.15	12.91	9.53	.000
Parental Acceptance and Rejection (X)	b_1	-.145	.066	-2.21	.029
Resilience (M)	b_2	-2.522	.408	-6.18	.000
Parental Acceptance and Rejection X Resilience (XM)	b_3	-.035	.011	-3.20	.002

Note: Coeff. = Coefficient, SE = Standard error, p = significance level

$$R^2 = .340, \text{MSE} = 495.59$$

$$F(10,159) = 8.17, p < .001$$

Table 6 shows the result of the Moderation Analysis, which reveals that the main effects of Parental acceptance-rejection and resilience were found to be significant with social anxiety. The main effect for parental acceptance-rejection, resilience, and social anxiety was 123.1%. At the same time, the interaction effect for parental acceptance-rejection and resilience accounted for 34% and is found to be significant, i.e., .035, $p < .05$.

The plot of moderation analysis showed that at high, moderate, and low levels of resilience, there was a significant change in the relationship between parental acceptance, rejection and social anxiety. At low levels of resilience, there is a significant negative relationship between parental acceptance-rejection and social anxiety, which showed that with an increase in parental acceptance rejection, there is a decrease in social anxiety. Whereas, at a moderate level, there is a slight negative relationship between parental acceptance-rejection and social anxiety, i.e., an increase in parental acceptance-rejection tends to decrease social anxiety slightly. Moreover, at high levels of resilience, there is a significantly positive relationship between parental acceptance rejection and social anxiety, i.e., an increase in parental acceptance-rejection tends to increase social anxiety.

Figure 1

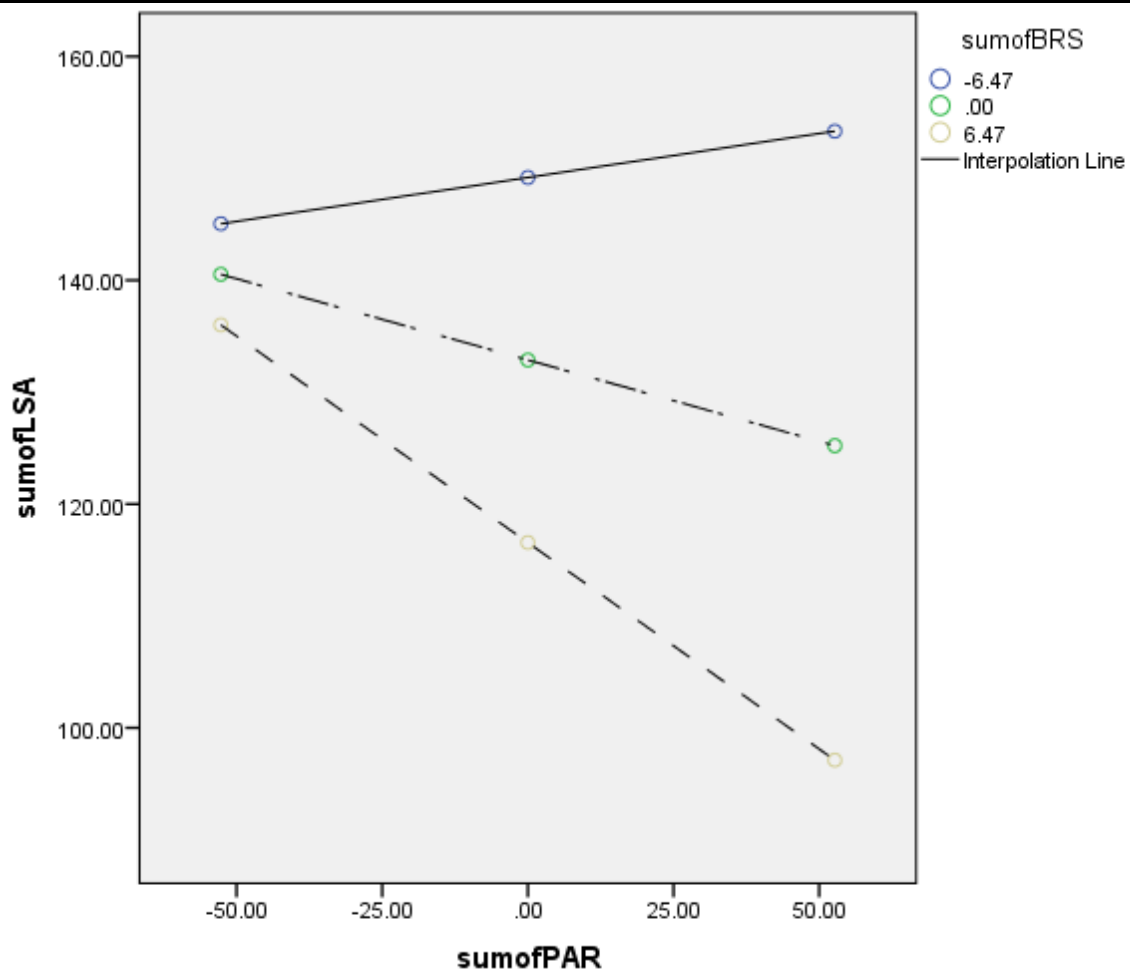


Table 7: Regression analysis examining the moderation of the effect of resilience on parental acceptance-rejection and difficulty in emotional regulation

		<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Intercept	i_2	56.57	2.86	19.77	.000
Parental Acceptance and Rejection (X)	b_1	-.051	.015	-3.47	.001
Resilience (M)	b_2	-2.63	.090	-29.13	.000
Parental Acceptance and Rejection X Resilience (XM)	b_3	-.035	.002	-14.65	.000

Note: Coeff. = Coefficient, SE = Standard error, p = significance level
 $R^2 = .939$, $MSE = 24.34$
 $F(10, 159) = 246.61$, $p < .001$

Figure 2

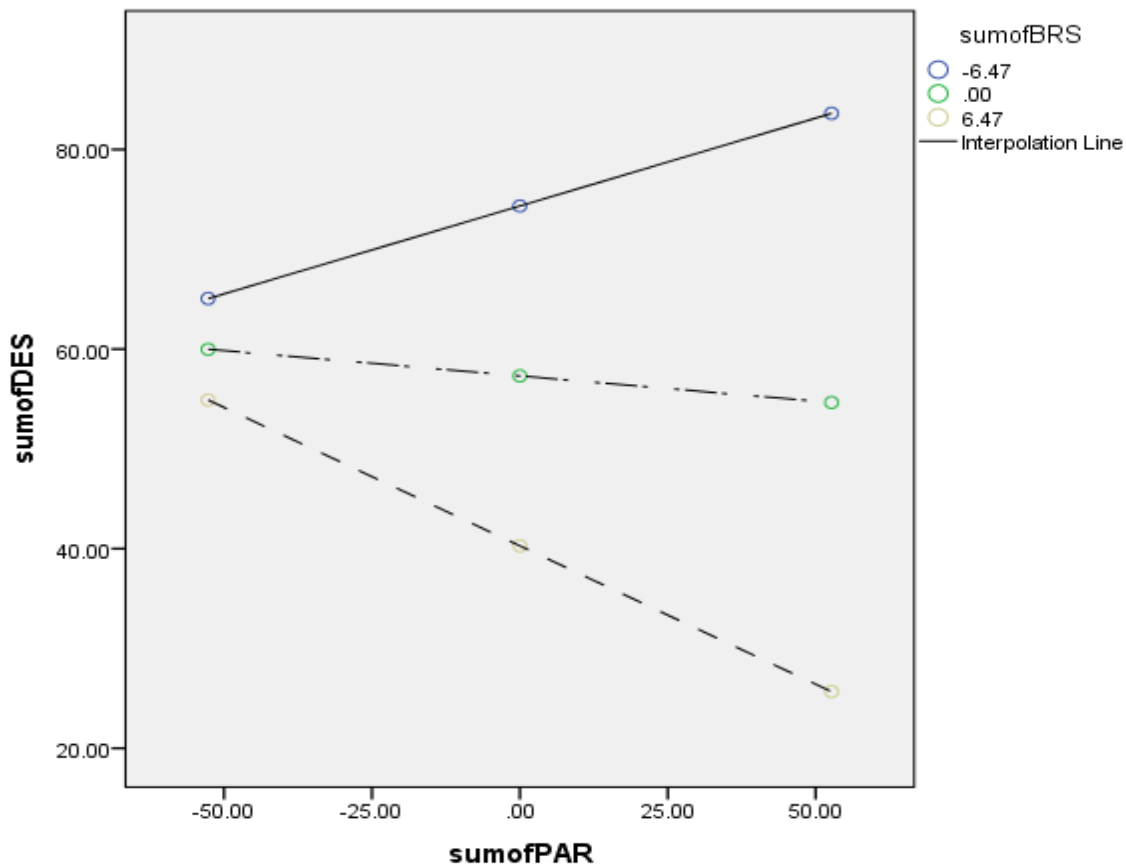


Table 7 shows the result of the Moderation Analysis, which reveals that the main effects of Parental acceptance-rejection and resilience were found to be significant with the difficulty in emotional regulation. The main effect for parental acceptance-rejection, resilience, and difficulty in emotional regulation was 56.5%. The interaction effect for parental acceptance-rejection and resilience accounted for 93% and is significant, i.e., .035, $p < .05$.

The plot of moderation analysis showed that at high, moderate, and low levels of resilience, there was a significant change in the relationship between parental acceptance and rejection and difficulty in emotional regulation. At low levels of resilience, there is a significant negative relationship between rejection of parental acceptance and difficulty in emotional regulation, which showed that with an increase in parental acceptance rejection, there is a decrease in emotional regulation. Whereas, at a moderate level, there is a slight negative relationship between parental acceptance rejection and difficulty in emotional regulation, i.e., an increase in parental acceptance-rejection tends to decrease difficulty in emotional regulation slightly. Moreover, at high levels of resilience, there is a significantly positive relationship between parental acceptance rejection and difficulty in emotional regulation, i.e., an increase in parental acceptance-rejection tends to increase social anxiety.

Discussion

The impact of parental acceptance-rejection on socio-emotional development during the transition into young adulthood emphasizes the importance of parent-child relationships in shaping self-perceptions, emotional well-being, and adaptive functioning. The study also explores the relationship between parental acceptance rejection and outcomes such as social anxiety and difficulty in emotional regulation. It highlights that the impact may vary across

individuals and that resilience, as a personal characteristic, can moderate these effects. *Resilience* is defined as the ability to adapt and bounce back from adversity. The study further describes the study's objectives, including examining the effects of parental acceptance rejection on social anxiety and difficulty in emotional regulation. It provides findings from correlations and previous studies supporting the hypotheses. The moderating role of resilience is explored, indicating that resilience significantly moderates the relation between parental acceptance and rejection and social anxiety and emotional regulation difficulty. The paragraph also discusses previous studies that support the role of resilience as a buffer against adverse outcomes related to parental rejection. Overall, the studies underscore the importance of resilience in promoting adaptive emotional regulation and psychological well-being in individuals who have experienced parental rejection.

Conclusion

The research emphasizes the significant impact of parental acceptance rejection on the origin of social anxiety and difficulty in emotional regulation among young adults. However, the influence of parental acceptance-rejection varies among individuals. Resilience acts as a saving factor, mitigating the negative impacts of parental rejection on emotional well-being. It helps young adults adapt and cope with adversity, improving their psychological well-being and adaptive functioning. Understanding the role of resilience is crucial for targeted interventions and support programs. By fostering resilience, interventions can empower young adults to manage social anxiety and improve emotional regulation skills effectively. Future research should continue to explore the intricate relationship between these variables, identify additional factors, and develop evidence-based interventions that promote resilience and well-being in young adults affected by parental acceptance rejection.

Limitations and suggestions

This study has several limitations that should be considered. First, the findings may only apply to some age groups or cultural contexts, given the study's focus on young adults and potential cultural variations in parenting styles and societal norms.

Second, the study relies on self-report measures, which could introduce biases and affect data accuracy. Future research could benefit from using multi-method approaches and objective measures to improve the validity of the results.

Additionally, further longitudinal studies are needed to understand the temporal associations and causal pathways between parental acceptance rejection, social anxiety, difficulty in emotional regulation, and resilience.

For future research, it is suggested to conduct longitudinal studies that follow young adults over time to investigate the dynamic relationships between these variables. Cross-cultural studies can also help uncover the influence of cultural factors on these relationships.

Further investigation into these correlations' underlying mechanisms and potential mediators is recommended. Exploring factors like self-esteem, social support, cognitive processes, or coping strategies could provide a deeper understanding of the complex pathways involved.

Lastly, researchers should develop and evaluate interventions to enhance resilience and mitigate the adverse effects of rejection of parental acceptance on social anxiety and emotional regulation. Interventions could include resilience-building programs, parent-child relationship interventions, or cognitive-behavioral therapies targeting social anxiety and emotion regulation skills.

By addressing these limitations and pursuing these suggestions, future research can advance our understanding of how parental acceptance and rejection, social anxiety, emotional regulation difficulties, and resilience are interconnected among young adults. This knowledge

could lead to the development of effective interventions and support systems to promote better mental health and well-being in this population.

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