

## DESCRIPTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE ON PERCEIVED PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE - REJECTION (PARQ)

### *Abstract*

*Many psychological theories describe the connection between parental behaviour and children and the character traits that develop in them. One of the most prominent theories is Rohner's Parental Acceptance Rejection Theory (PART). He is the author of several tests describing interpersonal acceptance/rejection between parents and children, parents and their parents, the perception of the parents themselves and their way of parenting, etc. In his manual he presents the original metric characteristics of the tests measuring the perception of acceptance or rejection.*

*The aim of this paper is to describe the instruments that measure the child's perception of parental acceptance-rejection, as well as the metrical characteristics obtained in the tests, adapting them to the Macedonian population. The questionnaires were given to 96 children and 192 parents. The following instruments were adapted: PARQ for children, PARQ for parents, PARQ for adults, PARQ for intimate partners. The following metric characteristics of the tests have been obtained: Cronbach Alpha of PARQ for children for the mother is .906, for the father .93; Cronbach Alpha of PARQ for parents amounts to .823 for the mother, while for the father it is .81, Cronbach Alpha of PARQ for adults for assessment of the mother is .91, while for the father it is .90. Accordingly, there are indications that these instruments could be used for the Macedonian population for research purposes, but also in the clinical practice after the appropriate standardization procedures are implemented.*

**Key words:** DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTRUMENT, QUESTIONNAIRES OF PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE-REJECTION, PARQ FOR CHILDREN, PARQ FOR PARENTS, PARQ FOR ADULTS.

### **Introduction**

The key factor for developing a healthy person is the child's relationship with the parents. In this text, the instruments that measure this relationship will be described on the basis of the theory by psychologist Ronald P. Rohner. He is Professor Emeritus at the University of Connecticut in the United States, and his theory describes the parents' relationship with the child in terms of parental acceptance or rejection. In fact, according to him, the assessment of parental behaviour is carried out by the child

through the perception of that relationship. The Theory of Parental Acceptance and Rejection (PART) is a theory of socialization of children in their primary social environment – the family. It is based on data from specific cases, and the goal is to predict and explain the main causes, consequences, and other correlates of parental acceptance or rejection. Research has been carried out mainly in the United States of America, but lately it has also been done in many countries across Europe and the world.

The concept of acceptance and rejection creates the dimension of parental warmth. In other words, parental warmth is a bipolar dimension, whereby parental rejection is on the one hand, and parental acceptance is on the other hand (Rohner, 1984). Parental warmth is a dimension or continuum which can accommodate all people, since everyone has had childhood experiences of receiving more or less love from their parents. Thus, warmth as a dimension is closely related to the affective relationship between parents and children, as well as the physical and verbal behaviours that parents use to express those feelings. One end of the continuum is marked as parental acceptance, referring to warmth, emotionality, care, comfort, concern, support, or simply the love that children can experience from their parents. The other end of the continuum is marked as rejection, which refers to the absence or the significant withdrawal of these feelings and behaviours and expression of various physical or psychologically hurting behaviours and influences. Studies reveal that parental rejection can be experienced by any combination of the following four main expressions: 1. cold and non-emotional, 2. hostile and aggressive, 3. indifferent and neglecting, 4. undifferentiated rejection. The unidentified rejection refers to the child's belief that the parents do not really care about him/her, even when there are no clear behavioural indicators that the parents are neglecting him, that they are non-emotional or aggressive towards the child.

The elements of warmth, hostility and indifference refer to the internal, psychological state of the parents. This means that parents can feel or think that they are being warm towards their children or as if they do not love them, or feel or think that they are experiencing hostility, anger, that they are nervous, impatient, or antagonistic towards them. Parents may also feel or think that they feel indifferent when it comes to their children, they may feel or think that they feel unconcerned or do not care for their children, or have a restrictive interest in their well-being. The elements of emotionality, aggressiveness and bullying refer to the visible behaviour of parents who act according to these emotions. Thus, when parents act according to their feelings or love, they are being emotional. Parental emotional reaction can be demonstrated physically (hugging, kissing, caring and comfort), verbally (rewards, praise and telling beautiful things to or about the child) or symbolically, that is, in some other way that is appropriate to a particular culture. These and many other ways that show care, nurture, support and love are expressed as parental acceptance.

When parents behave led by the feelings of hostility, anger, dissatisfaction, the result is generally aggressive behaviour in their children. As a PART construction, aggression is any behaviour that tends to hurt someone or something (physically or emo-

tionally). Parents can be physically aggressive (striking, punishing) and verbally aggressive (sarcastic, cursing, mocking, shouting, humiliating or saying derogatory things about the child), but parents can also use hurting, nonverbal and symbolic gestures towards their children (Шурбанювска, 2013).

### **An overview of past research on parental acceptance and rejection**

A large number of studies has been conducted in several countries around the world, and the comparison of their results confirms the correctness of Rohner's theory on the significance of parental behaviour for the development of children's personalities. For example, in one cross-cultural and intracultural study (Rohner & Britner, 2002) the conclusion that three classes of mental health issues are possible worldwide correlates with the parental acceptance-rejection. These are: (a) unipolar depression and depressed affect; (b) behaviour problems, including conduct disorder, externalizing behaviours, and delinquency; and (c) substance abuse. This research has been done with PARQ instruments. The strongest evidence supports the parental acceptance-rejection theory's personality sub theory that postulates a universal relationship between the perceived parental acceptance-rejection and the psychological adjustment.

The other meta-analytic procedures from 51 studies worldwide (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002) were used to assess the reliability of the two self-report measures that are most commonly employed for testing the transcultural association between the perceived parental acceptance-rejection and the psychological adjustment. These measures are (a) the Child, Adult, and Parent versions of the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) and (b) the Child and Adult versions of the Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ). The findings of Cronbach's alpha coefficient show high reliability and all of them exceed .80. The results of the meta-analysis support the conclusion that the PARQ is a reliable measure for research, clinical, and applied purposes among American ethnic groups and internationally.

Another research discusses major issues in corporal punishment research and identifies directions for improvement of the current knowledge about this disciplinary practice (Ripoll-Núñez, & Rohner 2006). PARQ has been used in this study. The results show: (a) an explicit and consistently used definition of physical punishment, (b) development of an assessment procedure that includes the full range of variables important in understanding corporal punishment and its effects, (c) evaluation of children's own perception of punishment, and (d) evaluation of the nonlinear relations between corporal punishment and child outcomes.

The study of Erkman and Rohner explored (Erkman & Rohner, 2006) relations between corporal punishment, perceived parental acceptance, and the psychological adjustment of 427 Turkish youths between the ages of 10 and 18. The participants responded in school to the child versions of the Physical Punishment Questionnaire (PPQ), Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ), Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ), and to a demographic questionnaire as well. It can be concluded

that apparent relations between the parental punishment and the youths' psychological adjustment were almost completely mediated by youths' perceptions of parental acceptance. Neither youths' gender, nor age were associated with either perceived parental acceptance or punishment.

The PARQ instruments were also used in the research of Varan, Rohner and Eryuksel (Varan, Rohner & Eryuksel, 2008). This study explored the relations between the perceived partner acceptance, the remembrances of parental (maternal and paternal) acceptance in childhood, and the psychological adjustment of 681 Turkish adults in ongoing attachment relationships. Results showed that both men and women tended to search considerable acceptance from all three attachment figures (i.e., mothers, fathers, and intimate partners). This fact notwithstanding, correlational analyses showed that the less loving either men or women saw any of their attachment figures to be, the more psychologically maladjusted they tended to be.

Additionally, a cross-cultural meta-analysis was made based on 220 studies involving 33,081 respondents from 23 nations across five continents (Ali, Khaleque & Rohner, 2015). The study addressed the psychological adjustment of both males and females universally, and was associated with children's and adults' perceptions of both maternal and paternal acceptance in childhood. All studies included in this meta-analysis used the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire for Mothers and Fathers (Child and Adult PARQ: Mother and Father Versions), as well as the Personality Assessment Questionnaire (Child and Adult versions). Results showed that both paternal and maternal acceptance correlate significantly with the psychological adjustment of both children and adults across all cultures.

Savedra (Savedra, 1984, according to Rohner, 1994) explored the relationship between the perceived parental acceptance or rejection with the parental control and self-assessment and self-adequacy of the child. Self-assessment is an emotional evaluation of yourself. Positive feelings towards oneself are a sign that an individual loves himself/herself, accepts himself/herself, and sees himself/herself as a person worthy of respect. Self-adequacy is self-assessment of one's own abilities to carry out daily tasks adequately and to meet one's own needs. Savedra collected results from 208 Puerto Ricans indicating that the self-esteem of adolescents is in direct relation with the perceived warmth from the mother and the father. He also found that the combined effects of high parental warmth in interaction with moderate parental control (unlike extreme permissiveness or restrictive control) increases the level of self-esteem in the adolescent.

In a similar study conducted by Rohner (1980), results were obtained about the working and middle class of Korean emigrants in the United States. This study included 25 families with the application of the PAQ (Parental Assessment Questionnaire) and the PARQ (Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire) tests. The results showed that children aged 7 to 12, part of the working class, perceive themselves as rejected as opposed to middle-class children. Also, working class children have lower self-esteem and self-adequacy compared to middle-class children.

Rochner, working in Mexico, reported on all these features of the person described by PART, which are related to the warmth dimension. 174 boys and girls from Mexico and 316 boys and girls from USA aged 8 to 15 years were examined. This age was covered due to the fact that children of this age are highly tied to the family and are influenced by parents, but are also mature enough to be able to respond to the questionnaire without any help. Approximately, half of the children belonged to the working class, and half to the middle class (Rohner, 1994).

The results of this study indicate the existence of a link between parental behaviour and the personality traits of children. Thus, two variables were created: the first variable is the perceived neglect, hostility and rejection (REJ), and the second one is the perceived warmth (WA). The multiple correlation between the REJ variables and the WA variables was  $R = .68$  for the American population and  $R = .65$  for the Mexican children.

The difference in the size between the coefficients of the WA variables and the REJ variables is significant for both groups, that is, for both American and Mexican children. This suggests that the perceived rejection by parents among American and Mexican children has a greater impact on the disposition of the behaviour than cultural differences. Just as PART predicts, the behaviour of children from both nations who perceive that their parents reject them is significantly more similar than the behaviour of the accepted children in both cultures.

Starky (Starky, 1980, according to Rohner, 1994) investigated the relationship between parent warmth and the school success of a child. In a study that involved 220 schoolchildren in America he concluded that the results of the achievements test vary depending on their perception of parental warmth: if the parents in the child's eyes are warmer, then school achievements are better.

Research in Czechoslovakia (Matječek & Kadubcova, 1986, according to Rohner, 1994) that included 116 boys and 112 girls have shown similar results. The answers of Czech children to PARQ and PAQ are similar to the ones of American children.

Gielen and colleagues (Gielen, Swanzey, Avellani & Kramer, 1986, according to Rohner, 1994) made two correlating studies involving 106 high school students from urban areas (53 girls and 53 boys) and 97 college students (37 boys and 60 girls). They examined the connection between moral reasoning and the perceived parental behaviour through: a questionnaire for parents and children, a questionnaire for parents, a mother's questionnaire, a father's questionnaire, a conflict questionnaire, and a moral judgement test. The variables on the perceived parental behaviour were: warmth, aggression, indifference, acceptance, autonomy, democracy and conflicts. The results have shown that young people are more accepted by mothers than fathers, the mother gives more warmth, and mothers are overlooked by the fathers. But the difference between parents is not significant when it comes to expressing aggression and rejection among boys. Girls get more warmth, but also more aggression from their mothers than from their fathers. In a study that included high school students, the authors found the greatest correlations with a negative direction between the negative forms of parental

behaviour and moral reasoning, i.e. the moral development is significantly interfered by the enmity between the mother and the father, then the parental conflicts about finances and the question of upbringing of the children. The moral development is in correlation with a positive direction towards parental democracy, then towards the mother's acceptance and warmth, and the correlations with the father's acceptance and warmth are in the same direction, but are statistically at a margin of significance.

When the results according to sexes are considered separately, the D-point (in the Rest Test of moral reasoning it indicates an inclination to use arguments at a post-conventional level) of male respondents is correlated in a negative direction with parental conflicts about finances and upbringing, parental animosity and indifference of the mother, and in a positive direction - with parental acceptance and democracy. Negative correlations for the female respondents are significant given the parental conflict regarding the question of upbringing of the children and given the maternal aggressiveness, so these are the only two correlations that appear in the same way in both sexes. Mothers have a greater impact on the moral development of children than fathers, while sons are more susceptible to parental influence than daughters (for male respondents, 11 out of 18 correlations are significant, and for female respondents only 2). It is evident that the above research supports the hypothesis that parental acceptance and rejection are significantly related to the psychosocial functioning of the person, regardless of where he/she lives. All this points to the need for new research in order to further elaborate the principles of human development, to humanize family relations so that the children can have a happy childhood and a normal psychological development.

For that purpose, several questionnaires derived from the PART have been constructed, which measure the perception of children about the behaviour of their parents towards them, separately for the mother and separately for the father, but also for adults who evaluate their parents when they were children, as well as an assessment of themselves as parents, further assessment of acceptance and rejection among intimate partners. Hence, it can be seen that the questionnaires measure the relationships between different family members in order to obtain a more complete picture of the attitude of acceptance and rejection in the family. These are: a questionnaire for assessing the child's relationship with parents (Child PARQ), a questionnaire for assessing the parent himself/herself in his/her behaviour towards the child (Parent PARQ), an adult questionnaire for assessing their parents (Adult PARQ) and other questionnaires (Rohner, 1984).

#### **Description of the parental acceptance/rejection questionnaire (PARQ)**

The Parental Acceptance/Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) is a self-assessment questionnaire designed to measure the current perception of the child and the adult as a retrospective of their memories to the extent to which they experienced parental (from the mother and the father) acceptance or rejection in childhood. The measures

contain four scales: 1. Warmth and emotionality (or cold behaviour and lack of emotion), 2. Hostility and aggression, 3. Disinterest and neglect, and 4. Undifferentiated rejection. The undifferentiated rejection refers to the feelings of the individual that the parent does not love him/her genuinely, does not appreciate or care for him/her, without in some way having objective indicators that the parent is cold, aggressive or neglecting. In fact, the four scales give a total result of the perceived or remembered parental acceptance or rejection in childhood.

### **Structure of PARQ**

This paper analyses four scales of the PARQ version: PARQ for children, PARQ for parents, PARQ for adults and PARQ for intimate partners. All versions are similar. For example, PARQ for children contains a claim: "My mother (or father) says nice things about me", PARQ for parents: "I say nice things about my child", while PARQ for adults is: "My mother (or father) used to say nice things about me".

PARQ for children is intended for children aged 7 and up, that is, up to the age when they more or less have continued contact with their parents. PARQ for adults is designed to be used when it is necessary to examine an adult during childhood and his/her relationship with the parents. PARQ for parents is used when parents want to evaluate their behaviour towards the child.

All questionnaires have a long and short version. The long version contains 60 statements, 20 of which can be placed in the "parental warmth" scale, 15 in the "hostility and aggression" scale, 15 in the scale "disinterested behaviour or neglect" and 10 in the scale for "undifferentiated rejection". The short form of the questionnaire contains 24 statements, 8 of which are for the scale of emotionality and warmth, 6 for hostility and aggression, 6 for disinterest and neglect, and 4 for undifferentiated rejection. Some items from the mother's scale in PARQ for children are as follows: "My mother showed me that she loves me" (from the scale for warmth), "My mother yelled at me when she was angry" (from the scale for hostility and aggression), "My mother did not pay attention to me" (from the scale for disinterested neglect) and "My mother does not really love me" (from the scale for undifferentiated rejection).

### **The way to answer and score in PARQ**

In all versions of PARQ, respondents answer on a four-step Likert scale: from (4) "almost always true" to (1) "almost never true". The results of these scales are summed up after the answers to the entire warmth scale are rotated, that is, it is turned into a scale of the perceived cold behaviour of the parent and a lack of emotionality (as a form of rejection) and then summed with the results of the other scales for parental rejection. The results of the long version range from 60 (maximum perceived acceptance) to 240 (maximum perceived rejection). The results of the short version range from 24 (maximum perceived acceptance) to 96 (maximum perceived rejection). The time re-

quired to complete the questionnaire is a minimum of 10-15 minutes for the long version, while for the short version it takes 5-10 minutes.

### **Reliability of PARQ in several European countries**

PARQ questionnaires have also been tested in some European countries: Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, on about 1,500 children. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the mother's version in Greece is .87 (n=156) (Giotsa & Theodoropoulos, 2016), in Bulgaria it is .71 (n=230) (Koltcheva & Djalev, 2016, according to Rohner, 2016) and in Turkey it is .85 (n=1407) (Okur & Berument, 2016; according to Rohner, 2016). Cronbach Alpha of the father's version in Greece is .90, in Bulgaria it is .72 (n=230). In Turkey they did not use the father's version (Rohner, 2016).

### **Reliability of PARQ in Macedonia**

In our country, the reliability check was performed on the following questionnaires: PARQ for children, PARQ for adults and PARQ for parents (separately for the mother and separately for the father). The tests of both the long version and the short version have also been adapted. In this text, we will show the measures of reliability of the short versions of the questionnaires, as they are most commonly used. The following results have been obtained:

For PARQ for children, for the mother's assessment scale Cronbach's Alpha is .92; for PARQ for children, for the father's assessment scale Cronbach's Alpha's is .93; for PARQ for adults (where parents assess their parents) for the mother's assessment scale Cronbach's Alpha is .91; for PARQ for adults for the father's assessment scale Cronbach's Alpha's is .90; for PARQ for parents (where parents assess themselves as parents) for the mother's assessment scale Cronbach's Alpha is .82, while for the father's scale it is .81. The results strongly suggest that the measures are as reliable for using these questionnaires in research and clinical practice in our country as they are for the United States. More specifically, the high alpha coefficient (which means a high effect size) goes through all three versions of PARQ. In the world, the arithmetic mean of the weight of the alpha coefficient for PARQ for children is .89; for PARQ for parents it is .84 and for PARQ for adults it is .95. These data are particularly important because no low or insignificant alpha coefficients have been found in any country around the world and there is no significant heterogeneity in the magnitude of the effect (alpha) in research across major geographic regions in the world or in ethnic groups in USA. There are also no significant differences in the magnitude of the effect in the three versions of PARQ (Rohner & Sumbleen, 2016).



### **Use of PARQ**

PARQ has been used for more than four decades and it has been applied for thousands of children, adults and parents around the world. It has been used extensively in research in clinical practice, in schools, by judges and has found other applications (Rohner, 2016). The various versions of these measures are available in 52 languages and dialects. Since 2017, the translated versions of these measures have been applied in the Republic of Macedonia. Although the differences in culture, language, race, gender, or other environmental conditions are factors that influence the expression of parental acceptance or rejection, they are still expressed in four ways that are measured by PARQ (warmth/emotionality, hostility/aggression, indifference/maltreatment, and undifferentiated rejection) throughout the world.

### **Conclusion**

Rohner's theory of parental acceptance and rejection is based on four and a half decades of research including thousands of individuals from many cultures around the world. This has led to the following conclusions: the behaviour of parents experienced as acceptance or rejection is universal (it is the same everywhere in the world) and transmits the symbolic message that my parents (or other attachments-figures) love me or do not love me, care for me, reject me, etc. These behaviours are perceived by the child as: warmth, emotionality, care or opposite, cold behaviour and lack of emotionality, hostility, aggression, indifference, maltreatment, and undifferentiated rejection. Moreover, the difference in cultures, ethnic and social classes, races, sex, etc. does not affect the perception of the parental acceptance and rejection in the same way (or by people who are very important to them). Studies have also shown that the perceived acceptance and rejection explains the variance of the psychological adaptation of youth and adults to about 25% on average, while 75% are explained by other factors.

From the data presented in this text, it can be safely said that these three versions of PARQ (PARQ for children, PARQ for parents and PARQ for adults) have high reliability and can be used for research purposes. They can also be used by psychologists in schools, as well as by psychologists in clinical practices in the Republic of Macedonia, just as in the rest of the world. More specifically, these instruments can be found in the Handbook of Parental Acceptance and Rejection of Ronald Rohner, and Abdul Khaleque (Rohner & Khaleque, 2008).

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