

## Research Paper

# The relationship between perceived stress and parental rejection and child aggression during the corona epidemic

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**Abstract**

Due to the effects of corona, school education has been done at home. School closures and students' home quarantine due to the epidemic also affect children's physical and mental health; thus, it can be expected to have an effect on parental stress and rejection. Therefore, a study was conducted to investigate the relationship between perceived stress and parental rejection and child aggression in corona epidemic. The research design was descriptive and correlative, and its population included parents with children aged 12 to 17 years in Boroujerd in the academic year 2020-2021. The sample size was 386 people who were selected using random sampling method. Questionnaires used included the Karimi Aggression Scale (2012), the Cohen Perceived Stress Scale (1983), and the Rohnner Parental Rejection Scale (2005). Data were analyzed using Spearman correlation test and SPSS-21 software. Findings of the study showed a significant positive relationship ( $r = 0.481$ ) between negative parental stress and children's aggression. There was also a negative and significant relationship between parents' positive stress and children's aggression ( $r = -0.286$ ). Finally, there is a positive and significant relationship between parental rejection and child aggression ( $r = 0.606$ ); Therefore, stress and rejection of parents are effective in the occurrence of aggressive behaviors of children in the corona.

**Keywords:**

Aggression,  
Parental Rejection,  
Stress,  
Corona

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## ***Extended Abstract***

### ***Introduction***

During the corona epidemic, many signs of psychological damage such as panic disorder, emotion disorder, anxiety, depression, irritability, aggression, and sleep disorders have been reported in individuals (Rubin & Wessely, 2020). According to studies, the more severe the parents' psychological problems such as anxiety; stress and depression, the higher the incidence of behavioral disorders such as aggression in children (Riahi et al, 2012). Findings of Dirks et al, (2011) also indicate that aggression is a behavioral problem and if it intensifies, it can cause communication problems and personality disorders. Aggression in behavioral sciences and psychology means behavior that leads to harassment and pain (Yaghobi, et al, 2011). There is ample evidence that the pattern of negative parent-child interaction predicts externalization problems in the child (Shiralinia et al, 2019). Mothers with anxiety, depression, and poor mental health perceive their children negatively, which affects the way they treat their children and the way they behave to their children (Aslani et al, 2015). Recent findings from China show that more than 25% of the general population experience severe levels of stress or anxiety caused by the coronavirus (Qiu, et al, 2020). People respond differently to life changes, positive stress can be a motivator, while negative stress can occur when these changes and needs fail. One of the most important reasons for aggression in children is learning from parental behavior among which stress is also one (Azizpour et al, 2017), i.e. children who have aggressive behavioral patterns behave like their own patterns. The critical situation of the epidemic created problems in the families that affect the mental health of the family and their children. The negative effects of the epidemic and the children's not going to school will affect their behavioral problems and their interactions with their parents. Given that according to the results of a study (Chester and De Wall, 2015) there is a relationship between maternal stress and behavioral problems such as aggression in children in the coming years, so corona epidemic provided the conditions for this study to be accomplished on the relationship between perceived stress and parental rejection with their children's aggression during the corona epidemic.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In this regard, studies have been conducted in and outside the country that confirm the relationship between maternal rejection / acceptance with the level of aggression in children. DeWall et al, (2010) also showed that long-term acceptance and sudden parental rejection has a significant effect on social relationships and adolescent aggression. In this regard Shiralinia et al, (2019) in a study showed that children's behavioral problems can be affected by maternal stress, the quality of mother-child relationships and maternal mental health. Researches of Hooper et al, (2015) has also shown that there is a relationship between maternal stress and behavioral disorders in children, including aggression. Thus, mothers' mental health problems are associated with short-term and long-term risks to their children's physical, cognitive and mental development (Thapa, et al, 2020), and this can affect parent-child interactions. Children are especially important in corona epidemic because according to research of Pitula et al, (2015) childhood stress can lead to aggression leading to murder in adolescence. Also, it should be considered that aggression in children with learning disabilities is a predictor of depression in these children during adolescence (Morris & Rottenberg, 2015).



## Methodology

The research design was descriptive and correlative. This research was applicable in terms of purpose. The statistical population of the study consists of 1500 parents with children aged 12 to 17 years in Boroujerd in the academic year 2020-2021. Using random sampling method, 386 people were selected as a statistical sample. For a closer look, the research was conducted when a year had passed since the Corona epidemic. The conditions for completing the questionnaire were that only parents whose children were 12 to 17 years old and had no psychological disorders such as hyperactivity and aggressive behaviors in their children's school record could complete the questionnaires. Data collected using the standard questionnaires of Aggression Scale (Karimi, 2012), Perceived Stress Scale (Kohen, 1983) and Parental Exclusion Scale (Rohnar, 2005).

## Discussion and Results

The results of Spearman correlation test to investigate the relationship between parental stress and children's aggression show that there is a positive and significant relationship between negatively perceived parental stress and aggression thinking component at the level of 0.01 ( $r = 0.603$ ), and a positive and significant relationship between negatively perceived stress and aggression component at the Level 0.01 ( $r=0.454$ ), and a positive and significant relationship between negatively perceived stress and the aggression component (total) of children at level 0.01 ( $r = 0.481$ ). This means that with the increase of negatively perceived stress of parents, the level of aggression of their children has also increased; but no significant relationship was found between children's aggressive behavior at home and their parents' negatively perceived stress.

The results of Spearman correlation test to examine the relationship between parental exclusion and child aggression show that there is a positive and significant relationship ( $r = 0.486$ ) between the predictor of cold / lack of love variable with children aggression at the level of 0.01. In addition, all components of parental exclusion, including violence / aggression ( $r = 0.278$ ), indifference / neglect ( $r = 0.514$ ), lack of differentiation / exclusion ( $r = 0.587$ ) and exclusion (total) ( $r = 0.606$ ) have a positive and significant relationship with children's aggression at home. This means that with the increase of rejection and its dimensions in parents, the amount of aggression of children at home has also increased.

## Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between perceived stress and parental rejection and child aggression during corona epidemic. These findings were consistent with the results of Azizpour et al, (2017), Sadeghzadeh et al, (2019), Morris & Rottenberg, (2015) on the effect of parental stress on child aggression. Explaining this finding, it can be concluded that parents, especially mothers, have had more interaction with their children in the conditions caused by the corona epidemic. Hossein (2014) believes that although both parents play their role in the process of child's upbringing and care, the mother has a greater role than the father in many societies. Therefore, the negative stress caused by this disease has caused mothers to use more strict parenting methods at home, and this has been effective in their children's behavioral problems, and they have exhibited aggressive behaviors. These results were consistent with studies of Shiralinia et al, (2019), Khanjani et al, (2016), and Kolshadi and Yazdkhashti, (2016). Explaining this finding, it should be said that parental rejection has a direct and positive relationship with children's aggression, and since the corona epidemic has increased parental stress, it has led to coldness and reduced parental affection, as a result of which children use aggressive behaviors to attract their parents' attention.