

Parental Acceptance-Rejection, Self Esteem and Self Control Among Street Children

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Street children exist in all under developed and developing countries. Street children spend most of the time in streets and are forced to work in order to support their families. They are abused and accused by the society. Many of them are rejected by their own parents. During the early years of personality development the adverse environments and conditions can be determinant of various psychological problems among this group. The aim of the present study is to focus on some of the important dimensions of personality development among street children with respect to perceived parental acceptance- rejection. Quantitative comparisons were made among street children ($n=50$) and non-street children ($n=50$). Rosenberg self-esteem scale, 10-item self-scoring self-control scale and child parental acceptance rejection questionnaire were used as data collection tools. Self-esteem, Self-control and important dimensions of parenting styles i.e., warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect and undifferentiated/ rejection were measured among street children and non-street children. The adverse association of parental rejection with a child's Self-esteem and Self-Control was confirmed. Street Children perceived more parental rejection as compared to non street children. In addition to this, the levels of Self-Esteem and Self Control among street children were significantly low as compared to non street children. Similarly, significant negative correlations were found between scores of Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (both Mother and Father Version) with Self-Esteem scale and Self-Control among street children but the study did not reveal any significant relationship with Gender variable. The study suggests that parental rejection is significantly related to the child's Self-esteem and Self-control.

Keywords: Street children, non-street children, self-esteem, self-control, parental acceptance and rejection.

The most common definition of a street child is "Any boy or girl who is residing on the street, most of the time and is not adequately supervised or directed by their parents or other significant adults responsible for them"(Abro, 2012). The exact global statistics of street children is not documented however, it is estimated that there are tens of millions of street children working around the globe (UNESCO, 1995).

Lugalla and Mbwambo (1994) identified two types of street children: children of the streets" and second "children on the streets". Children of the streets are the easy victims and are extremely vulnerable to all sorts of threats. As a consequence, these children are prone to develop psychological

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Contribution of Authors: Dr. Neelam Ehsan, the idea, designing, collection, analysis, interpretation of the data, Composition of the article, Revising the article. Hira Nauman, Data Analysis and Hafsa Tahir, Data collection, Data Entry, Literature review

and physical maladjustments. It has been noticed that majority of street children (i.e., 90%) in various developing countries work in the streets but live at home and are working to earn money for their families and it cannot be assumed that all children on the street are homeless (Ennew, 1986; Myers, 1989). However, Patel (1983) added that the real street children are those who reside in the streets full time. Furthermore, Gutierrez (1970) argued that most of the street children begin their street life when they are five years of age. These children have to work to earn for their own and their family's living. Most of them are the only earning hands of their families.

The International Labor Organization (1983) divided child work into five types. First is non-indoor and non-monetarist work such as water collection, marketing, safe keeping of goods, while the second is internal work such as washing, cleaning and cooking. Third is the paid service work such as work in industrial and agricultural areas, fourth is the difficult labor work and last type is fringe work on the streets such as shoe polishing, rag picking, newspaper rolling etc., (Satyarthi, 1989).

Besides focusing on the consequences of being in streets, the alarming fact is that the number of street children is increasing day by day. There are about 30 to 170 million street children around the world (Ress & Wik-Thorsell, 1996; Scanlon, Tomkins, Lynch & Scalen, 1998). About 20 million street children are reported in Brazil (Connolly, 1990). Whereas, there are 1 to 4 million street children in Russia. A common reason for their increase in number may be attributed to the fact that every year 50,000 of children run away from their homes. These run away children start living in the basement of buildings and in railway stations (Balachova, 2002). In Pakistan, 10 million children are working to earn money for their survival (Agenzia, 2012).

Behavioral and emotional problems like aggression, shyness, sleep problems, anxiety, sadness, depression, self-harm (head-banging, punching, scratching) and low self-esteem are common among street children (Vostanis, Grattan & Cumella, 1998). A similar conclusion by Adlaf and Zdanowicz (1999) revealed that 30% to 40% of the street children report depression, and a high occurrence of paranoid ideation, having numerous psychological disorders and attempts at suicide.

It is reported that street children also suffer from numerous other psychological disorders such as obsessive compulsive disorder, hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorder and attention deficit disorder (Cumella, Grattan, & Vostanis, 1998). They argued that in their early years of children are extremely susceptible to develop psychological maladjustment in later life.

Numerous studies provide evidence regarding significant life time influences of environment on individual's behavior. For example Reid, Patterson and Synder (2002) believed that child learns deviant acts from adverse stimuli present in the environment. Similarly Evans and Wachs (2010) called the problematic environmental factors as "chaotic" as they result in adverse and distressing behavioral and developmental outcomes in the child. Among the most common behavioral problems reported by Kundu and Tutoo (1991) are aggression, stealing and running away from home. In addition to this, children from very low socioeconomic status are highly susceptible to develop various emotional problems. Mayes and Lewis (2012) stated that these children tend to be emotionally troubled and experience conflict because their families are not strong enough to give them financial support. As a result they may acquire deviant behaviors ultimately leading to various personality disorders. These personality disorders when initiated at a very young age may develop into identity crisis and as a result, the children may show dissociative and distancing behaviors (Klain, 1999). Research also documented that street children may attempt suicide in order to relieve their

sufferings. It is also argued that suicide is considered the only key to relieve them from their sufferings (Yates, 1991).

It is believed that those who don't receive love are unable to give love. It is further noticed that older street children exploit younger street children because they do not want them to share their work areas. As a result, they lack tenderness in their personalities.

Now turning our attention to possible reasons of running away from home may include: sexual or physical exploitation and dispossession (Richter, 1988; Rehman, 1998) inappropriate physical and sexual behavior, dysfunctional families, joblessness and poverty. Some of the children also leave their homes for the love of the opposite gender, which is forbidden in their homes (Tufail, 2005).

Every child has the right to live with their parents or to be in contact with both parents to receive affection and warmth. Otherwise, life is and might be a negative experience for them and it might hurt the child psychologically (Kids Rights Foundation and Leiden University, 2012). It has been noticed that most of the children living on streets are rejected by their parents. Shaffer and Shoben (1956) theorized that parental behavior and attitude towards their child may be marked by the degree of warmth toward the child. This attitude may be positive or negative. Positive attitudes are marked by parental acceptance such as warmth, affection, love, care and concern that the child receive. On the other hand, negative attitudes include behaviors like lack of affection, abusive treatments and avoidance received from parents or significant others (Khaleque and Rohner, 2012). The theory of parental acceptance and rejection further states that child life would be positively influenced by receiving positive parenting and will be adversely affected if they are treated negatively by the parents. This theory further holds the viewpoint that early experiences in the lives of the children have a significant impact later in adult life. More specifically, children who perceived themselves as accepted by the parents are likely to be well adjusted psychologically as compared to those who unfortunately have faced rejection. Such circumstances may lead to negative personality outcomes in these children like hostility, aggression, impaired self esteem, immature dependence, emotional instability and lack of self-control.

Steinberg (1989) defined self-esteem as the way an-individual feels about himself. According to the majority of the social psychologists, self esteem is an important aspect in one's personality and it particularly reflects our overall attitude towards ourselves (Baron, Baronscombe, Byrne and Bhardwaj, 2009). Damaged self-esteem reduces the opportunities for the children to lead a healthy childhood with a prosperous future. It could be a barrier for street children to reintegrate as a productive member of society if they do suffer from low self-esteem. Low social class, abuse and lack of familial ties are highly associated with low self-esteem (Wolfe, 2015).

In addition, street children are unable to develop self -control due to parental negligence. Human development has a lot of dimensions including processes like cognitive, psychological, economic and physical etc., Street children live in an environment where they interact with the people of the same mental and economic status and as a result of interaction they develop lack of self-control (Rana and Chaudhry, 2011). Therefore the aim of the present study is to investigate the levels of self esteem and self control among street children with respect to perceived parental acceptance-rejection among street children and to compare it with non street children of the same socioeconomic status.

Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant difference in the mean scores on self-esteem scale between street children and non street children.
2. There will be significant difference in scores of self-control scale between street children and non street children.
3. There will be significant mean differences on perceived parental acceptance- rejection questionnaire (PARQ) (both mother and father version) between street children and non street children.
4. There will be a significant negative correlation between PARQ (both Mother and Father version) and Rosenberg Self Esteem scale among street children.
5. There will be a significant negative correlation between PARQ (both Mother and Father version) and Self scoring self control scale among street children.

Method

Sample

The sample of the study comprised of 100 children consisted of two groups: Street children and non street children (children living at home). They were selected through convenient sampling technique. Out of 100 total children, 50 were streets children (who spent most of the time in streets as they were forced to work and earn for their families) while the remaining 50, though having similar socioeconomic background as of the street children but lived at home with their parents. As mentioned earlier street children were those children who spent most of the time in streets in order to earn for their families. Instead of sending them to schools, they were being sent to streets by their parents to do odd jobs like cleaning cars at traffic signals, polishing shoes of pedestrians, selling day to day small items and also mostly begging in the area around. The money they earn was mostly taken by their families. They were unfortunately being deprived of normal childhood in which children usually spend quality time with friends, peer groups and enjoy normal family relationships which are considered as essential components in early years of life by developmental psychologists. On the other hand non street children group of the sample comprised children even though the families had the same low socio economic status as the street children but their parents instead of sending their own children for earning were rather working themselves. Therefore the non street children group were mostly school going. The age range of the entire sample (street children group and non street children group) was 6 to 15 years with mean age of 11.67 and Standard Deviation of 2.353. Among ($N=100$) them 57 were boys and 43 were girls.

Instruments

Demographic Information sheet

A self devised demographic information sheet gathered data about their age, gender and socioeconomic status. The socioeconomic status of the sample was recorded by asking the street children group the amount of money they or their families earned monthly. On the other hand the monthly income of non street children group was being asked from their parents.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSE)

The scale was used to measure self- esteem of the sample. The scale is developed by Rosenberg (1965). It consists of 10 items with likert type response options ranging 1 to 4. Item no. 1, 3, 4 and 7 are scored as strongly agree scoring "1" to strongly disagree scoring "4", while the remaining 6 items i.e., 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10 were reversed scored. The minimum score on the present scale is 10 and maximum score is 40. A higher score on the scale represent high levels of self esteem

whereas lower scores indicate low levels of self esteem. The reliability of the scale as reported by author range from 0.77 to 0.88 and the test-retest reliability of RSE range from 0.82 to 0.85. The present sample revealed the reliability of .92 on this scale.

Self- scoring Self Control Scale (SSCS)

The scale is used to measure self-control among the children. The scale is developed by Tangney, Baumeister and Boone (2004). It consists of 10 items. Items are scored on likert type scale with response options ranging from 1 to 5 with score of 1 for the option of “very much like me” to 5 scoring not at all like me. The scoring strategy for the items 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9 and 10 was scored as 5 for not at all like me, 4 for a little like me, 3 for somewhat like me, 2 for mostly like me and 1 for very much like me. Whereas, the remaining items (4, 5 and 6) were reversed scored (e.g., 1 for not at all like me, 2 for a little like me, 3 for somewhat like me, 4 for mostly like me and 5 for very much like me). The individual items scores are summed up and divided by 10. The maximum score on the scale is 5 (extremely self controlled) and minimum score is 1 (not at all self controlled). On the present sample reliability of the scale is .961.

Parental Acceptance-rejection Questionnaire Father (PARQ F)

To assess parental acceptance or rejection from father side Parental Acceptance- rejection Questionnaire Father version was used. This scale is developed by Rohner (1978). The scale is used to measure Warmth/Affection, Hostility/Aggression, Indifference/Neglect and Undifferentiated Rejection from father. It consists of 24 items. Items are scored on likert type scale ranging 1 to 4 where 1 was marked for “almost never true”, 2 for “rarely true”, 3 for “sometimes true” and 4 for “almost always true”, for the entire items of the scale except item no 13 which was reverse scored. The minimum score on the scale is 24 and the maximum score is 96. A score at or above 60 represent more rejection. On the present sample the reliability of the warmth/affection scale was .956, the reliability of hostility/aggression scale was .904, the reliability of the indifference/neglect scale was .887 and the reliability of undifferentiated/rejection scale was .905.

Parental Acceptance-rejection Questionnaire Mother (PARQ M)

To assess parental acceptance or rejection from mother side Parental Acceptance- rejection Questionnaire mother version was used. The scale is developed by Rohner (1978). The questionnaire is used to measure Warmth/Affection, Hostility/Aggression, Indifference/Neglect and Undifferentiated Rejection from mother. It consists of 24 items. Items are scored on likert type scale ranging 1 to 4 where 1 was marked for “almost never true”, 2 for “rarely true”, 3 for “sometimes true” and 4 for “almost always true”, for all items except item no 13 which was reverse scored. The minimum score on the present scale is 24 and the maximum is 96. On the present sample the reliability of the warmth/affection scale was .969, the reliability of hostility/aggression scale was .896, the reliability of the indifference/neglect scale was .882 and the reliability of undifferentiated/rejection scale was .849.

Procedure

Before starting research, formal written approval from Department of Psychology, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University was secured. Street children of different areas of Peshawar were approached. As mentioned earlier street children are those children who spent most of the time in streets in order to earn for their families. Instead of sending them to schools, they were being sent to streets by their parents to do odd jobs like cleaning cars at traffic signals, polishing shoes of

pedestrians, selling day to day small items and also mostly begging. The money they earned was mostly taken by their families.

Initially, rapport was developed with them by asking about their names, their nature of work, their earnings and their native places. This conversation made them comfortable. As the children were unable to read therefore the scales were administered in such a way that the researcher used to read out each and every item of the entire scales to individual child from the street children group and their responses were carefully recorded by the researcher. The data from street children group was gathered from Saddar road, G T road, Warsak road and Dalazak road Peshawar. It took us a lot of time and several visits to collect data. While collecting data from street children was a difficult task but collecting data from children living at their homes was much more difficult than street children because most of the parents were not allowing us to talk to their children. For this we requested them and explained the purpose of study to the parents. We also assured them that their identities will be kept secret. After seeking permission from their parents the data was recorded in the same manner. Finally we were able to collect data. After data collection small incentives (chocolates and candies) were also distributed among street children and children living at home.

Results

The sample consisted of 100 children, 50 % street children and 50% non street children. The number of male children was 57 while 43 were female children. In addition to this among male group 30 boys were street children and 27 were children living at home. Similarly among female group 20 girls were among street children and 23 girls were from children living at home. The average age of the children was 11.67 with 2.353 standard deviation.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics and Alpha Reliability of the scales

Variable	N	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Alpha r
RSE	100	24.74	5.73	-0.053	-1.788	0.921
SSSCS	100	2.87	0.77	0.10	-1.236	0.961
PARQ(M)	100	61.48	15.43	-0.024	-1.821	0.975
PARQ(F)	100	68.49	17.62	-0.165	-1.622	0.974

Table 1 shows the values of Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, Kurtosis and Alpha Reliability of the scales. The values of kurtosis indicate that the data is normally distributed while their Alpha Coefficient of Reliability reveals that entire scales are reliable.

Table 2

t- values showing significant mean differences among Street Children and Non- Street Children on Self Esteem(RSE), Self scoring Self Control Scale (SSSCS), Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire PARQ(M), & Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire PARQ(F)

Scales	Street Children (n = 50)		Non street Children (n = 50)		t(df)	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD		LL	UL	
RSE	19.2	1.54	30.28	1.14	40.87(98)**	-11.62	-10.54	8.18

SSSCS	2.18	0.33	3.5	0.36	19.58(98)**	-1.5	-1.2	3.91
PARQ(M)	74.42	3.25	46.54	3.86	41.92(98)**	28.47	31.29	7.81
PARQ(F)	84.86	4.47	52.12	7.76	25.85(78.3)**	30.22	35.26	5.17

Note: ** $p < .01$

Table 2 presents mean values of two different groups comprising of Street Children and non street Children. The study found significant mean differences among Street Children and non- street children on Self-esteem Scale ($t = 40.87, p = 0.000$), Self-Control Scale ($t = 19.58, p = 0.000$), Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (Mother) ($t = 41.92, p = 0.000$), and Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (Father) ($t = 25.85, p = 0.000$).

Table 3

Correlations coefficients between RSE, SSSCS, PARQ(M) and PARQ(F) of street children group (n = 50)

Scales	RSE	SSSCS	PARQ(M)	PARQ(F)	Gender
RSE	1				
SSSCS	.847**	1			
PARQ(M)	-.963**	-.847**	1		
PARQ(F)	-.917**	-.825**	.938**	1	
Gender	0.025	0.158	-0.023	-0.115	1

** $p < 0.01$

As evident from Table 3 there is significant positive correlation between Self-Esteem and Self-Control scale ($r = .847, p = 0.000$) showing that street children who had low self esteem also had low self control. In addition to this, we also found significant negative correlations between Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (Mother version) with Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale ($r = -0.963, p = 0.000$) and Self-Control ($r = -.847, p = 0.000$). Similarly the study also revealed significant negative correlations between Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (Father version) with Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale ($r = -0.917, p = 0.000$) and Self-Control Scale among this group ($r = -0.825, p = 0.000$). Moreover, there was a significant positive correlation between Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (Father version) with Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (Mother version) ($r = 0.938, p = 0.000$) showing that the street children perceived rejection from both the parents. The study did not find any significant relationship between Gender and Self-Esteem ($r = 0.025, p = 0.401$) and self control ($r = 0.158, p = 0.058$). Similarly no significant relationship was found between Gender and Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (Mother) ($r = -0.023, p = 0.409$), and Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (Father) ($r = -0.115, p = 0.127$).

Discussion

The number of street children in many countries is growing. There is a dearth of information available recognizing the increasing number of street children around the globe (Benitez, 2011). In a country like Pakistan, these children are highly susceptible to volatile situations around them (Abro, 2012).

There is an immense literature documenting that early years of life are detrimental in personality development of children. Therefore the present study focused on two influential dimensions of personality development in early years of life i.e., self esteem and self control among street children with respect to perceived parental acceptance and rejection.

The present study empirically tested street children and non-street children belonging to the same socio economic status. Street children were those who spend most of the time on streets because they had to earn for their families while non-street children were living at their homes with their parents like every normal child. The study also highlighted an important dimension of human living i.e., parental acceptance and rejection that can affect a child's self-esteem and self-control. Maslow (1943) regarded parental love and support as essential elements for satisfying human needs for love and belongingness. The results of the present study revealed that the street children group perceived their parents as rejecting as compared to non-street children. The alarming fact about this unfortunate group is that they are being forced to work outside not by others but by their own parents in order to earn money for the entire family living. That is why the present study revealed significant differences among street children and non street children on PARQ (both mother and father version). The reasons for being on the streets include multiple factors like very low income, educational level of the family, family breakdown, family size and neglect from parents (Abu El Nasr, 1992). Street children group of the present sample spent most of the day time in the streets during which they were mostly involved in odd jobs like cleaning cars at traffic signals, selling small items and some were even in the habit of begging. As, highlighted in the literature street children mostly live, grow and survive on streets in miserable environments. Besides physical vulnerability e.g., lack of nutrition, being present most of the time in streets induces many socially injurious experiences, such as physical abuses, victimization, sexual exploitation, deprivation of basic necessities of life and variety of other issues among this group which can be a determinant of severe problems.

Similarly strong negative correlations were found between both self esteem and self-control with perceived parental acceptance rejection among street children. Street children who perceived their parents as rejecting scored significantly low on self control and self esteem scales. Research literature has documented that parents, friends, peers and social environment have a crucial impact on the personality development of a child. Neglect, deprivation rejection or indifferent parental behavior, may create serious and irreversible damage to child's development. In other words, such circumstances may push a child to deviant behaviors. For example, Bartle (1986) reported that if the attitude of a parent is cold and unfriendly toward the children, then the chances of developing a close parent-child relationship are minimized. Similarly, Davies and Beech (2012) regarded parental support as having a primary influence on the psychological well being of a child which is manifested through his actions during the early adolescence period. Other adverse effects include anger, hostility, negative self esteem and social maladjustments.

An additional objective of the present study was also to uncover the psychological state of street children group, specifically their self esteem and self control levels and to compare it with the normal population. The results revealed significant differences in self esteem and self control levels among street children and non-street children. Our findings are supported by an earlier study by Aptekar (2004) who stated that low self-esteem is an attribute of street children. In addition to this another study by Olubunmi (2015) also found low self-esteem among street children. Reckless (1967) stressed that failing to satisfy one's inner drives leads to negative concept of self and self esteem which may contribute in the development of delinquency in the form of aggressive and violent acts. Trzenisiewski, Donnellam, Moffitt, Robins, Poulton and Caspi (2006) showed through a longitudinal study that there exists a close connection between low self esteem and criminal attitudes. They concluded that during adolescence low self esteem plays a predictive role for adopting anti social attitude during adulthood.

In the light of above mentioned literature it can be deduced that such findings increase the probability of giving rise to young criminals. Children are the future leaders of any nation. It is evident that by neglecting this special group who are already at a very high risk of physical and mental abuse, we unknowingly make them prone to engage in antisocial activities at early adulthood. Therefore the present study suggests that at least some preventive measures must be taken at the government level to look after the important needs of this special group.

Conclusion

The issue of street children is very common in all underdeveloped countries around the globe. Literature suggests that living on streets during such an early stage of life when personality development takes place with no supervision, guidance and protection generally makes them vulnerable to wide range of physical and psychological problems.

In this regard the present study focused on two extremely important dimensions of personality i.e., self esteem and self control. These dimensions are considered as some of the important determinants of healthy personality of a child. Street children had significantly lower levels of self esteem and self control levels as compared to non street children. Moreover, the study revealed strong negative correlations between both self esteem and self control with perceived parental acceptance rejection. It may suggest that perceived parental rejection may possibly be a determinant of low self esteem and low self control among this group. Lower levels of self esteem self control are related to negative characteristics such as anger, hostility and criminal attitude. Thus in other words to reduce violence and criminality in our society we may need to reduce the perception of parental rejection in our street children who are increasing in number every day. Educating children is one way of reducing the sense of deprivation and rejection in these street children. The government should make education compulsory and free till middle school for all children. This will not only make it easier for those parents who cannot send their children to schools primarily because of extreme poverty but will also take these children out of streets into schools. It would not only be a way forward in producing better and positive adults but would also make literate future parents who will be more able to look after their children resulting in making a better society. Although education is not a quick fix solution, it remains the most appropriate solution for the street children.

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Received: March 3rd, 2017
 Revisions Received: Dec 5th, 2017