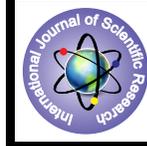


# Is Low Self-Esteem Related to Aggression Among Adolescent Students?



## Psychology

**KEYWORDS:** Self-esteem, Aggression, Adolescent students

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study aims to identify the relationship between self-esteem and aggression among adolescent students. A total of 478 adolescent students were randomly selected from Bangalore city, Karnataka. They were administered Rosenberg Scale of Self-esteem (1965a) and Mathur and Bhatnagar Aggression Scale (2004). Self-esteem of adolescents was measured to assess global feelings of self-worth. Aggression test measured adolescent's aggression in different situations. Data analysis was done using Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The result revealed that there is a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and aggression with a large effect size.*

### 1. Introduction

There is a lack of agreement regarding to the construct of self-esteem. The term is used in atleast three different ways. Global self-esteem or trait self-esteem refers to a personality variable that represents the way people generally feel about themselves. The most universal and frequently cited definition of global self-esteem is by Rosenberg (1965), he has defined self-esteem as a favorable or unfavorable attitude towards the self. Understanding the relationship between self-esteem and aggression is recent debate. Teachers, parents, therapists, and others have concentrated efforts on increasing self-esteem, on the hypothesis that high self-esteem will cause many positive results and welfares (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003).

One longstanding view in psychology believes that low self-esteem is a cause of aggression. Having low self-esteem feels bad, whereas having high self-esteem feels good. Therefore it may seem logically to infer that having low self-esteem is associated with bad things, such as behaving aggressively but actually very few studies support the idea that low self-esteem contributes to aggression (Thomaes, Bushman, & Thomaes, 2011).

Among the studies that found the link between low self-esteem and aggression are (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt and Caspi, 2005; Zeigler-Hill and Wallace, 2012; Zeigler-Hill, Enjaian, Holden, and Southard, 2014). Generally these studies found that the connection between low self-esteem and aggression is weak and inconsistent. On the other hand the studies by (Hughes, Cavell, and Grossman, 1997; Ang and Yusof, 2005; Thomaes, Bushman, Stegge and Olthof, 2008 and Bushman et al. 2009) discovered that high levels of self-esteem and/or narcissistic personality features lead to aggressive behavior but not directly. According to this view people with big egos become aggressive when others threatened their inflated egos for example someone tells a negative feedback to him/her.

Despite these theoretical arguments, research on the link between low self-esteem and aggression has failed to produce consistent results. An understanding of the precise nature of this relation has significant theoretical implications, as well as practical implications given the media attention surrounding the issue (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005).

### 2. Method

#### 2.1. Participants and procedure

Participants were 478 (206 boys, 272 girls) adolescent Students (14-16 years) in Bangalore city, Karnataka. Participants answered the two questionnaires namely Rosenberg Scale of

Self-esteem (1965a) and Mathur and Bhatnagar Aggression Scale (2004). The response sheets scored and interpreted by referring to the scoring key and norms of the respective questionnaires.

#### 2.2 Objective

To find the relationship between self-esteem and aggression

#### 2.3 Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and aggression

#### 2.4. Measures

Self-esteem was measured using Rosenberg (1965b) Scale of Self-esteem ( $\alpha = .86$ ). It designed to measure Adolescents' global feelings of self-worth. It has 10 first person statements and the responses are on 4 point scale of "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree" and "strongly disagree." Positively and negatively worded items are included in the scale to reduce the likelihood of represent set. Scores range from 10 to 40, with higher scores indicating better Self-esteem.

Aggression was measured using Mathur and Bhatnagar (2004) scale of Aggression ( $\alpha = .80$ ). It is used to study the level of aggression in any age group (above 14 years). It consists of 55 statements. Each statements describes different forms of individual's aggression in different situations. It is a likert type 5 point scale and scale statements are in two forms i.e. positive and negative. 30 statements are in positive form and 25 in negative form. Maximum score is 275 and minimum is 55, higher scores show higher aggression level and lower scores show lower aggression level.

#### 2.5 Operational Definition

##### Self-esteem

In the present study self-esteem is operationally defined as measured by scale for assessing self-esteem - (Rosenberg, 1965).

##### Aggression

In the present study aggression is operationally defined as measured by scale for assessing aggression (Mathur & Bhatnagar, 2004).

### 3. Results

The analysis of data has been presented under following table:

Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to analysis the relationship between self-esteem and aggression among adolescent students.

**Table 1:**  
Showing r value and p-value of Pearson correlation Coefficient for self-esteem and aggression

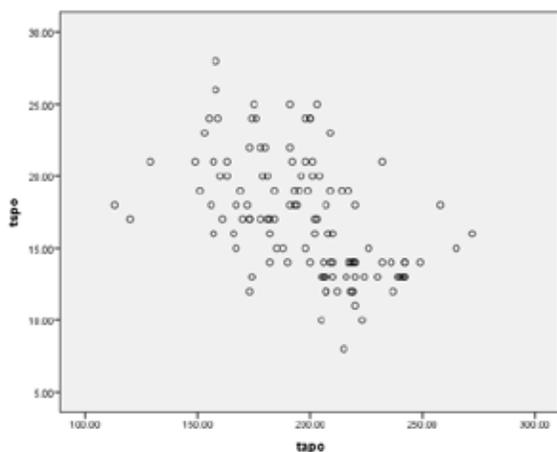
variable	N	'r' value	p- value
Self-esteem	120	-0.56	0.00*
Aggression	120		

\*Significance at the level of 0.01

Table 1 shows Correlation coefficient between self-esteem and aggression. The obtained 'r' value of -0.56 and p- value of 0.00 indicates that self-esteem and aggression are negatively and significantly correlated.

Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that "there is no significant correlation between self-esteem and aggression" is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. According to Cohen r less than 0.3 has small effect size; r value of 0.3 to 0.5 has medium effect size and r greater than 0.5 constitutes large effect size. Hence it is concluded that there is a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and aggression with a large effect size.

**Figure 1:**  
Graph showing pre-test and post-test correlation scores of experimental and control groups between self-esteem and aggression among adolescent students



Graph shows that there is a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and aggression with a large effect size.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

According to the results there is a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and aggression with a large effect size among adolescent students. Enormous literature suggests that low self-esteem is a source of aggression. For example a study by Zeigler-Hill, Enjaian, Holden, and Southard (2014) attempted to clarify association between self-esteem and aggression by examining the possibility that self-esteem instability moderates the association that self-esteem level has with aggression. Perceived aggression was measured in 234 (34 men and 200 women) undergraduate participants. These participants were then evaluated by 1078 friends and family members. Self-esteem instability was found to moderate the association between self-esteem level and aggression such that individuals with stable high self-esteem were viewed as being less aggressive than those with unstable high self-esteem or low self-esteem (regardless of whether their low self-esteem was stable or unstable).

Wang et al. (2013) examined differences in the level of self-esteem among adolescents with different roles in aggression involvement (aggression perpetrators, victims, perpetrator-victims and neutrals) according to gender. The results indicated that self-esteem in adolescents with different patterns of involvement in aggression is not the same as in those without involvement. So in females, aggression victims had low self-esteem. However, there was no significant difference in self-esteem among perpetrators, perpetrator-victims, and neutrals. In males, self-esteem in victims and perpetrator-victims was lower than in neutrals and perpetrators however; there was no difference in self-esteem between victims and perpetrator-victims or between perpetrators and neutrals.

The purpose of the present study was to study the relationship between self-esteem and aggression among adolescent students. The information gathered by the study will help counselors, educationists and psychologists who are dealing with adolescent problems to understand better the role of self-esteem on aggression and try to conducting intervention to affect the adolescent's self-esteem regarding to control their aggression.

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