

The role of aggression in shaping mental health among teenagers: a study on social anxiety and depression

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of aggression on social anxiety and depression among adolescents. Results reveal that adolescents with higher aggression levels exhibit increased social anxiety and depression, with males showing more pronounced effects. These findings align with La Greca & Lopez (1998)^[1] and Kaltiala-Heino et al. (2000)^[2] regarding the link between aggression and social anxiety. However, they contradict Crick & Grotpeter (1995)^[3] and Beck et al. (1996)^[6], who found higher depression in females. A significant positive correlation between social anxiety and depression was also identified. Further research is needed to explore these relationships in more detail.

Keywords: aggression, social anxiety, depression, adolescents

I. INTRODUCTION

Aggression is a significant behavioral issue that can profoundly impact the mental health of teenagers. During adolescence, a critical period of development, individuals often face various social and emotional challenges that can influence their behavior and well-being^[4]. Aggression, characterized by hostile or violent behavior, can stem from multiple factors, including environmental stressors, family dynamics, and peer interactions^[5]. Understanding the role of aggression in shaping mental health outcomes such as social anxiety and depression is crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems for adolescents.

Social anxiety, defined as the fear of social situations and interactions, can significantly hinder an adolescent's ability to form and maintain relationships, leading to isolation and increased vulnerability to other mental health issues^[1]. Depression, another common mental health concern, is marked by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a lack of interest in activities. It can severely impact an adolescent's daily functioning and overall quality of life^[6].

Previous research has established a connection between aggressive behavior and negative mental health outcomes in adolescents. For instance, studies have shown that teenagers who exhibit higher levels of aggression are more likely to experience elevated levels of anxiety and depression^[2]. Additionally, gender differences in the expression and impact of aggression have been observed, with male adolescents often displaying more overt aggressive behaviors, while females may internalize their aggression, leading to different mental health challenges^[3].

This study aims to explore the relationship between aggression and mental health outcomes among teenagers, focusing on social anxiety and depression. By examining the moderating role of gender and other demographic factors, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how aggression influences mental health during adolescence. The findings will contribute to the development of targeted interventions and support mechanisms to mitigate the adverse effects of aggression on teenagers' mental health.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kaur et al (2019)^[8] conducted research to study the prevalence of aggression among adolescents and to find out the associated risk factors. Settings and Design It was a community-based study conducted in the senior

secondary schools of urban and rural field practice area of AIMSRS. Materials and Methods Pre-tested, validated questionnaire and Buss and Perry Aggression score were used to assess the levels of aggression in the participants. Sample size of 250 was taken for each group, i.e., a total of 500. Results and Conclusion In our study, the total prevalence of aggression was found to be 51.9% with higher scores in urban population, males having more of physical aggression and females having hostility – associated significantly with the age distribution, residency type, etc.

Voulgaridou& Kokkinos (2023)^[9] conducted a review study to present the existing research on relational aggression across cultures during adolescence, a developmental period where the importance of peer relations peaks. Emphasis was placed on gender differences in relational aggression cross-culturally. A systematic literature search between 2010 and 2022 yielded 76 published studies, classified according to studies' characteristics (participants, information source, study's design), gender differences and relational aggression's prevalence. Adolescents in European and American countries reported low scores on relational aggression, while the majority of the studies that were conducted in Asia indicated higher engagement in relational aggression. In Africa and Australia, the findings were inconclusive regarding the prevalence of relational aggression. One third of the studies found non-significant gender differences adolescent relational aggression. The majority of the studies in Africa, Asia, Australia, and Europe showed that males scored higher on relational aggression, while in America most of the research demonstrated higher scores for females. Future comparative research on relational aggression during adolescence across cultures is suggested.

Rum et al. (2023)^[10] conducted a study to examine the daily diary study, we sought to understand the interplay between daily social anxiety and depression symptoms and emotion and motivation, determining whether daily symptoms are independently linked with positive affect, negative affect, and social motivation (desire to approach or to withdraw from others). Community-dwelling adults (N = 269) with a wide range of social anxiety and depression symptoms completed daily assessments for 14 consecutive days (a total of 2,986 daily surveys). Within-person analyses found that increases in social anxiety and depression symptoms were uniquely associated with elevated negative affect; only increases in depression symptoms were associated with diminished positive affect. Increases in social anxiety symptoms were associated with an elevated desire to approach others but not a desire to withdraw from others. By contrast, increases in depression symptoms were associated with a diminished desire to approach others and an elevated desire to withdraw from others. Desire for social connection may distinguish social anxiety from depression. Examining patterns of daily social motivation may enhance clinicians' ability to differentiate the difficulties that arise from social anxiety from those that arise from depression.

Vidal &lhaksampa et al.,(2020) ^[11] in their study there have been increases in adolescent depression and suicidal behavior over the last two decades that coincide with the advent of social media (SM) (platforms that allow communication via digital media), which is widely used among adolescents. This scoping review examined the bi-directional association between the use of SM, specifically social networking sites (SNS), and depression and suicidality among adolescents. The studies reviewed yielded four main themes in SM use through thematic analysis: quantity of SM use, quality of SM use, social aspects associated with SM use, and disclosure of mental health symptoms. Research in this field would benefit from use of longitudinal designs, objective and timely measures of SM use, research on the mechanisms of the association between SM use and depression and suicidality, and research in clinical populations to inform clinical practice.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are objectives of the studies

1. To study the impact of gender on social anxiety and depression.
2. To study the impact of gender on aggression and depression.
3. To find out the association between social anxiety and depression in adolescents.

IV. HYPOTHESES

1. There is significant impact of gender on social anxiety.

2. There is significant impact of gender on depression
3. There is significant impact of aggression on social anxiety.
4. There is significant impact of aggression on depression.
5. There is association between aggression and depression.

V. SAMPLE

The sample for the present study was consisting of 40 adolescents who were chosen based on a purposive sampling technique from gender (male and female) and aggression (high and low) on social anxiety and depression.

VI. TOOLS

Personal Data Questionnaire (PDQ) - This questionnaire was prepared by the researchers for eliciting information about the respondents name, age, gender, place of residence qualification etc.

The IIP Aggression Scale (16-0558-M) is the first scale used to assess the amount of aggression in children. Dr. Kranti K. Srivastava is the creator of this scale. The final form comprises 30 items with six choices, each rated on a five-point scale, and a zero point for the negative dimension. The correlation coefficient for the split-half reliability is 0.79 for men and 0.82 for women. It was 0.78 for the dependability coefficient.

Social Anxiety Disorder Scale developed by Nagpal Singh for adolescents in its final form comprised of 42 items. Social anxiety disorder score of the subject is the sum total of all item scores. The theoretical range of scores is from 42 to 210, high scores reflecting relatively higher level of social anxiety disorder of adolescents and vice-versa. The tryout group used for the scale was 100 adolescents of age between 15-18 years. The test-retest reliability was found to be 0.79. To establish the validity of the present scale the concurrent validity index was. Validity index comes out to be 0.59

Beck Depression Inventory (version I) - 21 item (BDI-21) is a self-rated 21 item depression inventory, with each item rated in a 0–3 Likert scale of increasing intensity., this measure, classifies depression as minimal depression (score of 0–13), mild depression (score of 14–19), moderate depression (score of 20–28), and severe depression (score of 29–63).

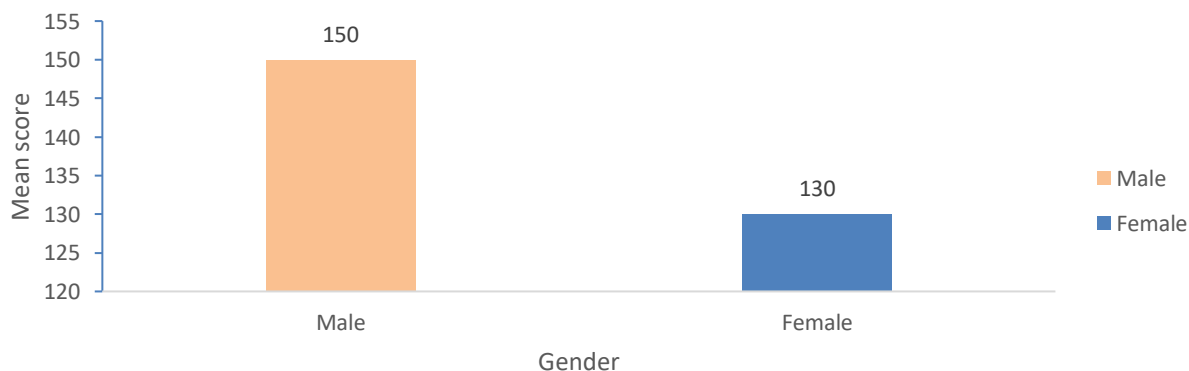
VII. ANALYSIS

Table 1: Effect of gender on social anxiety

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	df	t-value	P
Social Anxiety	Male	20	150	20	20	38	3.21**	p < 0.01
	Female	20	130	18				

*Significant at 0.01, **significant at 0.05, NS: no significant

Figure 01: Mean Score of male and female adults on Social Anxiety



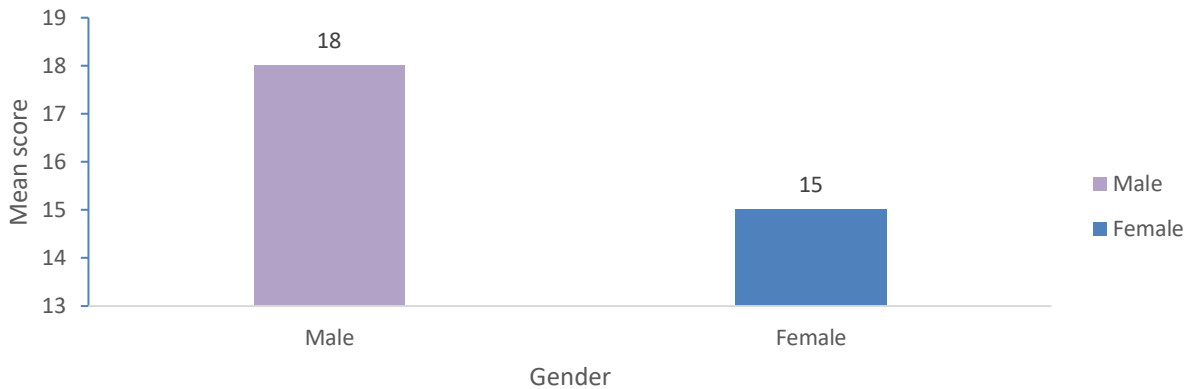
From the table 02 and figure 01 it is clear that the mean score on social anxiety of male and female adults exhibited 150 and 130 respectively. The difference between mean score of male and female adults 20. SD of male and female adults were 20 and 80 respectively. The obtained t- ratio was 3.21 which was significant at 0.01.

Table 2: Effect of gender on depression

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	df	t-value	P
Depression	Male	20	18	5	3	38	2.45*	p < 0.05
	Female	20	15	4				

*Significant at 0.01, **significant at 0.05, NS: no significant

Figure 02: Mean Score of male and female adults on Depression



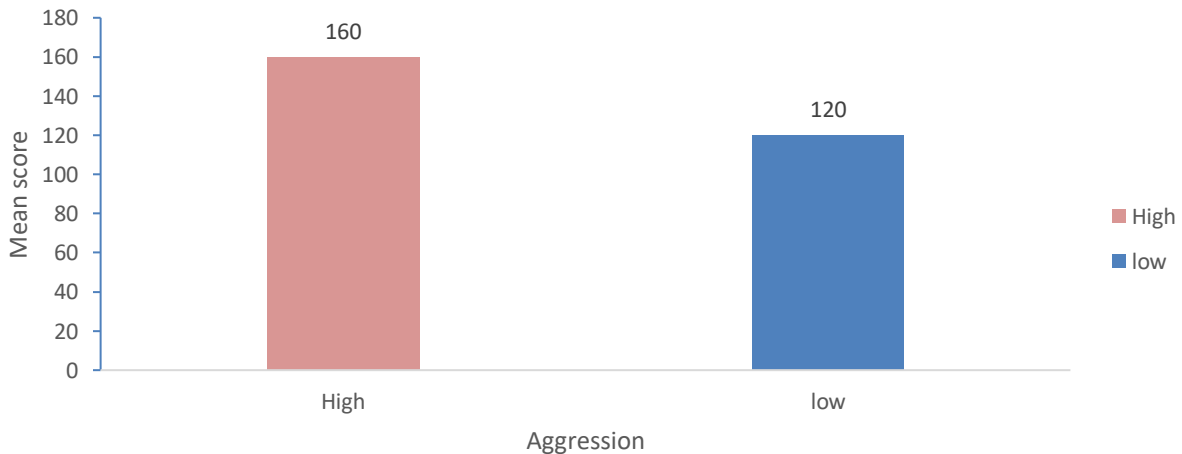
From the table 03 and figure 02 it is clear that the mean score on depression of male and female adults exhibited 18 and 15 respectively. The difference between mean score of male and female adults 3. SD of male and female adults were 5 and 4 respectively. The obtained t- ratio was 2.45 which was significant at 0.05.

Table 3: Effect of aggression on social anxiety

	Aggression	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	df	t-value	P
Social anxiety	High	20	160	15	40	38	6.32*	p < 0.01
	low	20	120	10				

*Significant at 0.01, **significant at 0.05, NS: no significant

Figure 03: Mean Score of aggression on adults on Social Anxiety



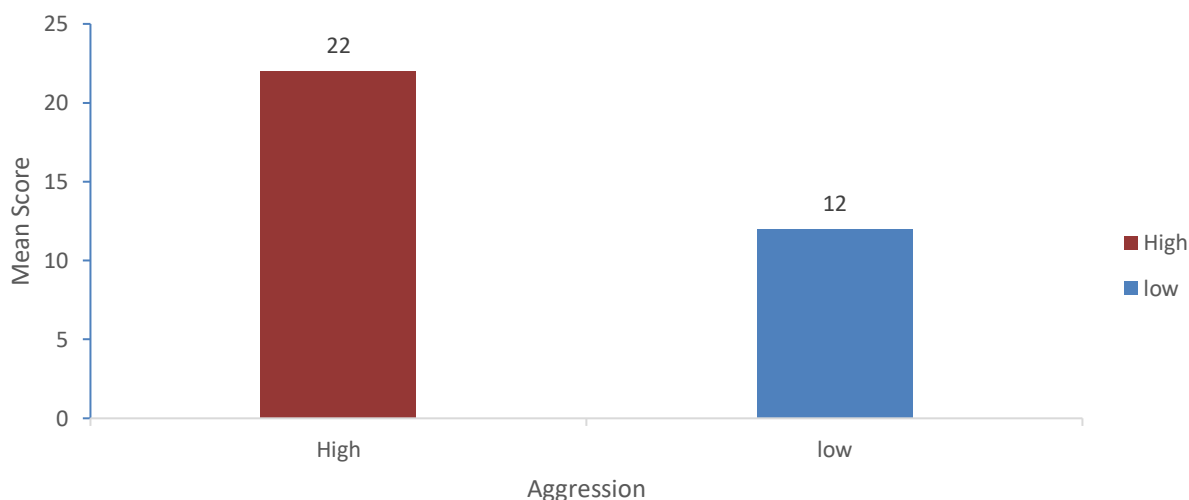
From the table 04 and figure 03 it is clear that the mean score on Aggression of high and low exhibited 160 and 120 respectively. The difference between mean score of high and low 40. SD of high and low were 15 and 10 respectively. The obtained t- ratio was 6.32 which was significant at 0.01.

Table 4: Effect of aggression on Depression

	Aggression	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	df	t-value	P
Depression	High	20	22	6	10	38	5.18*	p < 0.01
	low	20	12	4				

*Significant at 0.01, **significant at 0.05, NS: no significant

Figure 04: Mean Score of aggression on adults on Depression



From the table 05 and figure 04 it is clear that the mean score on Aggression of high and low exhibited 22 and 12 respectively. The difference between mean score of high and low 10. SD of high and low were 6 and 4 respectively. The obtained t- ratio was 5.18 which was significant at 0.01.

Table 5: Association between Social Anxiety and Depression

	Social Anxiety	Depression
Depression	0.65*	1
Social Anxiety	1	0.65*

*Significant at 0.01, **significant at 0.05, NS: no significant

From Table 6, it is clear that coefficient of correlation between social anxiety and depression was found 0.65. The correlation between these two variables is significant at 0.01 level. It reflects that there is significantly positive correlation between social anxiety and depression among teenagers.

VIII. RESULT

This study found that aggression significantly impacts social anxiety and depression among adolescents, with males exhibiting higher levels of both. These findings align with La Greca & Lopez (1998)^[1] and Kaltiala-Heino et al. (2000)^[2], who linked aggression to social anxiety, but contradict Crick & Grotpeter (1995)^[3] and Beck et al. (1996)^[6], which found higher internalization and depression in females. The positive correlation between social anxiety and depression supports Rum et al. (2023). However, the contradictory gender findings suggest that further research, especially longitudinal studies, is necessary to understand the complex relationship between aggression, gender, and mental health outcomes.

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