

1 Parental Acceptance and Children's Psychological Adjustment: The Moderating Effects
2 of Interpersonal Power and Prestige Across Age

3

4 **Short title:** Parental Acceptance, Power and Prestige Across Age

5

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21

22

Abstract

23 The differential contribution of maternal and paternal acceptance-rejection to children's
24 psychological adjustment has been explained by differences in interpersonal power and
25 prestige within families; however, there is not yet enough empirical support for this
26 explanation. This study examines the moderating effects of interpersonal power and
27 prestige on the relationship between perceived parental acceptance-rejection and
28 psychological adjustment across children's sex and age. The sample was composed of
29 913 children ranging in age from 9 to 16 years. Multiple hierarchical regression analyses
30 in the total sample showed a significant and independent contribution of parental
31 acceptance-rejection and parental power and prestige. No moderating effects of
32 interpersonal power and prestige were found for the total sample. However, when the
33 regression analyses were conducted across different age groups, maternal acceptance had
34 a higher contribution to psychological adjustment in children from nine to ten years old.
35 Interestingly, the moderating effects of interpersonal prestige (not interpersonal power)
36 were also significant in younger participants. Furthermore, the moderating effects of
37 prestige on maternal acceptance-rejection were different in late childhood than in early
38 adolescence. These results suggest how parental prestige may explain the higher
39 contribution of maternal acceptance to younger children's psychological adjustment.

40

41 **Keywords:** Parental acceptance-rejection; adjustment; children; adolescence; family

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45 of Interpersonal Power and Prestige Across Age

46

47 **Introduction**

48 Traditionally it has been assumed that children's psychological adjustment is related to
49 parent-child relationships [1, 2] and, more generally, to the way parents care for their
50 children. From a cross-cultural perspective, the interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory
51 (IPARTheory, [3–4]), formally known as PARTheory, has been supported by much cross-
52 cultural evidence that interpersonal acceptance-rejection is related to individuals'
53 psychological adjustment. Parental acceptance (by mothers and fathers) is particularly
54 closely associated with children's psychological adjustment [3, 4, 5–8]. As a kind of
55 natural law, in all analyzed cultures, children's psychological adjustment has been
56 significantly and positively related to perceived parental acceptance. However, fathers
57 and mothers did not always make the same contribution to children's psychological
58 problems. In some studies, paternal rejection makes a greater contribution to children's
59 maladjustment [9, 10], while in others maternal rejection appears to be the most painful
60 for children [11–14]. In the context of the PARTheory, a previous meta-analysis
61 conducted by Khaleque and Rohner [8] showed that the mean weighted effect size of the
62 correlation between perceived paternal acceptance and children's psychological
63 adjustment was significantly larger than the mean weighted effect size of the correlation
64 between perceived maternal acceptance and children's psychological adjustment. Thus,
65 although the acceptance-rejection of both parents has important effects on the child's
66 adjustment, occasionally the contribution of one becomes more relevant than the
67 contribution of another. The present study explores this differential contribution of
68 perceived parental acceptance (fathers versus mothers) on children's adjustment, taking

69 into account the role of perceived interpersonal power and prestige of mothers and fathers
70 in the familial dynamic. These results, suggest the need to explore possible mechanisms
71 that might explain why the love-related behaviors of one parent sometimes have a
72 significantly greater impact on offspring's adjustment than the love-related behaviors of
73 the other parent.

74 Interpersonal power and prestige refer to individual characteristics of parents as
75 perceived by children. These factors come mainly from studies of groups and leadership
76 in the field of social psychology [15–17]. Specifically, interpersonal power is defined as
77 the individual's capacity to influence the decisions and behaviors of others [16–18]. This
78 ability originates in interpersonal exchanges and is not based on any status, category or
79 level of authority. On the other hand, interpersonal prestige is understood as recognition;
80 it refers to the signs of social approval, esteem, respect and admiration that an individual
81 accord to another person or group of people.

82 Previous research from different perspectives [19–22] has shown the relevance
83 that parental power and prestige have to children's psychological adjustment and
84 satisfaction with their family functioning. In the context of IPARTheory, Carrasco and
85 Rohner [23], with a sample of 313 Spanish children aged 9 through 13, found that
86 maternal acceptance, compared to paternal acceptance, affected the children's
87 psychological adjustment when mothers were perceived to have both higher power and
88 higher prestige than fathers. However, the strongest overall contribution to children's
89 adjustment was made in families where fathers were perceived to have both the highest
90 power and the highest prestige. In a more recent special issue [24] on 13 studies in 11
91 nations (Bangladesh, China, Croatia, Greece, Korea, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Spain,
92 Turkey and the United Kingdom), the results of these analyses showed that either
93 maternal or paternal power or prestige—or both power and prestige—moderated the

94 relationship between perceived parental (maternal and/or paternal) acceptance and
95 offspring's adjustment in eight of the studies (62%). In the Spanish sample [25], in
96 particular, both perceived interpersonal power and prestige significantly moderated the
97 relationship between perceived paternal acceptance and children's psychological
98 adjustment. The relationship between perceived paternal acceptance and children's
99 adjustment intensified to the degree that children perceived their parents to share power
100 and prestige equally. In addition, the effects of perceived paternal acceptance on
101 children's adjustment were especially strong when fathers were perceived to have both
102 more interpersonal power and more prestige than mothers. The conclusions of this
103 previous research support the theory that offspring's perceptions of parental power and
104 prestige constitute one class of variables that helps to explain why the love-related
105 behavior of fathers sometimes fails (in many international contexts) to make a significant
106 contribution to offspring's adjustment when these behaviors by mothers are controlled.
107 However, we do not know yet why only perceived parental *power* moderates this
108 relationship in some instances, but only perceived parental *prestige* moderates it in others
109 [24].

110 Furthermore, children's sex and age are two important variables to be consider for
111 several reasons: (1) many studies of gender differences in perceived parental acceptance
112 are mixed and inconsistent (see [26]); (2) children perceive a decrease in parental warmth,
113 involvement and support as they grow up [27–29]; (3) there is empirical evidence for a
114 normative decrease in behavioral problems as children grow older [30, 31]; (4) few
115 studies have explored sex and age differences in parental power and prestige, and results
116 have been inconsistent [24]. For these reasons it is advisable to consider the sex and age
117 of the child when exploring the moderating effects of interpersonal power and prestige
118 on the relations between parental behavior and children's outcomes.

119 The aim of this paper is to analyze the extent to which the interpersonal power and
120 prestige of parents moderate the direct relationship between parental acceptance and
121 children's psychological adjustment. This objective will be approached from a
122 developmental framework, considering the children's age and sex. To our knowledge, no
123 studies have compared these relations across different age groups. Any effect between
124 these variables could be sensitive to the cognitive and social advances that occur from
125 late childhood to adolescence, as well to the corresponding adjustments in family
126 functioning.

127 **Materials and Method**

128 *Participants*

129 The sample consists of 983 Spanish children and adolescents (449 boys) ranging in age
130 from 9 to 16 years ($M = 13.09$; $SD = 2.00$). Participants were selected through simple
131 random sampling from 20 public and publicly funded private schools in 18 different cities
132 in Spain. For each school, one class was picked at random from each educational level.
133 The majority of the children lived with their biological parents, who were employed in
134 long-term unskilled or semi-skilled jobs.

135 The inclusion criteria of the sample were, first, have parental consent, and second, submit
136 a fully completed assessment protocol. Most belonged to the ethnic group "white
137 European."

138

139 *Instruments*

- 140 • *Parental Power and Prestige Questionnaire: Child Version* (3PQ; [32]; adapted
141 to Spanish population by [33]). It consists of ten items designed to assess the
142 perceptions of children about the relative power and prestige of their fathers
143 *versus* their mothers. Five items assess the perception of interpersonal power (e.g.,

144 “Whose opinions usually influence you the most?”), and the other five the
145 perception of interpersonal prestige (e.g., “Whom do you personally admire
146 more?”). The items are accompanied by a scale with the following five points: (1)
147 My mother most often; (2) My mother more than my father; (3) My mother and
148 father alike; (4) My father more than my mother; (5) My father most often. The
149 factor scores range between 5 and 25. Scores below 15 (midpoint) reveal the
150 perception that mothers have more power or prestige than fathers. Scores above
151 15 indicate that fathers are perceived to have more power or prestige than mothers.
152 Scores around the midpoint indicate that father and mother are perceived as
153 having equal power or prestige. For the total scale, scores range from 10 to 50.
154 Scores below 30 (midpoint) indicate that mothers are perceived to have more
155 power and prestige; scores above 30 suggest that fathers are perceived to have
156 more power and prestige than mothers. Scores close to the midpoint reveal that
157 both parents are perceived as having similar levels of power and prestige. The
158 Cronbach’s alpha was 0.78 [33]. In this instrument, the higher the score, the more
159 influence the father has, as opposed to the mother.

160 • *The Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire/Parental Control for Children* (Parental
161 Acceptance-Rejection/Control Questionnaire, PARQ/C; [34]; adapted to Spanish
162 population by [35]), short version for mothers (PARQ-M) and fathers (PARQ-F).
163 The short form consists of 29 items of which 4 refer to parental control. Versions
164 completed the child on the mother and the father are identical except that the items
165 relate to the corresponding parental figure. All items are evaluated by a 4-point
166 Likert scale: 1 “almost never true,” 2 “sometimes true,” 3 “often true,” and 4
167 “almost always true.” The questionnaire is divided into four subscales:
168 warmth/affection (e.g., “My mother [father] says good things about me”),

169 hostility/aggression (e.g., “My mother [father] hits me even though I do not
170 deserve it”), indifference/neglect (e.g., “My mother [father] does not pay attention
171 to me”), and undifferentiated rejection (e.g., “My mother [father] sees me as a
172 great nuisance”). The sum of these four scales (with the scale of warmth/inverted
173 coldness) provides an added measure of perceived acceptance-rejection, for which
174 scores range from 24 (maximum perceived acceptance) to 96 (maximum
175 perceived rejection). The control scale is assessed independently. Total scores
176 above 60 reveals qualitatively more rejection than acceptance. This instrument
177 has been used in more than 500 studies in different countries. The psychometric
178 properties have been shown to be excellent [7, 32, 34]. The Cronbach’s alpha for
179 PARQF and PARQM was 0.88 [35].

180 • The *Personality Assessment Questionnaire: Child Version* (child PAQ; [36];
181 adapted to Spanish population by [37]). It consists of 42 items that assess 7
182 personality provisions: (1) hostility/aggression, passive aggression or problems in
183 managing hostility and aggression (e.g., “I think of hitting or being rude”); (2)
184 dependency or defensive independence on the form, frequency, severity and
185 timing of perceived rejection (e.g., “I want my parents to love me very much”);
186 (3) self-esteem negative (e.g., “When I meet someone I think is better than me”);
187 (4) self-efficacy negative (e.g., “I think I cannot do things right”); (5) lack of
188 emotional response (e.g., “I cannot show others how I feel”); (6) emotional
189 instability (e.g., “I get upset when things go wrong”); and (7) negative view of the
190 world (e.g., “I believe that life is full of dangers”). The items are answered on a
191 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 “almost never true” to 4 “almost always true.”
192 The sum of the seven scales provides an aggregate score indicating the degree of
193 psychological adjustment of the child. This instrument has been widely used and

194 has good evidence of validity and reliability [7, 36]. The Cronbach's alpha was
195 0.82 [37].

196

197 *Procedure*

198 As part of a larger study on psychological adjustment in children, 18 schools were
199 randomly selected from different cities in Spain. We received authorization to conduct
200 the study from the schools' administrators. Each child's participation in the study was
201 voluntary and contingent on the informed consent of his or her parents. The children were
202 asked to complete the measures in the classroom. At the end of the study, parents received
203 feedback regarding the main results.

204

205 *Statistical analyses*

206 First, a preliminary analysis was carried out in which the correlations between the
207 variables and the basic descriptive of the variables were obtained. Second, five different
208 regression analyses with a hierarchical order of inclusion were conducted. As predictors,
209 the scores obtained in the PARQF, PARQM, and Interpersonal Power and Prestige
210 questionnaire were used, and as dependent variable, the child's adjustment measured by
211 the PAQ was used. In the first hierarchical regression analysis, sex and age were included
212 as covariables in the first step; the second step included perceived paternal (PARQF) and
213 maternal (PARQM) acceptance-rejection, parental power and parental prestige to test for
214 main effects; and the third step included the product variables to test for possible
215 interactions and moderating effects. Four additional regression analyses were conducted,
216 one for each age group: 9–10, 11–12, 13–14 and 15–16 years. In these regression
217 analyses, sex and age were not included. Finally, a post hoc analysis of interactions was
218 conducted using the Johnson-Neyman technique with the Hayes's PROCESS command

219 in SPSS [38]. In order to plot the significant interactions, the sample was divided into
 220 three different groups considering values for moderator mean and plus/minus one
 221 standard deviation from mean. All analyses were conducted using the IBM SPSS statistics
 222 21 software.

223

224 **Results**

225 *Preliminary analysis*

226 As a first approach to the analysis of the data, a correlational analysis (table 1) and a
 227 hierarchical regression analysis adjusted by sex and age (table 2) were conducted for the
 228 total sample. Given the large sample size, most correlations are significant; however,
 229 highest correlations are found between maternal acceptance-rejection (PARQM) or
 230 paternal acceptance-rejection (PARQF) and children's psychological maladjustment
 231 (PAQ), and between parental prestige and parental power. These results show significant
 232 positive correlations between children's psychological maladjustment and perceived
 233 paternal and maternal rejection. Thus, the higher the level of perceived parental rejection,
 234 the higher the level of children's maladjustment. In addition, the higher the parental power
 235 or prestige, the lower the perceived paternal rejection and the lower children's
 236 maladjustment.

237 *Table 1. Correlations between parental acceptance-rejection, power, prestige and child*
 238 *adjustment*

	PARQF	PARQM	POWER	PRESTIGE	PAQ	AGE
PARQM	.49**	---				
POWER	-.27**	.10**	---			
PRESTIGE	-.28**	.14**	.64**	---		
PAQ	.54**	.48**	-.15**	-.08*	---	
AGE	.23**	.20**	-.05	-.01	.28**	---
Mean	37.09	33.25	12.65	14.29	66.19	13.09
SD	10.52	8.83	3.71	3.21	13.55	2.00

239 *Note:* PARQM=maternal acceptance-rejection; PARQF=paternal acceptance-rejection;
 240 PAQ=children's psychological adjustment.

241 * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

242 As we can see in table 2, after adjusting for sex and age (step 1), a first approach
 243 to the analysis reveals a significant and positive effect of paternal acceptance-rejection
 244 and maternal acceptance-rejection on children's maladjustment. In addition, there was a
 245 significant negative effect of parental power on children's maladjustment and a
 246 significant positive effect of parental prestige on children's maladjustment; however, the
 247 contribution of prestige was the lowest one. No significant interactions were found (step
 248 3). Regarding the contribution of sex and age as co-variables, no significant effect of
 249 children's sex on children's maladjustment was found, but a significant positive effect of
 250 children's age on children's maladjustment was found. Because of this, sex was excluded
 251 for the subsequent regression analyses conducted for each age group.

252

253 *Table 2. Hierarchical regression analyses predicting children's psychological*
 254 *maladjustment adjusted by sex and age*

<i>Predictors</i>	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			
Constant	40.20	.08	.08**
Sex	.01		
Age	.29**		
Step 2			
Constant	22.04	.38	.30**
PARQF	.37**		
PARQM	.28**		
POWER	-.12**		
PRESTIGE	.07*		
Step 3			
Constant	3.90	.39	.01**
PARQM*POWER	-.15		
PARQM*PRESTIGE	-.33		
PARQF*PRESTIGE	.23		
PARQF*POWER	.04		

255 *Note:* PARQM=maternal acceptance-rejection; PARQP=paternal acceptance-rejection
 256 * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

257

258 *Parental acceptance-rejection, power and prestige predicting children's psychological*
 259 *adjustment by age group.*

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260 Considering these previous results, the different effects of the variables were
 261 analyzed separately by age group (table 3). Because gender was not significant,
 262 hierarchical regression analyses were only conducted by age groups. Four age groups
 263 were analyzed according to different developmental periods: late childhood (9–10 years),
 264 early adolescence (11–12 years), mid-adolescence (13–14 years) and adolescence (15–16
 265 years). Independent variables (PARQF and PARQM) were included in the first step to
 266 examine direct effects, potential moderators in the second step (Power and Prestige) to
 267 test the partial effects of independent variables versus moderators, and finally, in the third
 268 step, the product terms of parental acceptance and parental power and prestige were
 269 included to examine their moderating and conditional effects.

270 *Table 3. Hierarchical regression analyses predicting children's psychological*
 271 *adjustment by age groups*

Predictors	β				R^2				ΔR^2			
	G1	G2	G3	G4	G1	G2	G3	G4	G1	G2	G3	G4
Step 1												
Constant	21.99**	27.56**	34.25**	41.81**	.41	.57	.30	.35	.41**	.57**	.30**	.30**
PARQF	.27**	.35**	.34**	.45**								
PARQM	.46**	.33**	.25**	.21**								
Step 2												
Constant	36.85	30.24**	30.51**	.47**								
PARQF	.18	.36**	.41**	.40**								
PARQM	.46**	.34**	.23**	.26**	.47	.57	.31	.36	.06**	.00	.01	.01
POWER	-.26**	-.12	-.11	-.10								
PRESTIGE	.03	.05	.15*	-.01								
Step 3												
Constant	24.92	76.05**	7.62**	36.23**								
PARQF	-.46	-.04	.40**	.50**								
PARQM	1.31**	-.03	.64**	.40*								
POWER	-.08	.06	-.47	.06								
PRESTIGE	.06	-.78*	.80**	.05	.56	.60	.33	.37	.09**	.03*	.02*	.01
PARQM*POW	.46	-.85	-.14	.68								
PARQM*PREST	-1.73**	1.26*	-.50	-.80								
PARQF*PREST	1.42**	.01	-.44	.52								
PARQF*POW	-.58	.51	.53	-.69								

272 *note.* PARQM = maternal acceptance-rejection; PARQF= paternal acceptance-rejection;

273 *POW*= parental power; *PREST*= parental prestige; G1: group from 9 to 10 years old; G2: group

274 from 11 to 12 years old; G3: group from 13 to 14 years old; G4: group from 15 to 16 years old.

275 $p < .05$; $**p < .01$

276 Parental acceptance-rejection (by mothers and fathers) showed a significant and
277 negative direct effect on children's psychological adjustment in all age groups (step 1).
278 However, when the moderators were included, the direct effect of paternal acceptance-
279 rejection was no longer significant for the 9–10-year-old group, and the maternal
280 acceptance-rejection made a greater contribution than paternal acceptance-rejection to the
281 youngest children's psychological maladjustment (G1). For the rest of age groups the
282 coefficients of maternal acceptance-rejection versus paternal acceptance-rejection were
283 statistically equivalent (confidence intervals at 95%), so maternal rejection and paternal
284 rejection made similar contributions to maladjustment from early adolescence through
285 adolescence.

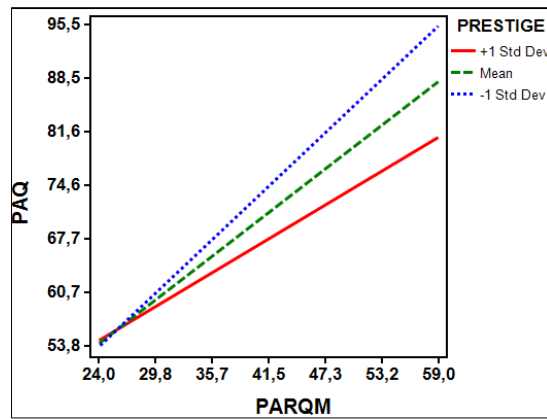
286 Regarding the direct effects of interpersonal parental power and prestige, two
287 significant effects were found: a positive effect of parental power on psychological
288 maladjustment at 9–10 years and a negative effect of parental prestige on psychological
289 maladjustment at 13–14 years. Therefore, the results show that the higher the paternal
290 power versus maternal power, the lower the level of maladjustment in late childhood, and
291 the higher the paternal prestige versus maternal prestige, the higher the level of
292 maladjustment in mid-adolescence.

293 Finally, three two-way significant interactions were found (step 3). Two interactions
294 at ages 9–10: maternal rejection by parental prestige (G1: $\beta=-1.73$, $t=-2.85$, $p=0.00$) and
295 paternal rejection by parental prestige (G1: $\beta=1.42$, $t=3.27$, $p=0.00$); and one interaction
296 at ages 11–12: maternal rejection by maternal prestige (G2: $\beta=1.26$, $t=2.36$, $p=0.02$).
297 These results show that the relationship between maternal acceptance-rejection and
298 children's maladjustment was moderated by perceived interpersonal prestige at ages 9–
299 10 and 11–12 years, and relations between paternal acceptance-rejection and children's
300 psychological maladjustment at ages 9–10.

301 The post hoc analysis of the interaction effect of parental prestige on the relations
302 between maternal acceptance-rejection and children's maladjustment showed different
303 effects in the 9–10-year-old group (Figure 1) versus the 11–12-year-old group (Figure 2).
304 Figure 1 shows that under the condition of +1 SD (mean plus one standard deviation)
305 interpersonal power—where fathers were perceived to have higher prestige than
306 mothers—the effect (simple slope) of maternal acceptance on children's psychological
307 adjustment tends to be weaker than under the condition of mean (where fathers were
308 perceived to have less prestige than mothers) and under the -1SD condition (where fathers
309 were perceived to have equal prestige with mothers). The higher prestige of mothers over
310 fathers (-1SD condition) intensified the effect of maternal rejection on children's
311 maladjustment. Higher levels of children's maladjustment were found when mothers
312 showed both high prestige and high rejection.

313
314 In contrast, Figure 2 shows that under the condition of +1 SD (where fathers were
315 perceived to have higher prestige than mothers) the effect of maternal acceptance on
316 children's psychological adjustment at 11–12 years old tends to be stronger than under
317 the other conditions. Higher levels of maladjustment in early adolescence were found
318 when mothers were viewed with lower prestige than fathers and were also perceived to
319 demonstrate high rejection. According to the Johnson-Newman technique, the moderating
320 effects of prestige on the relations between maternal acceptance-rejection and children's
321 psychological maladjustment in the 9–10-year-old group is significant for scores below
322 19.37 on the prestige scale; that is, 19.37 is a transition point at which the moderator
323 variable of prestige is no longer significant within the observed range. Similarly, the
324 transition point in the 11–12-year-old group is 8.7.

325



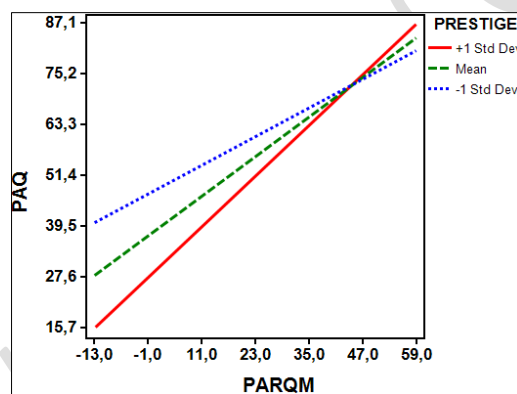
326

327 *Figura 1. Relacion entre Aceptación-rechazo materno y ajuste psicológico de los hijos de 9-10 años en*
 328 *distintos niveles del prestigio parental*

329 *PAQ = ajuste psicológico de la personalidad (puntuaciones altas indican inadaptación); PARQM=*
 330 *aceptación materna (puntuaciones altas indican rechazo materno).*

331

332



333

334 *Figure 2. Maternal acceptance-rejection predicting psychological maladjustment at varying levels of*
 335 *prestige in early adolescence (11–12 years old).*

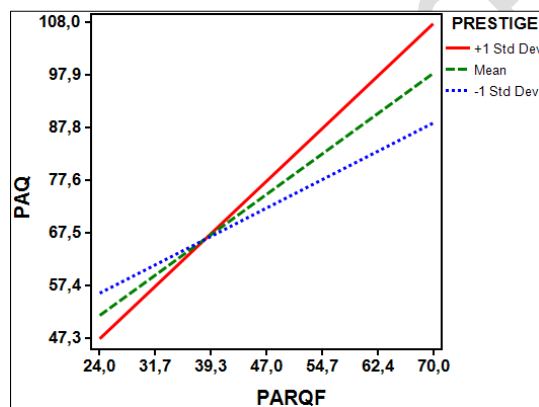
336 *PAQ= psychological maladjustment (higher scores are indicating maladjustment); PARQM (higher*
 337 *scores are indicating maternal rejection).*

338

339 Regarding the interaction between paternal acceptance-rejection and parental prestige
 340 (Figure 3), the effects (simple slopes in Figure 3) of paternal acceptance-rejection on
 341 children's maladjustment at different levels of prestige in the 9–10-year-old group
 342 showed similar results to the moderating effects of prestige on maternal acceptance-
 343 rejection at this age. Thus, under the condition of +1 SD interpersonal power—where
 344 fathers were perceived to have higher prestige than mothers—the effect (simple slope) of

345 paternal acceptance on children's psychological adjustment tends to be stronger than
 346 under the condition of mean (where fathers were perceived to have less prestige than
 347 mothers) and -1SD condition (where fathers were perceived to have equal prestige with
 348 mothers). The higher prestige of fathers over mothers (+1SD condition) intensified the
 349 effect of paternal rejection on children's maladjustment. Higher levels of children's
 350 maladjustment were found when fathers showed both high prestige and high rejection.
 351 The Johnson-Nyman technique revealed that the moderating effect of prestige is
 352 significant for scores above 8.44 on the prestige scale.

353



354

355

356 *Figure 3. Paternal acceptance-rejection predicting psychological maladjustment at varying levels of*
 357 *prestige in late childhood (9–10 years old).*

358 *PAQ=psychological maladjustment (higher scores indicate maladjustment); PARQF (higher scores*
 359 *indicate paternal rejection).*

360

361 **Discussion**

362 The main objective of this study was to learn more about why the acceptance or
 363 rejection of one parent could affect a child's adjustment more than the acceptance or
 364 rejection of the other parent when both are significant in the child's life. From a
 365 developmental approach, considering the children's age and sex, we explore to what
 366 extent interpersonal power and prestige might explain the greater impact of one parent on
 367 offspring of the other parent from late childhood to adolescence. The results partially

368 support this idea and show how the moderating effect of prestige varies across different
369 age groups.

370 Preliminary results in this study showed that the children's sex, in contrast to age,
371 was not significant in predicting psychological maladjustment. For this reason, the
372 variable of sex was excluded from the statistical analyses that followed. Accordingly,
373 recent cross-cultural meta-analyses within the IPARTheory found no differences in the
374 relationship between children's psychological maladjustment and perceived parental
375 rejection based on a child's sex [5, 8, 39]. However, these results have not always been
376 consistent (see [26]). Children's age, on the other hand, was positively related to
377 children's maladjustment. Thus, our data bring some support to the traditional view of
378 adolescence as a challenging period of life, especially early adolescence [40].

379 Consistent with previous studies, both fathers and mothers made an independent
380 and significant contribution to children's psychological adjustment across different age
381 groups. A great number of studies have shown that parental acceptance- rejection has a
382 significant effect on the psychological adjustment of children and adolescents across
383 different countries and cultures [5–9, 41, 42]. In these studies, it has been also found that
384 mothers and fathers' contributions to children's adjustment are not always similar in
385 intensity; in some studies paternal acceptance-rejection shows a stronger contribution
386 than maternal acceptance-rejection to children's adjustment [8, 10], while in others the
387 inverse is true [13, 25, 43]. The results in this study showed that maternal rejection, unlike
388 paternal rejection, made a different contribution to children's maladjustment depending
389 on the child's age. The effect of maternal rejection was higher than the paternal effect at
390 late childhood (age 9–10); however, this difference tended to disappear from early
391 adolescence to adolescence (age 11–16), even as paternal rejection became more relevant,
392 which is consistent with previous studies of these age groups [25, 42, 43]. The higher

393 contribution of maternal rejection in younger children can be explained by the existence
394 of close mother-child relationships at this age. When children become adolescents, they
395 become more distant and demand more autonomy from their parents [27, 44]. It is
396 generally acknowledged that mothers are usually highly involved in the day-to-day care
397 of children during earliest stages of development and spend more time with them than
398 fathers do [45-47].

399 Regarding the direct effect of parental power and prestige on children's
400 psychological adjustment, the effect size of power ranged from low to moderate in the
401 younger groups and became non-significant in the adolescent groups. Interpersonal
402 prestige was not significant except in the 13–14-year-old group. Most research has not
403 found significant direct effects of the relative power or prestige of fathers versus mothers
404 on children's psychological maladjustment (see [24]). However, previous studies with
405 children have shown a significant contribution of interpersonal power [48] or
406 interpersonal prestige [25] to the psychological adjustment of children.

407 Higher interpersonal power of the father relative to the mother was negatively
408 related to younger children's maladjustment. Younger children tend to feel very close to
409 their parents; obviously, the parents capacity to influence the decisions and behaviors of
410 children is expected to have a positive effect. Late childhood may be a more sensitive
411 moment for displaying the significance and relevance of the father's role. As children
412 become more autonomous, fathers may become more involved in their everyday concerns
413 and routines [49]. This shift could probably be supported by maturational and socio-
414 cultural modifications.

415 In contrast, our data showed that fathers being perceived to have more prestige
416 than mothers is positively related to adolescents' maladjustment only at 13–14 years. We
417 do not know yet why this was the case. Fathers who show higher signs of social approval,

418 esteem, respect and admiration than mothers might negatively affect early adolescents
419 who interpret this as a kind of superiority or invasive attitude when they need to feel more
420 distance from their fathers [50]. They might also interpret the mother's lower prestige as
421 a lack of support. In addition, there seems to be a consensus that conflict becomes more
422 intense during early adolescence and less strong from middle to late adolescence [27, 51].

423 Interestingly, our data showed that the moderating effect of parental prestige on
424 the relations between parental rejection (both mothers and fathers) and children's
425 adjustment was only significant in the group of younger children, for which maternal
426 rejection made a stronger contribution than paternal rejection to the children's
427 maladjustment. In this group, the higher prestige of one parent relative to another
428 intensified the acceptance-rejection of the parent who was perceived to have more
429 prestige. Higher levels of children's maladjustment were found when parents (father or
430 mother) showed both high prestige and high rejection. Likewise, higher levels of
431 adjustment were found when parents showed both high prestige and high acceptance.
432 Prestige seems to be a sign of parental salience that strengthens the impact of the
433 acceptance-rejection by the parents on the child.

434 The moderating effect of prestige in the group of 11–12-year-olds was only
435 significant for maternal rejection (not paternal rejection); however, the way in which
436 interpersonal prestige affected the relations between maternal rejection and children's
437 maladjustment was different from the younger group. At 11–12 years old, when the
438 interpersonal prestige of fathers tended to be higher than that of mothers, the impact of
439 maternal rejection on the children's maladjustment intensified. Higher levels of
440 maladjustment were found when mothers showed lower prestige than fathers (fathers are
441 perceived to have higher prestige) and mothers were perceived to have high rejection.

442 Consistently, higher levels of early adolescents' adjustment were found when mothers
443 showed higher prestige than fathers and mothers were perceived to have high acceptance.

444 Therefore, the significant moderating effects found support the idea that
445 offspring's perceptions of parental prestige constitute one class of variables that helps to
446 explain the higher influence of one parent over another, and this moderating effect
447 depends on the child's age. One of the answers to the question of why perceived parental
448 power or prestige moderates this relationship in some instances but not in others [24] may
449 be found in age and its attendant development processes. As has been previously found
450 (see for a review the special issue, [24]) prestige has been a significant moderator in some
451 studies with children or preadolescents (7–12 years old) [25, 43, 52] but not with
452 adolescents (15–17 years old) [43, 48, 53]. Some of these previous studies have shown
453 that interpersonal prestige intensified the effects of paternal rejection [25] and others that
454 it buffered the effects of maternal rejection [42, 53], but no studies to our knowledge have
455 compared these effects across age. The way interpersonal prestige moderates differently
456 in children versus early adolescents is difficult to explain. The higher prestige of one
457 parent versus another may compensate for the effects of their rejection on younger
458 children's maladjustment due to younger children's closeness to their parents. For this
459 reason, the perceived lower prestige of one parent versus another does not intensify
460 his/her rejection. In early adolescence this paternal compensation may disappear, and
461 lower maternal prestige may intensify the effects of maternal rejection. On the other hand,
462 we can speculate that interpersonal prestige may have more meaning for adolescents (i.e.,
463 they measure prestige based on signs of social approval, esteem, respect and admiration)
464 than for children (i.e., they measure prestige based on signs of salience, regardless of their
465 content), so the lack of maternal prestige could strengthen the effects of maternal rejection

466 on early adolescents' maladjustment and weaken the effects of maternal rejection on
467 children.

468 This study has some limitations. First, this research is cross-sectional in design,
469 and we cannot make any causal attributions about the influence of perceived interpersonal
470 power or prestige as moderators of the relationship between perceived parental
471 acceptance and offspring adjustment. For this reason, no causal attributions due to
472 children's age should be considered. Second, all measures were self-reported and
473 statistical associations obtained may be attributable to shared method variance, so the
474 results should be considered from the children's perspective. Other perspectives, such as
475 those of parents or external informants, must be considered to confirm these results.
476 Third, the parental power and prestige scale does not allow the power or prestige of one
477 parent to be measured independently from the other's, so this measure only provides the
478 relative levels of power and prestige between father and mother. Furthermore, this study
479 was conducted in Spain, within a Western cultural context. Different results could be
480 expected in other countries with different cultural contexts and varying roles for fathers
481 and mothers.

482 For future studies, a longitudinal approach is needed to give a more decisive
483 answer regarding the development of the relationship between parental acceptance-
484 rejection and adolescents' psychological adjustment, taking in to account the mother and
485 father's power and prestige. These longitudinal studies should be conducted in different
486 cultural contexts using different sources of information, such as parents or external
487 informants, with independent measures of power and prestige for mothers and fathers.

488 Despite these limitations, this study has shown that the degree of interpersonal
489 prestige that offspring perceived "catalyzed" the effect of parental rejection on the
490 children's maladjustment in different ways depending on the child's age. That is, the

491 results of this study showed that interpersonal parental prestige moderated the
492 relationship between perceived parental (maternal and/or paternal) acceptance-rejection
493 and offspring's adjustment at late childhood and early adolescence. Thus, the degree of
494 interpersonal prestige may be essential to the intensity of parental acceptance-rejection's
495 effects on their offspring's adjustment, especially for younger children and early
496 adolescents.

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