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**Role of Self-Esteem in Punitive Parenting and Psychological Reactions of Abuse and Neglect in Adolescents**

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Uzma Ashiq<sup>1</sup>, Sara Subhan<sup>2</sup>, Sayyeda Taskeen Zahra<sup>3</sup>**Abstract**

The objective of the study was to examine the moderating role of self-esteem in the relationship between punitive parenting and psychological reactions to abuse and neglect. The sample of the study was 305 (Girls=49%, Boys=50%) adolescents with the age range of 12-16 years ( $M=14.25$ ,  $SD=1.47$ ) of class 6<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> of 3 boys and 4 girls schools selected through multistage sampling technique. Culturally developed punitive parenting scale, self-esteem scale, and psychological reactions of abuse and neglect scale were administered. Results were discussed in light of cultural expressions and indicators of self-esteem, punitive parenting, and psychological reactions to abuse and neglect. Results suggested that self-esteem significantly moderates the relationship between punitive parenting and psychological reactions to abuse and neglect ( $\beta=.013$ ,  $SE. = -.005$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Regression analysis revealed that punitive parenting is a positive predictor ( $SE=.45$ ,  $p<.001$ ) of psychological reactions to abuse and neglect whereas self-esteem negatively predicts ( $\beta=-.006$ ;  $SE=.08$ ) psychological reactions to abuse and neglect in the association with punitive parenting in adolescents. Study findings suggest that punitive parenting significantly contributes to increasing psychological reactions to abuse and neglect in adolescents therefore the area of parenting needs noteworthy concerns to reduce mental health problems in adolescents.

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s2019166004@umt.edu.pk**Introduction**

The adolescent stage brought several dimensions to set life areas such as emotional, behavioral, and social which demand the support of parents (Banati et al., 2021). Indeed, parents play a significant role in determining a healthy environment to nourish adolescents (Hu et al., 2015). However, it's also factual that psychosocial problems are the trademark (Glatz et al., 2017) of the adolescent's phase, particularly identity development (Tian et al., 2018) autonomy, relationships, academic pressure, interpersonal issues, health, and behavioral problems, at any stage adolescents could present biological, social, emotional and moral issues. Prevalence of adolescents' chronic illness, school issues, and psychosocial problems are allied as risk factors (Pengpid et al., 2020).

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Global estimates provide facts that adolescents before turning 18 years old experience various forms of abuse and neglect such as physical abuse, harsh discipline practices, and maltreatment by parents (Okunlola et al., 2020). Later, the abuse and neglect experiences led to severe psychological distress (Tarafa et al., 2021) and the adolescents face loneliness, sadness, emotional disturbance, risk behaviors, and suicidal ideation (Aremu et al., 2019).

The studies conducted over some time highlighted various risk factors promoting abuse and neglect in children and adolescents among them, parenting style is significantly associated with this emerging problem in our culture (Ofoha & Ogidan, 2020). Disciplining adolescents is the imperative ingredient of parenting and in various parenting styles, punitive parenting is the key style that is extremely linked with the abuse and neglect experienced by the adolescents (Roche et al., 2011). Therefore, literature revealed that in adolescents, psychological reactions are the consequences of punitive parenting such as low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, behavior problems substance use, delinquency, antisocial behaviors (Chen et al., 2016) and low achievements (Tang & Davis, 2015).

Nearly across the globe in different cultures controlling and punitive parenting is frustrating, and limit autonomy, competence, and belongings (Brenning et al., 2019). Punitive parenting is considered a risk factor to leave a negative impact on psychological positive growth (Rizvi & Najam, 2015). A previous study has shown that punitive parenting is related to abuse and neglect such as shaming, physically punishing, verbal hostility, and the use of harsh discipline ways to manage adolescents (Brenning et al., 2019). The literature revealed that culturally Pakistani parenting is more related to punitive styles such as demanding, higher expectations, and obedience which in the

long run positively predict psychological problems in adolescents (Zahra et al., 2021). Along with several psychological reactions to abuse and neglect, adolescents also present low self-esteem (Szkody et al., 2021).

Self-esteem is a person's perception of self, formed by the environment and experience (Kelley, 1973). Self-esteem is specifically influenced by environmental factors and parents (Shavelson et al., 1976). Various studies have shown that self-esteem more is influenced by parenting practices used by parents (Garcia et al., 2020, 2018; Grusec et al., 2017). Therefore, punitive parents positively support ripen psychological reactions such as low self-esteem in adolescents (Banstola et al., 2020) whereas supportive parents develop positive self-esteem in adolescents through their supportiveness, praise, appreciation, familial behaviors towards success, and downfalls. (Chentsova et al., 2020; Tarafa et al., 2021). Punitive parenting endorses abuse and neglect in adolescents bringing mild to severe mental health problems in adolescents. The emotional neglect and abuse of parents negatively affect adolescents' self-esteem (Chentsova et al., 2020). It is found that adolescents mostly perceive parenting as demanding and harsh that predicts depressive symptoms and psychological reactions to abuse and neglect in adolescents (Tang & Davis, 2015).

Culturally, parents are less known for the positive disciplining to develop positive self-esteem in adolescents and long-term mental health consequences of abuse and neglect. Therefore, parenting style and development of self-esteem are associated with each other so it is vital to examine how self-esteem plays a moderating role as a risk and protective factor in the manifestation of psychological reactions to abuse and neglect in adolescents. This study aims to investigate the moderating role of self-esteem with punitive parenting

and psychological reactions to abuse and neglect in adolescents.

### **Objective**

The objective of the study was to identify the moderating role of self-esteem in the relationship between punitive parenting and psychological reactions to abuse and neglect.

### **Hypothesis**

It is hypothesized that self-esteem would moderate between punitive parenting and psychological reactions to abuse and neglect

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

The sample of the study consisted of 305 participants recruited on the basis of a multistage sampling technique. The sample was divided into two main strata; gender (Girls, 49%; Boys, 50%) aged 12-16 ( $M=14.25$ ,  $SD 1.49$ ) selected from 7 mainstream Government schools followed by substrata of class-wise 6<sup>th</sup> (7.5%), 7<sup>th</sup> (16.1%), 8<sup>th</sup> (21.3%), 9<sup>th</sup> (39.7%), and 10<sup>th</sup> (15.1%) Adolescents of private schools were excluded. Most participants were from the nuclear family system (65%). The sample was determined on the basis of each predictor; 30 participants against each predictor.

#### **Measures**

##### **Self Esteem Scale (SES)**

A self-esteem scale was administered to measure the self-esteem of the adolescents. It consists of four factors; academic self-esteem, self-confidence, social self esteem, and low self-esteem. It is a five-point rating scale (0-5) to rate each problem with options like 0 (never), 1(rarely), 2(to some extent), 3(too much), and 4 (always). It is comprised of 44 items. Its maximum scoring range was 220 and the minimum was 5. The scale represents .84 internal consistency (Zafar et al., 2012).

##### **Perceived Parenting Styles Scale (PPSS)**

The perceived parenting scale is used to measure the parenting styles in the Pakistani

context. It is a self-report measure consisting of four factors: positive parenting, overprotective, punitive, and controlling. It is a four-point rating scale of 0 (never), 1 (nearly), 2 (to some extent), and 3 (very much). It contained 60 items, scale suggests good internal consistency .88. In the current study, one factor as a subscale which was punitive parenting was measured. Its internal consistency is .78. Maximum score range was 240 and the minimum score was 4 (Saleem et al., 2017).

##### **Psychological Reactions Scale for Adolescents (PRSA)**

This scale was administered to measure the psychological reactions to abuse and neglect in adolescents. The scale comprised 36 items with three factors: sadness, emotion exhortation, and deviant behavior. It is a four-point rating scale of 0 (never), 1 (rarely), 2 (often), and 3 (always). Scale suggests good internal consistency .92. Its maximum score ranges were 144 and below was 36 (Ashiq & Subhan, 2021).

##### **Procedure**

First of all, official permission was attained from the institutional review board and the Government High School's heads of seven schools consisting of 4 girls and 3 boys schools. Then suitable time slot was finalized with associated class teachers. The aim, objectives, research protocol, and demographics of the study were defined to the relevant teachers to fulfill proper requirements of inclusion and exclusion criteria of age, gender, and classes. Data was collected in the classroom setting. Approximately participants took 45-60 minutes to complete the research questionnaires.

##### **Ethical Considerations**

Teachers were assisted to take the consent of the participants and the right to withdraw was clearly explained along with the confidentiality process. They were encouraged to ask any questions for their

clarity. In the end, debriefing was given to the participants along with a relaxation exercise. They were also offered counseling services if required.

**Results**

The regression coefficient was used to find out the association between punitive parenting, self-esteem, and psychological reactions in adolescents.

**Table 1**

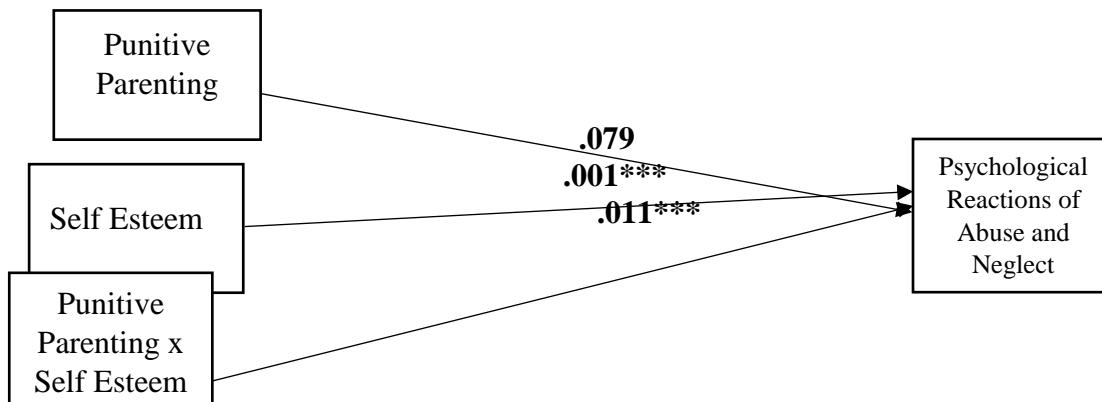
*The Regression Coefficient of Self-Esteem on Punitive Parenting and Psychological Reactions of Abuse and Neglect (N=305)*

Variables	$\beta$	SE	t	p	UL	LL
Constant	12.74	7.23	1.76	.07	-.150	26.9
Punitive Parenting	1.52	.45	3.3	.001***	.63	2.41
Self Esteem	-.006	.08	-.07	.93	-.17	.16
Psychological Reactions	-.01	.005	-.2.5	.01**	-.02	-.002
R <sup>2</sup>	.11					

Note. df =293, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Table 1 shows that punitive parenting (SE=.45, p<.001) is a positive predictor of psychological reactions to abuse and neglect. Whereas self-esteem is a negative predictor of psychological reactions to abuse and

neglect in association with punitive parenting ( $\beta$ =-.006; SE=.08). The R<sup>2</sup> value of .11 revealed with predictor variable 11% variance in the outcome variable with F (2, 291) =13.98, p<.001.



**Figure 1**

*Predictive Model of Psychological Reactions to Abuse and Neglect*

**Table 2**

*Regression Analysis to Investigate the Interaction Effect of Self-Esteem and Punitive Parenting on Psychological Reactions of Abuse and Neglect (N =294)*

Variables	Psychological Reactions of Abuse and Neglect		
	B	SE	95% CI
Constant	12.74	7.23	[-1.5-26.9]
Punitive Parenting	1.52***	.45	[.63 - 2.41]

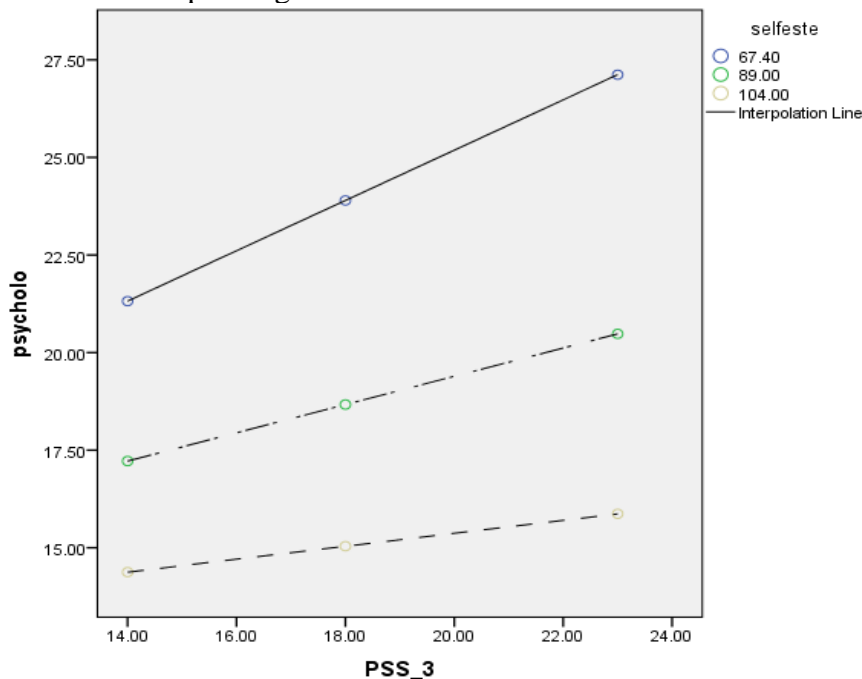
Self Esteem	-.006	.08	[-.17-.16]
Psychological Reactions x Self Esteem	-.01	-.005	[-.02-.00]
Low Self-Esteem	.64***	.16	[.31-.97]
Moderation Self Esteem	.16	.17	[-.18-.51]
High Self-Esteem	.36	.14	[.07-.64]
$R^2$	.11		
$F$	12.90***		

\*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 2 shows that punitive parenting ( $\beta=1.52$ ,  $SE=.7.23$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and low self-esteem is a significant positive predictor of psychological reactions to abuse and neglect ( $B=.67.40$   $SE=.16$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Findings also indicate that the interaction effect is significant in the association between punitive parenting, self-esteem, and psychological reactions to abuse and neglect ( $B=-.013$ ,  $SE = -.005$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Findings also concluded that role of self-esteem moderates between punitive

parenting and psychological reactions to abuse and neglect. Low self-esteem increased the level of psychological reactions to abuse and neglect ( $B= .67.40$ ,  $SE, .16$ ,  $p<.001$ ) whereas high self-esteem does not interfere with psychological reactions to abuse and neglect ( $B=.89$ ,  $SE = .14$ ) non-significant. Therefore, we can conclude that self-esteem has noteworthy interference in determining the psychological reactions of abuse and neglect associated with punitive parenting.

The interaction plot is given below:



**Figure 1**

Shows the moderating role of self-esteem in association with punitive parenting and psychological reactions to abuse and neglect

## Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine the role of self-esteem as a moderator in the relationship between punitive parenting and psychological reactions to abuse and neglect. Self-esteem is the key component instigated by family support (Krauss et al., 2020) later on influenced by the process of environment and socialization. A current study has established how self-esteem plays a vital role in determining the psychological reactions of abuse and neglect associated with punitive parenting. Parenting styles are highly connected to developing self-esteem such as warmth parenting develops higher self-esteem in adolescents (Queiroz et al., 2020). Whereas adolescents who experience harsh and punitive parenting exhibit psychological reactions and mental health problems (Neguyen et al., 2019). The current study examined that moderator self-esteem plays a risk and protective factor in determining psychological reactions to abuse and neglect (Freisthler & Kepple, 2019). Studies established that adolescents who experience abuse and neglect are prone to have mental health problems such as psychological severe reactions as a consequence of abuse and neglect endangering the self-esteem of the adolescents (Cano-Lozano et al., 2021). Unfavorable parenting styles such as punitive and harsh disciplines increase mental health problems and intensifies negative psychological consequence (Freisthler & Kepple, 2019). Moderating role of self-esteem shows that adolescents who got opportunities to strengthen their self-esteem tend to maintain less psychological reactions. It is also established that persons who develop strong self-esteem they also develop an ability to deal life challenges (Ho, 2019). Furthermore, findings suggest that role of parenting is vigorous in the life of adolescents negative parenting is highly associated with developing mental health problems. Adolescents who are with low self-

esteem have a higher level of psychological reactions (Mann et al., 2004) Study proved that self-esteem plays mediating role in life events and coping styles, therefore, mental health problems could be reduced by enhancing the self-esteem of adolescents. Moreover, there is a drastic need to enhance positive discipline practices contextually from cultural standpoints to reduce the severe negative consequences on the adolescent's wellbeing (Hollow et al., 2016).

Parents and caregivers are liable to learn about adolescents' needs and development challenges in their lives today. If parents will understand what challenges and opportunities adolescents are facing, they will get a better understanding to manage their behavior and boost their self-esteem.

### Limitations and Recommendations

The current study highlighted issues of school adolescents with specific age ranges. There are several adolescents out of the school not assessed. Furthermore, the current study sample was collected from one district, there are other districts that ought to be included in future research.

### Implications of the Study

Research would be useful for the caretakers to understand how parental role contributes in adolescent's wellbeing and other stakeholders such as teachers and school counselor can support adolescents to decrease psychological reactions of abuse and neglect by buffering positive self-esteem.

### Conclusion

The current study concluded that self-esteem plays a vital role in determining adolescents' psychological reactions related to abuse and neglect as a consequence of punitive parenting.

### Contribution of Authors

Uzma Ashiq: Conceptualization, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing - Original draft

Sara Subhan: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Writing-Reviewing & Editing  
 Sayyeda Taskeen Zahra: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing - Reviewing & Editing

### Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by authors.

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