

Differences in Perceptions of Parental Acceptance/Rejection in Students in the 3rd Cycle of Schooling

Diferenças nas Perceções de Aceitação/Rejeição Parental em Estudantes do 3.º Ciclo de Escolaridade

(PT: 103-121)

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DOI: 10.33167/2184-0644.CPP2020.VVIN1/pp.87-102

ABSTRACT

Perceptions of acceptance/rejection, in this case parental, are revealing for the psychological adjustment of students and for their success in various areas of life, in this case at school (Ali, 2011; Khaleque & Ali, 2017; Rohner, 2016). Based on some concepts from the Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (Rohner 1975, 1986, 2004, 2016), this study analyzes differences in parental acceptance / rejection, mother and father, according to the students' grade (7th, 8th and 9th). The study sample included 573 students aged 12 to 18, mostly attending state schools in the Lisbon district and a state school in Beira Alta. Of these students, 214 (37.3%) were from the 7th grade, 202 from the 8th (35.3%) and 157 from the 9th grade (27.4%). For this, we used the One Way MANOVA and the Scheffé post-hoc test was applied to identify which grades differed in terms of parental acceptance / rejection (father and mother). Our results show significant differences between grades, in the dimensions and total scale related to the perception of maternal and paternal acceptance / rejection. In general terms, 9th grade students showed themselves as those who revealed to perceive more parental rejection, in global terms, in relation to father and mother. We believe that these students having been through adolescence, as well as being much nearer to attending secondary school,

Article received on 20/04/2020 and approved for publication by the Editorial Council on 13/05/2020.

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may explain these results. On the other hand, the 7th grade students, closest to childhood years, were those who revealed themselves to feel less problems regarding affection on the part of their mothers and fathers.

Keywords: Perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection, Third cycle of schooling, Grade

RESUMO

As percepções de aceitação/rejeição, nomeadamente parental, são revelantes para o ajustamento psicológico dos alunos e para o seu sucesso em várias áreas da vida, nomeadamente na escola (Ali, 2011; Khaleque & Ali, 2017; Rohner, 2016). Com base em alguns conceitos da Teoria da Aceitação-Rejeição Interpessoal (Rohner 1975, 1986, 2004, 2016), este estudo analisa diferenças quanto às percepções de aceitação/rejeição parental, mãe e pai, de acordo com o ano de escolaridade frequentado pelos alunos (7.º, 8.º e 9.º ano – 3.º ciclo do ensino básico). A amostra do estudo incluiu 573 estudantes, maioritariamente a frequentar escolas públicas do distrito de Lisboa e uma escola pública situada na Beira alta, com idades entre os 12 e os 18 anos. Destes alunos, 214 alunos (37.3%) encontravam-se a frequentar o 7.º ano, 202 a frequentar o 8.º (35.3%) e 157 a frequentar o 9.º ano (27.4%). Para tal, recorreu-se à *Anova One Way* Multivariada (MANOVA) e foi aplicado o teste *post-hoc* de *Scheffé* com o objetivo de identificar quais os anos escolares que apresentavam diferenças relativamente às percepções de aceitação/rejeição parental (pai e mãe). Os resultados revelam diferenças significativas entre os anos escolares, nas dimensões e total da escala relativas à percepção de aceitação/rejeição materna e paterna. Em termos gerais, os alunos do 9.º ano constituíram-se como aqueles que revelaram perceber mais rejeição parental, em termos globais, relativamente ao pai e à mãe. Acreditamos que a vivência plena da etapa da adolescência por parte destes alunos, bem como uma maior proximidade à frequência do ensino secundário, que se prevê desafiante, poderão explicar estes resultados. Por outro lado, os alunos do 7.º ano, mais próximos à partida do período temporal da infância, foram aqueles que revelaram sentir menos problemas de afeto por parte das suas mães e pais.

Palavras-chave: Percepções de aceitação/rejeição parental, Terceiro ciclo de escolaridade, Ano de escolaridade

1. Introduction

During the developmental stage in adolescence, a phase characterized by multiple transformations causes deep changes to take place in the social and family environment of adolescents (Braconnier, Marcelli & Fernandes, 2000; Steinber, 2001; Weymouth & Buehler, 2016). The literature suggests that between the ages of 12 and 17, the distance between parents and children makes itself felt more strongly. Meanwhile, despite this, the majority of adolescents report they have a good relationship with their parents, and, more importantly, conflict between parents and their offspring is not the norm (Steinberg, 2001).

The quality of relations between parents and children is related to social skills and the self-concept held by children and young people (Forehand & Nousiainen,

1993, Musitu & García, 2004), to mental health (Amato, 1994; Rohner & Brothers, 1999) and to behavior that is deviant (Campo & Rohner, 1992).

Within the Theory of Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection *IPARTheory*, it is generally supported that children understand their parents/carers to be accepting (Parmar & Rohner, 2010).

The affection perceived by children in relation to their parents comes to be conceptualized as a *continuum*, which varies from the perception of the absence of affection (rejection) to the perception of it being wholly present (acceptance) (Khaleque & Ali, 2017; Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2016).

Parental acceptance when accompanied by the love, affection and warmth which parents transmit to their children, have physical and verbal displays as their main manifestations. Physical displays can be, for example, cuddles, hugs, looks of approval, kisses, smiles and shows of affection, support, and approval. Verbally, praise refers to saying nice things about the child, directly or to others. It is based on actions such as storytelling or singing a song, gestures which reflect parental acceptance. Any child, independently of the fact of belonging to a family which in the main promotes acceptance, is exposed to behavioral changes, at times when even the most patient of parents occasionally gets impatient or angry, even showing typical signs of parental rejection (Rohner, 1986, 2016).

The conceptual definition of parental rejection refers to an absence or a noticeable lessening of affection, tenderness, or love by parents towards their children. Parental rejection comes in three main forms (Rohner, 1975, 2016): Hostility/Aggression; Indifference/ negligence and indifferent rejection. Hostility and indifference are considered internal psychological sentiments, with hostility including anger, resentment, unfriendliness, malice or bad will towards the child/young person, and indifference being translated as a lack of concern or care (Rohner, 1975, 2004, 2016). Aggression and negligence, on the other hand, are considered behavioral displays of the internal states mentioned. Aggression is to do with conduct which aims to affect negatively, physically or psychologically, someone, or, symbolically, an object (Rohner, 1975, 2004, 2016). Displays of aggression can be physical or verbal. Physical displays are characterized by, for example, hitting, biting, pushing, shaking, pinching, scratching, binding, scalding or burning. Verbal displays are shown through contempt, maligning, sarcasm, blaming and demeaning actions (Rohner, 1975, 2004, 2016). It includes every and all types of verbal content that is disagreeable, thoughtless and cruel, said directly to the child or about him/her.

Concerning negligence, it makes itself felt when parents do not attend to the child's basic needs, such as, amongst others, being fed and receiving medical care, as well as needs of a different sort: school-related, worries, desires or the inter-

ests of the child. The indicators of excellence of negligence are the physical and psychological unavailability of the parents (Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2016). Physical unavailability is the physical absence of the father and/or of the mother, causing the child to feel loneliness, coming from the fact that no-one physically looks after him/her. Psychological unavailability, a more complex process to be understood when the parents, although being present, do not psychologically reach out to the child, (they do not respond to the “dependent being” in the way that the latter needs, in their interaction with him/her), (Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2016).

For its part, indiscriminate rejection refers to the sentiment of rejection, when the children do not feel loved or wanted without, meanwhile, showing some of the typical indicators of rejection mentioned before. Specialized rejection is liable to be observed behaviorally, whilst aggression, neglect, or both, along with indiscriminate rejection, are not. Indiscriminate rejection refers, exclusively, to the subjective experiences of non-love, without the existence of observable indicators (Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2016).

From the various research carried out in light of the Theory of Interpersonal Acceptance/Rejection (e.g. Ali, 2011; Khaleque, 2012; Khaleque & Ali, 2017; Khaleque, & Rohner, 2012; Rohner & Britner, 2002, 2004), it is possible to conclude, on a global scale and independently of culture, that parental acceptance/rejection is of import for the psychological adjustment of children and young people. It is determined that psychological adjustment is the principle associated with parental acceptance/rejection, being the variable which stands out globally, with the presence of rejection perceived as having an impact on the development of disturbances of a psychological nature.

Regarding the period of adolescence, specifically, this is characterized by a greater need for autonomy by the adolescent from his parents, which can give rise to some tensions within the family unit. Adolescents need, in this phase of human development, more autonomy and they tend to have disagreements with their parents. These factors translate into greater challenges to the communication between parents and children (Nomaguchi, 2012; Shanahan, McHale, Crouter, & Osgood, 2007). The parents are weighed down with the onerous task of learning to balance between giving freedom to the adolescent to do what he/she wants, and establishing rules and limits (Deslandes, Potvin & Leclerc, 2000; Sentse, Veenstra, Verhulst, & Ormel, 2009). Taking into account the personal issues in this period of human development, some studies indicate the fact that children seem to feel a lessening of warmth, involvement and support from parents as they grow up (Ali, 2011; Rodríguez, Barrio, & Carrasco, 2009; Rosa, Parada & Rosa, 2014). Some studies reveal that displays of affection between parents and children, just as with the perceptions they hold about the relationship they have, tend to change signif-

icantly as they grow older, just as does the reduction of the time that parents and children spend together (Oliva, 2006).

Research undertaken within the *IPARTheory* allows the identification of the effects of perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection as actual and similar, independently of age, from infancy to adulthood (Akün, 2017; Khaleque & Rohner, 2002a, 2012).

In a study which researched the perceptions of acceptance/rejection in North-American and Indian Culture, the perceptions of acceptance/rejection showed they did not vary with age, at least for those between the ages of 6 and 12 (Rohner & Chaki-Sircar, 1987). Already, in research undertaken in Mexico, differences were found, the reasons for which have still not been clarified, with the youngest children revealing a higher level of the perception of rejection compared to the older ones (Rohner, 1975, 2004).

In a specimen of mothers from Bengal aged between 20 and 70, they reported having felt more rejected during infancy, compared to later periods (Rohner & Chaki-Sircar, 1987).

We know, furthermore, that it is between the ages of 6 and 12 that rejection has the most impact. In adolescence, whilst underlining the relevance that, in particular, relationships established within peer groups take on, self-representation becomes more affirmed, giving rise to a greater ability to deal with parental rejection without the same having an adverse impact (Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2016).

Recent studies reflect some variations in the perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection relating to age in the period right from the heart of adolescence, a challenging time for parents and children (Ali, 2011; Ramírez-Uclés, González-Calderón, del Barrio-Gándara, & Carrasco, 2018).

2. Hypothesis

In the special context of the *PARTheory*, research essentially allows the identification of perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection and its related principle — psychological adjustment — as similar in subjects of different ages, from infancy to adulthood (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002a, 2012; Rohner, 2004, 2016; Rohner & Britner, 2002).

Recent studies reflect some variations in the perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection and their effects, in accordance with age during, for example, adolescence (Ali, 2011; Ramírez-Uclés et al., 2018).

We understand that if perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection differ according to the grades that schoolchildren are in, it is important for measures by school psychologists. The latter could, in this way, pay more attention to the work

done with pupils in different grades in the third cycle, better orientating measures for the perception of pupils of parental acceptance/rejection.

We know, on the other hand, that perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection are important for aspects such as the psychological adjustment of pupils and their success at school (Ali, 2011; Khaleque & Ali, 2017; Rohner, 2016)

Once it is of interest, specifically, to verify if significant differences exist between the perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection in schoolchildren in the grades that make up the 3rd cycle of education (+12 years), it could be considered as a possibility for pupils to go into more advanced grades when they are right in the middle of adolescence — with a more marked influence of peer groups on these ages — (Braconnier, Marcelli & Fernandes, 2000), presenting differing parental perceptions, maybe reporting a greater perception of rejection.

Meanwhile, we believe that, in global terms, these differences relating to the perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection in differing school grades do not make themselves felt, starting from the premiss that perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection and their main association, psychological adjustment, will be similar in subjects of different ages, from infancy to adulthood (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002a, 2012; Rohner, 2004, 2016; Rohner & Britner, 2002). Despite this, the existence of significant differences within the school grades (7th, 8th and 9th) with relation to the more specific dimensions of parental acceptance/rejection, are not to be overlooked.

In this way, we can formulate hypothesis 1:

Hypothesis 1

The schoolchildren in different grades (7th, 8th and 9th) present a similar global value for the perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection (father and mother).

3. Method

TABLE 1. Characterization of the sample

		FREQUENCY	%
SCHOOL GRADE	7 th year	214	37.3
	8 th year	202	35.3
	9 th year	157	27.4
	TOTAL	573	100.0
GENDER	Female	257	44.9
	Male	316	55.1
	TOTAL	573	100.0
AGE	12–13 years	246	42.9
	14–15 years	242	42.2
	16–17 years	79	13.8
	≥ 18 years	6	1.0
	TOTAL	573	100.0
		<i>M</i> = 13.95	<i>D.P.</i> = 1.46
		Min = 12.0	Max = 21.0

This study involved 573 schoolchildren, 257 girls (45%) and 316 boys (55%), with 214 pupils (37.3%) in the 7th grade, 202 in the 8th grade (35.3%) and 157 in the 9th grade (27.4%). These students came, mainly, from state schools in the Lisbon area and from a state school in Beira Alta. The specimen was chosen for reasons of convenience.

4. Tools

Questionnaire of Parental Acceptance/Rejection (Child PARQ Mother and Father, abbreviated)

This assesses the perceptions of the child/adolescent of the level of maternal and paternal rejection. There are two versions of this tool, one which assesses the perceptions of children of the acceptance/rejection of their parents, and the other which assesses the perception of acceptance/rejection on the part of mothers. Each version has 24 elements set out in four scales. The same correspond to the

values of parents' behavior, from the ones which children tend to itemize their perceptions of acceptance/rejection by parents: a) Warmth, b) Hostility/Aggression, c) Indifference/Negligence and d) Indiscriminate Rejection. These are the scales of feedback and the marking is done according to the 4-point *Likert* scale: a) frequently true, b) sometimes true, c) rarely true, and d) never true. Together, these four scales make up the total score of the PARQ. The total score of the scale reflects the level of rejection by parents, so that the questionnaire is set for measuring rejection. The higher the score, the more the rejected children tend to understand (Rohner, 2004).

In our study, the PARQ for the mother revealed a high level of inner confidence (alpha total = 0,88). The alpha of each of the dimensions was greater than 0.70 and varied from 0.72 through 0.85. The PARQ for the father revealed a very high level of inner confidence (alpha total = 0.93). The alpha of the dimensions was greater than 0.75 and varied from 0.78 through 0.92.

5. Procedures

The first step was to obtain the authorization for collecting the data, namely from the directors of the schools involved and from the legal representatives of the pupils.

The survey was done in a classroom and in a group environment, in classes from the 3rd cycle of schooling, chosen at random.

The instructions were read out loud before starting, an opportunity being given for questions to be asked or doubts to be clarified.

The data relating to parental acceptance/rejection, father and mother, was collated at two differing sessions, in order to avoid the participants getting tired, given that it dealt with versions of the same tool, and also to avoid possible contamination.

The data relating to academic output was collated through the reports of the 2nd period. Regarding the analysis of the results, this was carried out using the statistical program *Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)*, version 21.

6. Results

Our objective focused on the comparison of the perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection in the three school grades that make up the 3rd cycle of education (7th, 8th and 9th). To do this, we used the multivariate Anova One way (MANOVA). Once the values of each tool (the version which analyzes the perception of acceptance/rejection by the father and by the mother and psychological maladjustment) are linked together, it was pertinent to use a multivariate analysis. The quantita-

tive nature of the scale, the large size of the groups and the existence of uniformity of the variances between them allowed for the use of this parametric test.

The average score was always used in the values (the sum of the items divided by the number of items which made it up).

The values of the scale are all in the negative, namely the value of affection, where a higher score indicates more problems at this level. The sum of the values of the scale was also carried out, in order to obtain a total of the perception of acceptance/rejection with relation to the father and to the mother (Table 2).

The results reveal significant differences between the school grades, in the values and total of the scales in relation to the perception of maternal acceptance/rejection. The *post-hoc Scheffe* test was applied in order to identify which were the grades that presented these differences. In general terms, the pupils of the 9th grade felt more rejection on the part of their mothers (total of the scale) than those of the 7th and 8th grades. These results could suggest that the pupils of the 9th grade, being right in the middle of adolescence, felt more parental rejection, caused by their greater autonomy which vindicate other factors such as being closer to their peer groups (Braconnier, Marcelli & Fernandes, 2000; Nomaguchi, 2012; Shanahan, et al., 2007). Approaching secondary education, with the demands of this transition, could be another factor in contributing to the results of the 9th grade in relation to maternal rejection being shown as being higher.

Regarding hostility/aggression, the students of the 9th grade, meanwhile, felt less maternal hostility and aggression than the students of the other grades. This result focusses our attention on the need to understand parental acceptance/rejection as a *continuum*, in which all the values contribute towards acceptance/rejection (Rohner, 2004, 2016).

It is emphasized that the affection value has a medium effect value ($h^2p = 0.056$). It was the students of the 7th grade who reported feeling more affection from their mothers, which could be explained by the fact that they are nearer to the period of infancy.

The students of the 8th grade were those who obtained the highest values for indiscriminate maternal rejection, a form of rejection which, exclusively, refers to subjective experiences of non-love, even though there are no observable, categorizable indicators, such as aggression, negligence or both (Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2016).

TABLE 2. ANOVA One Way Multivariate: Comparison between the different school grades relating to the perception of parental acceptance/rejection

	GRADE	AVERAGE	DP	N	MANOVA	P	PARTIAL ETA SQUARED
Affection Mother	7th	1.42	.48	214	16.795	.000***	.056
	8th	1.45	.47	202			
	9th	1.71	.59	157			
Hostility/Aggression Mother	7th	1.51	.53	573	6.822	.001***	.023
	8th	1.46	.47	214			
	9th	1.41	.48	202			
Indifference/Negligence Mother	7th	1.61	.67	157	7.323	.001***	.025
	8th	1.48	.54	573			
	9th	1.91	.46	214			
Indiscriminate Rejection Mother	7th	1.88	.43	202	5.064	.007**	.017
	8th	2.06	.55	157			
	9th	1.94	.48	573			
Total Mother	7th	1.36	.50	214	12.648	.000***	.042
	8th	1.29	.48	202			
	9th	1.48	.69	157			
Affection Father	7th	1.37	.56	573	16.487	.000***	.055
	8th	1.54	.37	214			
	9th	1.51	.37	202			
Hostility/Aggression Father	7th	1.72	.51	157	3.851	.022*	.013
	8th	1.58	.42	573			
	9th	1.60	.64	214			
Indifference/Negligence Father	7th	1.83	.75	202	14.151	.000***	.047
	8th	2.04	.87	157			
	9th	1.80	.77	573			
Indiscriminate Rejection Father	7th	1.40	.47	214	5.752	.003**	.020
	8th	1.51	.62	202			
	9th	1.57	.66	157			
Total Father	7th	1.49	.58	573	13.618	.000***	.046
	8th	1.65	.58	214			
	9th	1.77	.67	202			

*** p ≤ .001; * p ≤ .05; h²p : ≤.05 small effect value,]0.05, 0.25] medium effect value;]0.25, 0.50] high effect value; > 0.50 very high effect value.

Relating to the values of each scale referring to the perceptions of paternal acceptance/rejection, there are significant differences here also. In the total of the scale there are differences between each grade, the average increasing with each grade.

The students of the 9th grade felt more paternal rejection than those in the other grades. The explanation we find, within the literature, is similar to that which we found in relation to the mother: these pupils, because they find themselves, from the outset, due to their age, right in the center of adolescence, a phase full of challenges, could experience greater difficulties in their relationships with their parents (Nomaguchi, 2012; Shanahan, et al., 2007), which could be reflected in a greater perception of paternal rejection.

In the values for affection and negligence, the 7th grade pupils felt less problems than the other pupils, which we believe is to do with their being closer to infancy. Despite this, there are also those who feel more problems with paternal hostility/aggression. Although they felt more problems with paternal hostility/aggression than the others, the pupils of the 7th grade were also those who reported a lesser perception of global paternal rejection. This aspect focusses our attention on a *continuum* which characterizes parental acceptance/rejection and which is made up of various values, all of which contribute to the acceptance/rejection (Rohner, 2004, 2016). In the affection value, for the father, the size of the effect is also average ($h^2p = .055$).

It is the pupils of the 8th grade who reported feeling more issues with paternal indifference/negligence. With regard to negligence, let us remember that it concerns providing the basic needs of the child, such as the need for food, medical care, amongst others, just as for needs of other types: school-related, worries, desires and the interests of the child. The indicators of excellence of negligence are the physical and psychological unavailability of the parents (Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2016).

To summarize, the students of the 9th grade were those who reported feeling the greatest parental rejection, relating to father and mother. The students of the 7th grade already reported feeling less paternal rejection and less problems with parental affection, father and mother. The students of the 8th grade reported higher levels of indiscriminate maternal rejection and of paternal indifference/negligence.

In this way, we reject the hypothesis of the research undertaken — “The pupils in different grades (7th, 8th, 9th) report similar values in the perception of parental acceptance/rejection, father and mother”, with the 9th grade pupils reporting higher levels of maternal and paternal rejection than the other pupils.

7. Discussion

The Theory of interpersonal acceptance/rejection advocates that, independently of culture and more or less for everyone, the perceptions of acceptance/rejection relating to father and mother are important for the holistic development of children in such aspects as, for example, their psychological adjustment — shown to be the main player in the perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection —, academic performance and behavioral issues (Ali, 2011; Khaleque & Ali, 2017; Rohner, 2016; Tulviste & Rohner, 2010).

The research undertaken held, as its main objective, undertaking comparative analyses of the perception of acceptance/rejection of pupils regarding their parents, based on the different grades they were attending (7th, 8th and 9th). For this, we applied the multivariate Anova One Way and the Sheffé *post-hoc* test.

The perceptions of acceptance/rejection, mother and father, were also analyzed for pupils in different grades (7th, 8th and 9th) of the 3rd cycle of education. With regard to mothers and fathers, the students of the 9th grade were those who overall felt more rejection. They reported more maternal indifference/negligence and more problems relating to maternal affection — coldness, than the pupils of the 7th and 8th grades. Despite this, they were also the ones who reported lower values of maternal hostility/aggression. This factor leads us to understand the perception of paternal acceptance/rejection as a spectrum, in which hostility/aggression, meanwhile and for this only, is one of the values not representing parental rejection (Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2016).

The pupils in the 9th grade also reported higher levels of indiscriminate paternal rejection, a more subtle and indeterminate way of feeling parental rejection (Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2016), as well as less paternal affection compared to the rest.

In adolescence, important transformations take place of, amongst others, a physiological, psychological and social nature. Writers such as Monahan, Cauffman and Steinberg (2009) focus our attention on the widening of relationships which occurs during adolescence, in which the adolescents begin to give more importance to peer groups, which go on to exert a greater influence.

The pupils in the 9th grade, from the start more advanced into adolescence than those of the 7th and 8th grades, find themselves right in the center of this phase. We know that during adolescence, relationships established with peer groups gain relevance. This factor represents, frequently, an increased challenge for parents (Braconnier, Marcceli & Fernandes, 2000). A closer proximity to attending secondary school can also bring about certain tensions within the family unit, related to the relative transition to this cycle of education which, in some ways, is hoped for and desired.

Furthermore, adolescents can display more difficulties in the relationships they establish with their parents, caused by a greater need for autonomy, which can bring about conflicts within the family home (Nomaguchi, 2012; Shanahan, et al., 2007). The parents have the difficult task of learning how to balance giving freedom to the adolescent to do what he/she wants, and establishing rules and limits (Deslandes, Potvin & Leclerc, 2000; Sentse et al., 2009).

Similarly to the results we obtained, other studies point to the fact that children seem to feel a decrease of warmth, involvement and support from their parents as they grow up (Rodríguez, Barrio & Carrasco, 2009; Rohner, 1986; Rosa-Alcázar, Parada-Navas & Rosa-Alcázar, 2014). Some authors (e.g. Oliva, 2006) affirm that the dynamic in parent/child relationships tends to change substantially during adolescence, with less time being spent together by parents and children, as well as a decrease in shows of tenderness and affection. This distancing which seems to be apparent between parents and children during adolescence, can explain the fact that the 9th grade pupils, from the outset older than the others, are those who feel more rejected by their parents.

The 7th grade pupils, maybe because they are still closer to infancy, are those who, compared to the other grades, report feeling that their parents, father and mother, are more affectionate. It was also the 7th grade pupils who felt their parents were more accepting of them. However, they reported higher levels of hostility and aggression with regard to their fathers. These results suggest that parental acceptance/rejection represents a spectrum, which must be viewed globally and which does not reduce, as an isolated element, its values. Let us remember, further, that even in those relationships principally dictated by acceptance, there are some displays of rejection (Rohner, 1975, 1986, 2016).

What is said regarding measures taken within the area of psychology, seems important for us to understand regarding to the relationship dynamic between parents and children, how it is that the perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection change in different school grades. In this way, the school psychologist would be in a position to identify in which school grades it is imperative to intervene, as regards pupils' perceptions of acceptance/rejection, namely through development of intervention programs and specific measures directed at families. This fact is of particular importance, because we know the relationship established by parents reveals a varied range of aspects such as, for example, academic success and the behavior pupils display (Ali, 2011; Musitu & García, 2004).

In this way, we believe that by being aware of the different values which make up the spectrum of parental acceptance/rejection, the educational psychologist would be better equipped to deal with the synchronicities established between

parents and children, supporting more adequately, in this way, the development of the pupils and their academic success and integration.

In the field of developmental understanding and the stability of perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection, it would become relevant to apply the same tests we used, on the same subjects, some years later, which would give a long-reaching vision which we were not able to obtain, given the cross-sectional character of this research.

We did not explore the understanding of social, contextual or other factors which could influence the perception of parental acceptance/rejection, such as, for example, aspects relating to the composition of the family structure, parents being in/out of work, the level of schooling of parents, the existence of psychological problems of parents, etc. It would be interesting to look into these aspects, which were not covered by this research.

It is further emphasized that it is of great interest to consider the phenomenological perspective of the child on his/her parents' behavior, differentiating between that of the father and that of the mother (Khaleque & Ali, 2017; Rohner, 1975, 1986, 2004, 2016). Some authors who undertook more recent studies (e.g. Giffin, 2005; Navarro, 2007; Rohner 2016; Vieira & Souza, 2010), refer that for a long time, science in the area of psychology focused, essentially, on the study of the mothers or on the study of both parents together, with research on the father being dedicated more to the impact of his physical absence, which ended up not promoting a deeper exploration of the perspective of the children concerning the father's behavior.

Despite the limitations already indicated, our research intended, amongst other aspects, to be a contribution towards the study of parent/children relationships, allowing, at a practical level, a debate on the need for a more detailed approach to the distinction of mother/father, and which considers the differing values which make up the spectrum of parental acceptance/rejection. We believe it would be of added value should this occur, whether for prevention taken within a psychological scope, or for intervention through sensitive measures taken by the psychologist with the family.

8. Conclusion

In the perspective of excellent performance of pupils within a school context, meaning academic output and conduct at school, the perceptions relating to parental behavior, namely, the perceptions of acceptance/rejection concerning father and mother, present themselves as important (Ali, 2011; Musitu & García, 2004; Rohner, 2016; Tulviste & Rohner, 2010), as do other aspects, such as, for example, the psychological adjustment of pupils which is known to be intimately linked to

parental acceptance/rejection (Khaleque, 2012; Khaleque, & Rohner, 2012; Rohner & Britner, 2002, 2004).

The Theory of interpersonal Acceptance/Rejection of Rohner (1975; 1986; 2004; 2016), which the author developed over the last 50 years, is supported by the research into the consequences and matters relating to the perception of parental acceptance/rejection. In this way, this theoretical framework has been an impulse for various studies undertaken in this field, the world over (e.g. Ali, 2011; Khaleque, 2012; Khaleque & Ali, 2017; Khaleque, & Rohner, 2012; Tulviste & Rohner, 2010), there now being in existence over 3,000 works (Rohner, 2016).

Regarding the school/family relationship as far as academic results show, at times a cause of tension, the study of the perception of acceptance/rejection compared to the relationship which the pupils establish with the father and the mother, separately, reveals itself to be of utmost importance.

Authors who undertook more recent studies (e.g. Giffin, 2005; Navarro, 2007; Rohner 2016; Vieira & Souza, 2010), refer that for a long time now, the study of parental relationships centered on the mother, giving little emphasis to the father. In the current scientific outlook, the aspects of the paternal relationship have been explored more (Rohner, 2016; Vieira & Sousa, 2010), as the existence of studies which focus on the mother, as well as on the father, are of relevance.

The study of the perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection according to the school grade of pupils is important, in order for the school Psychologist to understand if there are significant differences in parental acceptance/rejection, indicators of higher levels of rejection which merit action. In this way, the school Psychologist can better organize the action to be taken with a focus on the perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection, namely by way of defining programs of intervention and action for the school grades indicated.

This study allowed us to determine that the 9th grade pupils, from the outset further into the challenging stage of adolescence, reveal that they feel a greater parental rejection regarding father and mother than the other school grades (7th and 8th). We know that the development stage of adolescence can cause greater tensions between parents and children, which will be reflected in the perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection. It falls to the educational psychologist to be alert to possible changes that can arise in the parents/children relationship during adolescence (Braconnier, Marcceli & Fernandes, 2000; Nomaguchi, 2012; Shanahan, et al., 2007), namely, by the 9th grade pupils, which show them to feel greater parental rejection, allowing for bridges to be built which better serve the family unit during this particularly difficult period of human development.

From the results which we were able to determine, the importance stands out of understanding the parental acceptance/rejection as a *continuum* made up of

various values, all of which contribute to parental acceptance/rejection (Khaleque & Ali, 2017; Rohner, 2016). This way, we found results in the 7th grade pupils to show they were the ones who considered the father as the most rejecting, in global terms, but also as the most hostile/aggressive. Already the 9th grade pupils reported a greater maternal rejection, but they are also the ones who reported less maternal hostility/aggression. These results remind us of the importance of assessing the more specific values of parental acceptance/rejection, looking to intervene in values which stand out for being negative, even though the perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection, globally, stand out for being positive.

Despite the relevance of this study, a long-reaching approach was not undertaken with regard to the perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection, in a way that firmer conclusions could be arrived at. It would be relevant if other studies were to be undertaken, aimed at applying the tools for the perceptions of parental acceptance/rejection to the same pupils, during the 7th, 8th and 9th grades, in a similar period, with the objective of expanding the conclusions.

