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Parental Acceptance-Rejection, Social Cynicism and Ambivalent Sexism in Young Adult Women

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Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between parental acceptance-rejection, social cynicism, and ambivalent sexism in young adult women. It was hypothesized that parental acceptance-rejection would significantly correlate with and predict social cynicism and ambivalent sexism, and significant socio-demographic differences would be evident across the study variables. Through a cross-sectional research design, a sample of 205 young adult women, aged 18-26 years (M = 21.25, SD = 2.1), were recruited in-person through non-probability purposive sampling. The assessment tools included a self-developed Sociodemographic Information Sheet, Short Form of the Adult Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (Malik et al., 2012), Social Cynicism Scale for Women (Younas et al., 2023), and Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). SPSS version 23 was used to analyze the data. The findings showed paternal warmth/affection negatively correlated with, and predicted, institutional cynicism while paternal-undifferentiated rejection and paternal- hostility/aggression were negatively associated with dispositional cynicism. Moreover, paternal indifference/neglect positively correlated with, and predicted benevolent sexism. Single women reported higher paternal warmth, women from nuclear families exhibited higher cynicism scores, and urban women reported higher maternal indifference/neglect. This study suggests the need for interventions that promote positive parenting practices and challenge traditional gender norms to mitigate distrustful and sexist attitudes in young adult women.

Keywords: Ambivalent Sexism, Benevolent Sexism, Hostile Sexism, Parental Acceptance-Rejection, Social Cynicism

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Introduction

Parental acceptance-rejection (PAR), a salient aspect of the parent-child bond, significantly influences children's social and psychological health (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002). Parental warmth has been positively associated with positive worldviews and negatively with hostile dispositions across diverse cultures (Khaleque, 2012, 2014). In line with the sub-theory of PAR Theory, parental rejection in childhood is postulated to foster antagonistic worldviews in children and adults (Ali et al., 2022; Khaleque & Rohner, 2004). Such rejection by parents has been identified as a predictor of negative outcomes worldwide, regardless of race, ethnicity or geographical context (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002; Khaleque, 2012; Khaleque, 2014). One such negative worldview, which has gained recent attention, is social cynicism. Social cynics tend to be sceptical about the sincerity and integrity of individuals, groups, and institutions and are low in trustworthiness (Leung et al., 2010). Women may be particularly susceptible to

social cynicism due to various societal and cultural pressures, such as rigid parental control, discrimination and gender-based violence, which undermine trust in social institutions and values (Younas et al., 2021). Moreover, in the predominately patriarchal society of Pakistan, women nurture overt and covert negative feelings towards other women, frequently masked under seemingly positive expressions (Khan & Khalid, 2019). These attitudes align with dimensions of ambivalent sexism, including both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1997).

Parental Acceptance-Rejection

Parental warmth (acceptance/rejection) is deemed a substantial facet of parenting (Rothenberg et al., 2021). The acceptance extremity defines the comfort, concern, consolation, nurturance and love that children, as recipients, experience from their parent(s). The rejection extremity is defined by parents who treat their kids with discrimination, rejection, and disregard, (Rohner, 1980; Rohner & Khaleque, 2005). Children who receive consistent love and support from their parents are more likely to develop sound self-worth and a pleasant attitude towards life. On the contrary, children who experience parental rejection or neglect are susceptible to psychological issues and struggle with trust and attachment issues (Rohner, 1980). Attachment theory proposed by Bowlby (1969) suggests similar propositions; unbothered or harsh caregiving inculcates cynical relational schemas and negative views of people and relationships (Simons et al., 2012).

PAR uses a multidimensional model that includes four dimensions: warmth-affection (W/A), hostility-aggression (H/A), indifference-neglect (I/N), and undifferentiated rejection (UR) (Rohner, 1975). The W/A dimension of PAR reflects feelings of belongingness and affection, encompassing behaviors like hugging, praising, and quality time. The H/A dimension specifies anger and criticism, marked by behaviors such as yelling, hitting, and blaming the child for family problems. The I/N dimension symbolizes a lack of emotional involvement in the child's well-being. Lastly, The UR dimension represents inconsistent and unpredictable behaviors that confuse the child (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005). While the W/A dimension positively impacts children's well-being, the other three negative dimensions are associated with adverse outcomes (Rohner et al., 2005), including difficulty forming healthy interpersonal relationships, trust issues, attachment problems, (Rohner, 1980) etc. Harsh parenting has also been linked to an increased utility of hostile attribution bias (Simons et al., 2012).

Rohner's parental acceptance-rejection theory (PAR Theory) builds on Baumrind's (1974) parenting prototypes, offering a shift from the rather inflexible categories to the dimensional perspective, allowing for cultural variations that Baumrind's framework did not fully address. This flexibility has made PAR Theory applicable in explaining various social and personal outcomes in non-western contexts like Pakistan (Waheed et al., 2021; Walayat & Butt, 2017).

Parenting in the collectivistic culture of Pakistan, emphasizes obedience, parental control and harmonious interpersonal relationships, with fathers typically being more distant and mothers showing greater warmth towards their children (Stewart et al., 1999). In this context, women often suppress overt dissent to conform to parental expectations (Zaman, 2014), indulge in self-criticism and internalize harsh experiences (Tariq & Yousaf, 2020; Iqbal et al., 2023). The practice of self-silencing, which women often employ to obey their parents and avoid disrespect, has a significant influence on their psychological health (Ahmed & Iqbal, 2019). Given these cultural dynamics, investigating parenting behaviors through a dimensional framework is crucial for gaining a nuanced

understanding of how parental acceptance and rejection manifest within our culture.

Social Cynicism

Social cynicism refers to the negative attitudes or beliefs about the motives and intentions of others in society (Bou Malham & Saucier, 2014), often arising in response to perceived societal injustices, hypocrisy, and corruption. It is characterized by a pessimistic and negative outlook towards individuals and institutions of a society, leading to disillusionment and disengagement from social activities and responsibilities (Burgess, 2010; Leung et al., 2010) and a lack of faith in the effectiveness, or fairness of these institutes (Younas et al., 2021).

Social Dominance Theory (SDT) posits that social cynicism arises when people perceive themselves as occupying a lower position within a social hierarchy. In this context, social cynicism is viewed as a coping strategy that enables less resourceful people to shield themselves from the negative effects of their disadvantaged status (Pratto et al., 2006; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). Pakistan, a patriarchal society, stands at 145 out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report 2022, where women face a host of legal and societal barriers (UN Women, 2023). Our country is consistently highlighted for its severe gender disparity (Khan & Khalid, 2019). Also, in our patriarchal culture, the tolerance of women's subjugation, justified by customs and religion, creates an unsafe space for women with no societal support, contributing to underreporting of gender-based crimes and silence by victims (Hadi, 2017). These observations suggest women are disadvantaged, positioned at the bottom of the social hierarchies, and potentially prone to higher levels of SC.

Moreover, the literature supports the notion that women in highly male-dominated societies report higher levels of cynicism towards gender-based discrimination, as compared to men (Calogero & Jost, 2011; Leung et al., 2011), likely due to their greater awareness and personal experience of gender inequality. It would be logical to consider that women inevitably experience disrespectful treatment in societies with huge power gaps, and studies confirm disrespect as a strong correlate of cynical views pan-culturally, creating a vicious cycle of disrespect and cynicism (Stavrova et al., 2020).

Ambivalent Sexism

Glick and Fiske (2001) believed that: (1) patriarchal structures that justify male dominance, (2) gender differentiation that views women as inferior and confined to home, and (3) heterosexuality that further validates violence against women, were the structural bases of ambivalent sexism towards women. Glick et al. (2000) postulated the Ambivalent Sexism Theory in 1996, which combines the two facets of hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS).

HS refers to negative attitudes and stereotypes toward women, such as the idea that they are less intelligent, sentimental, powerless, or irrational (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Through overtly damaging depictions of women, HS aims to uphold male supremacy and conventional gender roles. Whereas, people high in BS view women favorably and display supportive behaviors if they adhere to traditional gender norms. Benevolent sexism reflects men's dependence on women and reinforces male dominance through seemingly nicer, but ultimately restrictive, views (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Both aspects of ambivalent sexism are mutually dependent yet contradictory in manifestation. When women do not live up to sexist norms, the security and affection that BS offers are quickly withdrawn (Glick & Fiske, 2011) which makes it equally patronizing, constrictive, and harmful as HS. Although the literature suggests boys and men score higher on ambivalent sexism, women or girls also have sexist attitudes towards same-sex fellows (Montañes et al., 2015; Nava-Reyes et al., 2018) that seems to

show an increase with age (Dueñas et al., 2020). In a similar vein, women prefer potential romantic partners with higher benevolent sexism if they have concerns about safety and attachment (Cross & Overall, 2018).

Literature Review

Scholarship has indirectly indicated how family dimensions distort adults' attitudes, making them distrustful of various relationships and experiences. For instance, Darling and Steinberg (1993) proposed that authoritarian attitudes of parents could lead children to perceive themselves as inherently flawed, fostering a belief that other children might be similarly evil and untrustworthy. Similarly, an indigenous study by Waheed et al. (2021) predicted lower social skills in children who perceived more parental rejection. The authors suggested that children might generalize their resentment and negative experiences with their parents to other relationships, thus exhibiting limited social competency. Likewise, a study suggested mothers' authoritarian attitudes increased the propensity to have hostile attributions in preschoolers and children in grade one (Runions & Keating, 2007). Younas et al. (2023) developed an indigenous scale to measure SC in women, based on a qualitative study that explored the causal factors underlying SC. The study reported that women likely experience more SC due to interlinking societal and cultural factors, with family and authority figures playing a key role. The findings offered insights into how parental, especially paternal, control and rigid authority fostered social cynicism in women. Another causal explanation was parents' safety concerns that amplified women's fear of commuting and engagement in public life (Younas et al., 2021). Furthermore, Ahmed and colleagues (2021) found that social cynicism beliefs were positively related to workplace bullying perceptions, moderated by Islamic work ethic. They concluded that for those reporting higher Islamic work ethic, a weakened link between social cynicism beliefs and workplace bullying perceptions was observed. These findings highlighted the significance of social and religious values in shaping workplace bullying perceptions. Similarly, stress, gossip and cynicism were linked to emotional exhaustion, with abusive supervision as a mediator, in Pakistani employees working in the banking sector (Bano et al., 2023).

Also, cynics high in hostility reported higher levels of perceived rejection and overprotection and low affective warmth by their parents. In this study, perceived rejection by parents emerged as the strongest predictor of hostility in adults. For women, rejection and overprotection by both parental figures predicted high hostility yet emotional warmth scores were similar in both high-hostility and low-hostility women (Meesters et al., 1995).

Simons and colleagues (2012) investigated harsh parenting as a predictor of negative views about romantic relationships in young African-American adults. Distrustful perceptions regarding relationships were assessed through insecure attachment and hostile attribution bias in participants; both were positively related to partner hostility and dismissive views about marriage. Moreover, harsh parenting emerged as a significant predictor of sceptical views regarding relationships. Malik and Rohner (2012, 2015), focusing on the "spillover effect", observed that spousal rejection positively correlated with children's perceptions of parental rejection in the Pakistani samples.

A consistent pattern in literature has associated perceived parental warmth with relatively positive outcomes and parental rejection with maladjustment and negative psychological outcomes, highlighting its global relevance to children's long-term well-being. For example, Khaleque (2012) found that children, across gender and culture, showed a positive correlation between parental (both maternal and

paternal) warmth and positive self-views. Similarly, a meta-analysis confirmed that the undifferentiated rejection (UR) dimension of PAR, perceived in the case of both attachment figures, showed a positive correlation with psychological maladjustment across 17 countries, irrespective of age. Specifically, the findings were more pronounced for perceived maternal undifferentiated rejection (Ali et al., 2018). A study postulated that younger children (both boys and girls) showed greatly influenced by perceived parental rejection. Emotional instability and low self-esteem were heavily influenced by parental rejection as compared to than that of boys (Ramírez-Uclés et al., 2017).

To broaden the conceptualization of family dynamics in predicting sexist ideologies, Ibabe and colleagues (2017) revealed that exposure to intimate violence predicted ambivalent sexism in young Spanish adults. Family socialization, a process by which cultural teachings are transmitted to the next generations, was argued to play an important role in which growing minds learn about attitudes, customs, and norms of the domestic sphere (Duncan & Goddard, 2017). In a similar vein, a study highlighted the significance of family in teaching adolescents traditional occupational roles of genders (e.g., men as security personnel, women in healthcare, etc.) (Farkas & Leaper, 2016). Similarly, a study indicated that boys had higher levels of ambivalent sexism than girls, although a small difference was observed in BS. Reprobation (strong rejection or disapproval) had the most significant relationship with BS and HS scores. The researchers concluded that constant emotional rejection by parental figures formed a foundation for gender stereotypes, fostering ambivalent attitudes (Dueñas et al., 2020). Similarly, Malonda and colleagues (2017) suggested that parental control significantly contributed to the development of sexism within a family setup.

Ashraf (2015) found that a father's BS had detrimental effects on the daughter's self-concept and career aspirations. She also found that a father's HS fostered BS in daughters over time, whereas a mother's HS fostered HS in daughters. Furthermore, Garaigordobil and Aliri (2012) concluded that the indulgent parenting style of both parents was significantly linked to low sexism in children. This indulgent parenting style was symbolized by high warmth and low levels of strictness by parental figures (Fuentes et al., 2022). However, Lee et al. (2007) suggested that, given the conflicting literature on parenting and children's ideologies, the development of legitimizing ideologies in children might not be solely determined by familial interactions.

To conclude social cynicism is fostered by social institutes, especially family dynamics (Younas et al., 2021). Moreover, the family milieu plays an evidential function in the dissemination of sexist views in children. We can infer that the family institution, especially facets of parenting, seem to play an integral role in presetting both SC and AS. Scarce literature on the interrelationship between research variables further affirms the need to study them together.

Rationale of the Study

Parents or key family figures shape children's attitudes, behaviors, and affective reactions in alignment with social and gender norms. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, familial conflict and use of force in childrearing and marital relations are high, with women considered the property of the male family members (Malik & Rohner, 2012). Also, Pakistani women are primarily appreciated within their traditional gender roles (Ali et al., 2022). This not only results in differential treatment from men but also reinforces patriarchal values, even in women. In addition, the rise of cynicism in recent times (Stavrova et al., 2020) with Pakistani samples scoring higher SC in a meta-analysis (Bond et al., 2004), underscores the need to explore this construct among our indigenous young

women. To the best of our knowledge, insufficient indigenous research has examined the inter-generational transmission of sexist beliefs (Ashraf, 2015) and how parental rearing behaviors supplement social cynicism in women. This research will inculcate appreciable findings in the extant scholarship for our collectivistic and predominately patriarchal society.

Objectives

- To investigate the relationship between parental acceptance-rejection, ambivalent sexism, and social cynicism in young adult women
- To study how parental acceptance-rejection predicts social cynicism and ambivalent sexism in young adult women

Hypotheses

- There would be a significant positive relationship between aggression/hostility, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection dimensions of PAR and social cynicism (institutional cynicism, experiential cynicism, and dispositional cynicism) in young adult women.
- There would be a negative significant relationship between the warmth/affection dimension of PAR and social cynicism (institutional cynicism, experiential cynicism, and dispositional cynicism)in young adult women.
- There would be a significant positive relationship of paternal indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection with benevolent sexism in young adult women.
- Aggression/hostility, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection dimensions of PAR would positively predict social cynicism (institutional cynicism, experiential cynicism, and dispositional cynicism) in young adult women.
- The warmth/affection dimension of PAR would negatively predict social cynicism (institutional cynicism, experiential cynicism, and dispositional cynicism) in young adult women.
- Paternal indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection would positively predict benevolent sexism in young adult women.
- There would be significant socio-demographic differences across study variables.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The present study followed the correlational (cross-sectional) research design. A non-probability purposive sampling strategy was used to recruit the participants. An a priori power analysis through G*power version 3.1.9.7 (Faul et al., 2007) indicated a minimum sample size of (N = 189) for the intended statistical analyses. 240 participants from universities in Lahore, Pakistan, were approached through direct, in-person engagement. The final dataset comprised (N = 205) young women aged 18 and 26 (M = 21.14, SD = 2.01). Following the acquisition of permissions from the respective authorities and authors, data collection was initiated. APA-mandated ethics were followed throughout the study. The data was collected after formal approval from the consenting participants. The participants filled out a sociodemographic information sheet before proceeding to scale items measuring study variables. The results were generated using SPSS version 23; the findings were accurately reported and contextualized within the existing literature.

Assessment Measures

Sociodemographic Information Sheet.

It included questions about age, educational experience, type of university, family background, family system, number of siblings, and relationship status.

Adult PARQ - Short Form. The Adult Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (Adult PARQ), containing 24 items, is used to document adults' views of the treatment of their mother or father towards them when they were 7 to 12 years old. The two versions of Adult PARQ include: (1) Adult PARQ: Mother, and (2) Adult PARQ: Father. A 4-point Likert scale (1: Almost never true, 2: Rarely true, 3: Sometimes true, 4: Almost

always true) records the participant's responses. PARQ consists of four subscales: (1) warmth/affection (8 items), (2) hostility/aggression (6 items), (3) indifference/neglect (6 items), and (4) undifferentiated rejection (4 items). The reliability coefficients (alphas) for Adult PARQ across 51 studies had a mean of .95 (Rohner, 2005; Rohner & Ali, 2016). The Urdu versions of both forms validated by Malik et al. (2012) were employed in this study.

Social Cynicism Scale for Women (SCWS).

The Social Cynicism for Women Scale (SCWS) is a 19-item indigenous scale, with three subscales: (1) Institutional Cynicism (10 items), (2) Experiential Cynicism (4 items), and (3) Dispositional Cynicism (5 items). Based on a 5-point Likert format (where 1 indicates "Strongly Disagree" and 5 indicates "Strongly Agree"), it explores levels of cynicism that women have related to social institutes, daily experiences and the prevailing stereotypes respectively. The alpha reliability for subscales of SCWS ranged from .54 to .86. This recently developed scale is currently only available in the English Language (Younas et al., 2023).

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory – ASI Form 2.

The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, a 22-item scale, was developed by Glick and Fiske (1996). Recording sexist views against women, it consists of two subscales: (1) Hostile Sexism and (2) Benevolent Sexism, each consisting of 11 items. BS subscale further encompasses three sources of ambivalence: Paternalism, Gender Differentiation, and Heterosexuality. A 6-point Likert scale (0 = disagree strongly to 5 = agree strongly) records the test taker's responses. The alpha reliability of HS and BS subscales are .92 and .85 respectively (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Our study, employing the English version, will analyze the total scores of HS and BS.

Results

Descriptive analysis indicated that participants were, on average, 21.14 years old (*SD* = 2.10) with an average educational experience of 14.5 years (*SD* = 1.50). On average, they had 3 to 4 siblings, and their monthly family income was around 178376.62 PKR (*SD* = 592706.67).

Table 1

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 205)

Variables	*n*	%	Variables	*n*	%
University			*Birth Order*		
Private	112	54.6	First born	61	29.8
Public	93	45.4	Middle born	87	42.4
Family Background			Last born	46	22.4
Urban	152	74.1	Only child	11	5.4
Rural	53	25.9	*Relationship Status*		
Family System			Single	152	74.1
Nuclear	139	67.8	Dating	16	7.8
Joint	57	27.8	Engaged	25	12.2
Others	9	4.4	Married	12	5.9

Note. n = frequency, % = percentage

Table 2

Psychometric Properties of Study Variables (N = 205)

Scales	*α*	*M*	*SD*	Range
Short Form of F-PARQ				
P-W/A	.82	22.86	7.83	10-65
P-I/N	.73	9.22	3.47	6-22
P-H/A	.79	8.57	3.24	6-21
P-UR	.63	6.36	2.16	4-15
Short Form of M-PARQ				
M-W/A	.89	25.78	6.12	11-32
M-I/N	.73	9.27	3.59	6-23
M-H/A	.74	9.15	3.27	6-20
M-UR	.47	7.01	2.14	4-16
DC	.68	17.18	3.74	5-25
IC	.81	36.30	6.53	12-50
EC	.65	16.28	2.56	6-20
Ambivalent Sexism Inventory				
HS	.62	35.08	6.92	11-51
BS	.53	32.22	6.03	10-45

Note. α= reliability coefficient, *M*= Mean, *SD*= Standard Deviation, F-PARQ = Father Form-Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire, M-PARQ = Mother Form-Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire, P-W/A = Paternal-Warmth/Affection, P-I/N = Paternal- Indifference/Neglect, P-H/A = Paternal- Hostility/Aggression, P-UR = Paternal- Undifferentiated Rejection, M-W/A= Maternal-Warmth/Affection, M-I/N = Maternal - Indifference/Neglect, M-H/A = Maternal- Hostility/Aggression, M-UR = Maternal- Undifferentiated Rejection, DC = Dispositional Cynicism, IC = Institutional Cynicism, EC = Experiential Cynicism, HS = Hostile Sexism, BS = Hostile Sexism

Table 2 shows Cronbach's alpha values for all scales employed in this study. Except for one, all other study variables had $\alpha > .50$ (α = .53 to .89) which was deemed acceptable as Field (2018) suggested an acceptable alpha cut-off value of .50 for social sciences. However, the subscale Undifferentiated Rejection of Maternal Form of PARQ demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha (α = .47) below the acceptable value.

Table 3

Correlations between Study Variables (N= 205)

Variable	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*
1.P-W/A		-.13	.14*	-.07	.19**	-.24**	-.11	-.26***	-.10	-.12	-.16*	.02	-.01
2. P-I/N		-	.67***	.72***	-.26***	.50***	.35***	.50***	-.06	.06	.10	.02	.14*
3. P-UR			-	.75***	-.14*	.30***	.38***	.29***	-.14*	-.05	-.04	-.04	.12
4. P-H/A				-	-.22**	.41***	.36***	.50***	-.17*	-.18	-.06	-.04	.11
5. M-W/A					-	-.32***	-.10	-.30***	-.06	-.10	-.08	.03	-.12
6 M-I/N						-	.60***	.67***	.02	.03	.02	-.05	.11
7. M-UR							-	.68***	-.001	.04	.01	-.04	.08
8. M-H/A								-	-.02	.03	.03	-.05	.07
9. DC									-	.40***	.65***	-.01	.01
10. EC										-	.30***	-.01	-.003
11. IC											-	-.06	-.08
12. HS												-	.51***
13. BS													-

Note. P-W/A = Paternal-Warmth/Affection, P-I/N = Paternal- Indifference/Neglect, P-H/A = Paternal-Hostility/Aggression, P-UR = Paternal- Undifferentiated Rejection, M-W/A= Maternal- Warmth/Affection, M-I/N = Maternal - Indifference/Neglect, M-H/A = Maternal- Hostility/Aggression, M-UR = Maternal-Undifferentiated Rejection, DC = Dispositional Cynicism, IC = Institutional Cynicism, EC = Experiential Cynicism, HS = Hostile Sexism, BS = Hostile Sexism.

*p < .05, **p < .01, *** p < .001

Table 3 documents the results of the Pearson-Product Moment correlation analysis. Paternal Warmth/Affection negatively correlated with Institutional Cynicism (r = .16, p = .02*) while Paternal Undifferentiated Rejection (r = -.14, p = .047*) and Paternal-Hostility/Aggression (r = -.17, p = .01*) had negative associations with Dispositional Cynicism. Paternal Indifference/Neglect was a positive correlate of BS (r = .14, p = .045*). Women who reported higher Paternal Warmth/Affection also reported higher Maternal Warmth/Affection, lower Maternal Hostility/Aggression and lower Indifference/Neglect. The paternal rejection dimensions were positively linked to the mother's rejection dimensions. All three subscales of SC showed positive correlations with each other; BS and HS were also positively correlated in our sample of young adult women.

Table 4

Stepwise Regression Results for Dispositional Cynicism in Young Adult Women (N= 205)

Predictor	B	SE	*β*	95% CI		*t*	*p*
				LL	UL		
Intercept	18.88	.73		27.63	32.32	25.79	.01***
P-H/A	-.20	.08	-.17	-.36	-.04	-2.48	.014*
F	6.17						
R^2	.029						

Note. P-H/A = Paternal- Hostility/Aggression, SE = Standard Error, CI = Confidence Interval, LL= Lower limit, UL= Upper Limit
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, only significant values reported

After the correlation analysis, the significant variables of Paternal Undifferentiated Rejection and Paternal Hostility/Aggression from the correlation table were added to the stepwise regression analysis. Table 4 shows that only Paternal Hostility/Aggression emerged as a significant negative predictor (β = -.17, p = .014*) of Dispositional Cynicism. P-H/A explained for 2.9% of the variance in DC with F (1, 203) = 6.17, p < . 05. Paternal-UR was excluded from the regression equation because of its non-significant predictive value.

Table 5
Linear Regression Predicting Institutional Cynicism in Young Adult Women (N= 205)

Predictor	B	SE	β	95% CI		t	p
				LL	UL		
Intercept	39.39	1.40		36.63	42.14	28.23	.01***
P-W/A	-.14	.06	-.16	-.25	-.02	-.23	.02*
F	5.48						
R^2	.026						

Note. P-W/A = Paternal- Warmth/Affection, SE = Standard Error, CI = Confidence Interval, LL= Lower limit, UL= Upper Limit, only significant values reported
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 5 reveals the findings of simple linear regression with Paternal Warmth/Affection as a predictor of Institutional Cynicism. Paternal Warmth/Affection emerged as a significant negative predictor (β = -.16, p = .02*) of IC. P-W/A explained for 2.6% variance in IC with F (1, 204) = 5.48, p < .05.

Table 6
Linear Regression Predicting Benevolent Sexism in Young Adult Women (N= 205)

Predictor	B	SE	β	95% CI		t	p
				LL	UL		
Intercept	29.98	1.19		27.63	32.32	25.20	.01***
P-I/N	.24	.12	.14	.01	.48	2.02	.045*
F	4.07						
R^2	.020						

Note. P-I/N = Paternal-Indifference/Neglect, SE = Standard Error, CI = Confidence Interval, LL= Lower limit, UL= Upper Limit, only significant values reported
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 6 indicates the findings of simple linear regression with Paternal Indifference/Neglect as a predictor of Benevolent Sexism. Analysis showed that Paternal Indifference/Neglect predicted BS (β = .14, p = .045*), explaining a 2.0% variance in BS with F (1, 203) = 4.07, p < .05.

Table 7

Independent Samples t-test for Family Background (N=205)

	Urban (152)		Rural (53)				
Variables	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***t(203)***	***p***	**Cohen'*d***
M-I/N	9.56	3.80	8.42	2.8	1.99	.02*	.04

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation,
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, only significant values reported

Table 7 indicates a significant difference in mean values of Maternal Indifference/Neglect reported by urban participants as compared to rural participants ($p < 0.5$); the effect size was extremely small (d = .04). Moreover, no significant differences were found between urban and rural participants for the rest of the study variables. Also, the differences between public and private university students were not significant for PAR, SC and AS subscales.

Table 8

One-way ANOVA Indicating Differences on Study Variables across Birth Order (N=205)

	First Born		Middle Born		Last Born		Only Child			
Variable	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***F* (3, 201)**	**η^2**
M-I/N	8.41	3.07	9.17	3.52	10.08	3.65	11.32	5.26	3.28*	.05

Note. M-I/N = Maternal - Indifference/Neglect, η^2 = eta squared
*$p < .05$, **$p < .001$, *** $p < .0001$, only significant values reported

A one-way ANOVA indicated significant differences in mean scores for Maternal Indifference/Neglect across the categories of birth order. Table 8 shows that women who belonged to the only-child category reported significantly higher M-I/N than those with siblings (F (3, 201) = 3.28, $p < .05$); the effect size was medium (η^2 = .05). LSD post-hoc test revealed significant differences between last-borns and first-borns (p = .02) and between only- child and first-borns (p = .01).

Table 9

One-way ANOVA Indicating Differences On Study Variables across Family System (N=205)

	Joint Family		Nuclear Family		Others			
Variable	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***F* (2, 202)**	**η^2**
DC	15.61	4.16	17.80	3.41	17.44	3.43	7.38**	.07
IC	33.34	7.70	37.66	5.53	34.00	6.72	10.26***	.09
P-H/A	8.63	3.61	8.37	2.90	11.33	4.70	3.66*	.03

Note. DC = Dispositional Cynicism, IC = Institutional Cynicism, P-H/A = Paternal- Hostility/Aggression, η^2 = eta squared
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, only significant values reported

Next, One-way ANOVA indicated significant differences in mean scores of DC, IC and P-H/A across categories of the family system. Table 9 shows that women from nuclear families reported significantly higher scores on Dispositional Cynicism than other two categories (F (2, 202) = 7.38, $p < .05$), with medium to large effect size (η^2 = .07). Women from nuclear families also reported higher on Institutional Cynicism, with large effect size (η^2 = .09). LSD post-hoc test revealed significant differences between participants from joint and nuclear families (p = .01***) for DC and IC (p = .01***).

Women belonging to the category "others" (hostels, shared spaces etc.) reported more Paternal- Hostility/Aggression than those from joint or nuclear families. However, the effect size was small ($\eta^2 = .03$).

Table 10

One-way ANOVA Indicating Differences across Relationship Status (N=205)

	Single		Dating		Engaged		Married			
Variable	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***F* (3, 201)**	**η^2**
P-W/A	23.37	7.99	18.69	6.66	6.76	1.35	7.44	2.15	2.93*	.04
P-H/A	8.20	2.59	9.56	4.44	9.72	4.90	9.58	3.99	2.68*	.04
M-I/N	9.06	3.63	9.12	3.19	9.00	3.01	12.67	3.42	3.98**	.06
M-H/A	8.85	3.06	9.81	4.13	9.28	3.48	11.87	3.34	3.53*	.05

Note. P-W/A = Paternal- Warmth/Affection, P-H/A = Paternal- Hostility/Aggression, M-I/N = Maternal - Indifference/Neglect, M-H/A = Maternal- Hostility/Aggression, η^2 = eta squared

*$p < .05$, **$p < .001$, *** $p < .0001$, only significant values reported

Also, one-way ANOVA indicated significant differences in mean scores of dimensions of PAR across the relationship status categories. Single women reported significantly higher P-W/A than other categories (F (3, 201) = 2.93, $p < .05$), with small-to-medium effect size ($\eta^2 = .04$). Engaged women reported more P-H/A ($\eta^2 = .04$) while married women scored higher on both M-I/N ($\eta^2 = .06$) and M-H/A ($\eta^2 = .06$) dimensions of PAR.

Discussion

The present study provides meaningful insights into the complex relationship of parental acceptance-rejection with little-studied variables of social cynicism and ambivalent sexism in young Pakistani women, highlighting how parental factors shape these psychological constructs in our indigenous context.

Initially, the reliability of the scales was ensured. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for both scales were acceptable, affirming their suitability within our socio-cultural context. Moreover, the Social Cynicism Scale for Women (SCSW), an indigenously developed scale (Younas et al., 2023), was employed in this study. Its prior validation in our culture further substantiates its appropriateness and utility for this study. Notably, our study is the first to examine the SCSW with other psychological constructs. However, the Undifferentiated Rejection subscale of the Maternal Form of PARQ showed slightly lower reliability. This could be attributed to differences in the perception of the concept within our Pakistani culture. Our religio-social framework expects deference towards maternal figures (Zaman, 2014), potentially resulting in social desirability bias. We also expected social desirability bias on the part of women participants as this research was about parental relationships and gender beliefs. However, data collection was exclusively conducted at universities unaffiliated with the researchers to mitigate potential biases associated with familiarity and perceived obligation. Participation was entirely voluntary, free from coercion or undue influence by the instructors.

Our results did not support the first and fourth hypotheses, as paternal-undifferentiated rejection and paternal- hostility/aggression exhibited negative associations with dispositional cynicism. Specifically, paternal hostility/aggression accounted for 2.9% of the variance in dispositional cynicism, indicating that paternal hostile and aggressive behaviors decrease women's cynical views. This contrasts with existing Western

literature, where paternal hostility is usually related to increased cynicism (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Meesters et al., 1995). However, our findings could be understood within the framework of cultural interpretations of parental behavior in Asian societies, where parental harshness is often perceived as a form of concern and protectiveness. Additionally, cultural norms and religious values emphasize paternal authority and respect (Zaman, 2014), which may lead children to downplay or reframe paternal harshness in a positive light, thereby mitigating its direct impact on social cynicism. The observed lack of significant results may also be attributed to this cultural context, where negative evaluations of parenting behaviors are potentially minimized or overlooked.

Our second and fifth hypotheses were partially accepted as the results revealed paternal warmth/affection negatively correlated with and predicted institutional cynicism in young women. This suggests that women who perceive greater paternal warmth are less cynical towards social institutions. This aligns with the PAR Theory, which indicates that parental warmth enhances positive worldviews and, psychological and social well-being in children (Khaleque, 2012; Khaleque & Rohner, 2002; Rohner, 1980). Given the strong parental authority in traditional families of Pakistan (Younas et al., 2021), this warmth may buffer against social cynicism, particularly among women who are otherwise marginalized in patriarchal societies.

Further, our third and sixth hypotheses were partially accepted. Specifically, higher levels of paternal indifference/neglect correlated with and predicted benevolent sexism in young adult women while paternal undifferentiated rejection did not exhibit a significant association. This aligns with prior research indicating that constant emotional rejection by parental figures can reinforce gender stereotypes and ambivalent attitudes (Dueñas et al., 2020). Also, BS is documented by Glick and Fiske (1996, 2001) to benefit women, as it supports the belief that women are deserving of men's protection, provision and admiration. This superficially beneficial aspect of BS might explain why women continue to endorse sexist views towards their own gender (Bareket & Fiske, 2023). Furthermore, Garaigordobil and Aliri (2012) found indulgent parenting style, which contrasts with the indifference/neglect dimension, is linked to low sexism in children.

The non-significant correlations between other PAR dimensions and ambivalent sexism may be attributed to the reasoning that children's belief systems cannot be solely explained by familial interactions (Lee et al., 2007). Moreover, various external variables contribute to the stigmatization of women such as harassment, and rigid sociocultural norms (e.g., prohibiting interaction with unknown men, discouragement of night-shift jobs etc.) that limit women's social and professional mobility (Gentile et al., 2022). Such barriers may foster negative worldviews, suggesting that the interaction of these societal and cultural factors likely plays a more substantial role in shaping cynicism than familial dynamics alone. This might also explain the non-significant associations between PAR dimensions and social cynicism observed in our sample. Future research could examine the combined impact of these broader influences more thoroughly by developing a systematic model, integrating familial, social, cultural and legal variables.

The socio-demographic variables also provided key insights into our study's findings, supporting our seventh hypothesis. Women from urban areas reported higher maternal indifference/neglect. Urban lifestyles are often characterized by individualistic cultures, nuclear family structures, economic pressures that necessitate extensive job hours and diminished emotional bonding between

parents and children, likely contributing to low perceived maternal attention. This lack of emotional connection might also result in trust issues in children (Hendriati & Okvitawanii, 2019). This observation aligns with our findings that women from nuclear families reported more social cynicism than those from other living arrangements. In contrast, joint families provide additional emotional warmth and support through grandparents, positively influencing children's perceived parenting and mitigating the effects of unsupportive parents on children's social skills (Akhtar et al., 2017). Interestingly, women with no siblings had significantly higher scores on maternal indifference/neglect than those with siblings. This finding could be contextualized with the framework of collectivistic cultures where the pressures of "fitting in" heighten the sense of unfulfilled expectations from close relationships (Chen et al., 2014; Lin et al., 2021). Moreover, the absence of sibling support and increased parent-child conflicts documented in scholarship (Khadaroo, 2018), might exacerbate dissatisfaction with attachment figures in only children. Also, higher paternal hostility/aggression was reported by women living in shared spaces (e.g., hostels, shared apartments etc.). This may be explained by the trend of leaving parental homes at an early age due to disruptive families, negative home environments (Bernhardt et al., 2005) or as Perica (2021) observed, due to strict control by parents.

This study uniquely revealed that single women reported more paternal warmth whereas married women reported higher perceived hostility/aggression from both parents, specifically maternal neglect. Although the existing literature does not directly address this gap, a relative notion suggests that parental attitudes and behaviors often change once the daughters are married. As Zahra, (2018) notes, "Sadly in this society (Pakistan), there is always a distance that develops between parents and their daughters after they are married", which might contribute to daughters' resentment towards their parents and potentially reshape their memories of past parental warmth. Furthermore, research indicates that unhealthy attachment with parents could lead to negative reminiscence in adulthood. Moreover, the younger individuals score higher on bitterness revival, recalling perceived past unjust experiences (Ferrario & Demiray, 2023). These contextual insights provide further support for our findings and highlight the complex dynamics of how parental behavior is perceived and remembered over time.

Conclusions

The present cross-sectional study investigated the relationship between dimensions of parental (both maternal and paternal) acceptance-rejection, social cynicism and ambivalent sexism in young adult women. The outcomes suggested paternal warmth reduces cynicism regarding social institutions and, paternal indifference/neglect reinforces benevolent sexism, where women conform to their traditional gender roles in a patriarchal society like Pakistan. However other dimensions of PAR did not significantly correlate with SC or AS, indicating that familial dynamics alone do not fully explain these constructs in young women. Sociodemographic differences were observed, with women from nuclear families scoring higher on dispositional and institutional cynicism. Moreover, married women and those living in shared spaces scored higher on perceived parental hostility. Urban participants and married women also scored higher on maternal indifference and neglect.

Limitations and Suggestions

Firstly, the sample was recruited from universities within the Lahore region; the results of the study variables may not capture the experiences of young women from diverse backgrounds, especially those from unprivileged areas. Further, reliance on self-

reported measures to capture past parental behaviors risks retrospective distortion, and social desirability bias due to strong cultural emphasis on parental authority and respect. The university culture, educational exposure and peer influence might also have influenced participants' responses. Moreover, causal inferences could not be derived from this research. Future studies could employ longitudinal studies to reduce biases and effectively determine the role parental attitudes play in influencing cynical and sexist views in children.

Future studies could also explore additional personal and societal influences such as personality traits, globalization, parents' education etc. to develop a more comprehensive model of study variables, as these impact cultures and family dynamics over time (Lansford et al., 2021). This may also help clarify the non-significant direct relationships between most PAR dimensions and outcomes like social cynicism and ambivalent sexism.

Implications

This study supports the PAR Theory notion that parental warmth can mitigate antagonist attitudes in children. The findings, overall, offer an initial understanding of how parental attitudes and behaviors may result in sexist and distrustful attitudes in women, providing a foundation for targeted interventions. These results are particularly relevant to mental health practitioners who can design interventions to enhance parental warmth to reduce social distrust in young women. Family-centered programs could focus on addressing parental practices that contribute to the internalization of sexist attitudes. Given the higher incidence of maternal neglect in urban women, interventions should emphasize fostering healthy emotional bonds between mothers and daughters.

Contribution of Authors

Faiz Younas: Methodology, Formal Analysis, Writing - Reviewing & Editing

Areeba Javaid: Methodology, Writing - Reviewing & Editing, Supervision

Vicar Solomon: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by the authors.

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Data Availability Statement

The datasets of the current study are not available publicly due to ethical reasons but are available from the corresponding author [V.S.] upon the reasonable request.

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