



Rejection Sensitivity as a Mediator of the Effects of Parental Support on Friendship Alienation

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Introduction

- Previous research has shown that adolescents who are more securely attached to parents have greater success in forming friendships and have higher friendship satisfaction ratings (Parade et al., 2010).
- Previous research has also shown an association between parental relationship quality and friendship quality, so that with higher relationship quality with parents, there is an increased probability of higher friendship quality, although the process by which these variables are related remains unclear (Mounts et al., 2006).
- Rejection sensitivity, or the tendency to readily perceive and expect social humiliation or rejection, has been shown to have a moderating effect on attachment avoidance and friendship quality, but was not found to have a mediating effect (Ayca et al., 2010).
- Research Question: Is the association between parental support and friendship alienation partially accounted for by a mediating effect of rejection sensitivity?

Hypotheses

- Parental support will be inversely associated with rejection sensitivity and friendship alienation.
- Rejection sensitivity will be positively associated with friendship alienation.
- The inverse association between parental support and friendship alienation will be mediated by rejection sensitivity.

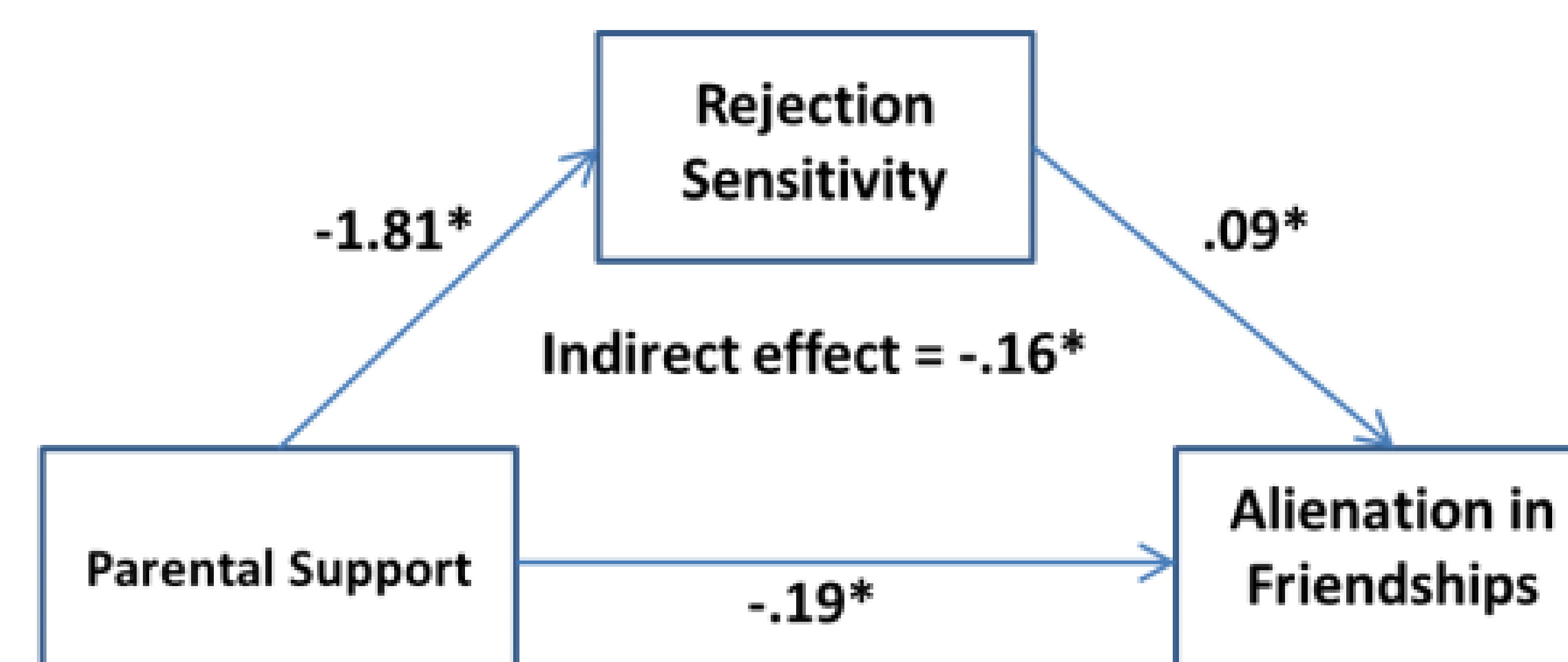
Method

- Participants: 214 undergraduate students
 - 123 male, 91 female
 - 87.0% Caucasian, 3.7% African American, 3.7% Asian, 5.6% Other
- Measures:
 - Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ; Downey & Feldman, 1994): measures sensitivity to rejection in social situations
 - Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Armsden & Greenburg, 1987): measures psychological security and support received from relationships
 - 3 contexts: mother, father, peers
 - 2 scales used: parent communication (i.e., parental support), friend alienation
- Analyses
 - Multiple regression, bootstrap mediation

Table 1. Pearson correlation coefficients; * $p < .05$

	Variable	1.	2.
1.	Rejection Sensitivity		
2.	Parental Support	-.38*	
3.	Alienation in Friendships	.49*	-.20*

Figure 1. Results from mediation analysis; * $p < .05$



Results

- Bivariate correlations showed that friendship alienation was positively correlated with rejection sensitivity and inversely correlated with parental support. Rejection sensitivity and parental support were inversely correlated (see Table 1).
- In multiple regression analyses predicting friendship alienation, parental support was inversely associated and rejection sensitivity was positively associated with alienation.
- Tests of mediation showed that rejection sensitivity partially mediated the inverse association between parental support and friendship alienation (see Figure 1).

Discussion

- Young adults reporting high levels of parental support are less likely to be rejection sensitive and report having lower levels of friendship alienation, and therefore higher quality friendships.
- These results suggest that young adults with poor parental support may be at risk for developing high levels of rejection sensitivity.
- With high levels of rejection sensitivity, there is also an increased risk of experiencing alienation in friend relationships.
- Further research should explore this mediating effect for romantic relationships in addition to friend relationships.
- The present study is limited by use of cross-sectional data and a correlational design.