



Aggression and Adjustment in Youth

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine differences in aggression and adjustment among youth. The sample consisted of 140 youths, including 70 males and 70 females. Aggression was measured using the Aggression Scale developed by Bansal and translated into Gujarati by Jogsan and Doshi. Adjustment was assessed using the Adjustment Scale developed by Kumar. Statistical analyses, including the *t* test and correlation analysis were employed to analyze the data. The results revealed a significant difference in aggression and adjustment among youth. Additionally, a negative correlation was found between aggression and adjustment, indicating that higher levels of aggression were associated with lower levels of adjustment.

Introduction

Adolescence and young adulthood represent a pivotal phase in human development, marked by rapid biological growth, cognitive changes, and evolving social and emotional demands. During this period, youth must navigate the challenges of establishing personal autonomy while maintaining positive relationships within families, peer groups, and educational settings. Although most adolescents adapt successfully, some exhibit aggressive behaviors that can disrupt healthy development. Aggression, defined as any behavior intended to cause physical or psychological harm to another individual (Shaffer, 2009), often emerges in two primary forms: overt aggression, involving direct physical or verbal



confrontation, and relational aggression, which relies on social manipulation, exclusion, and rumors to undermine others.

Aggressive behaviors are closely linked to adjustment, a multidimensional construct describing how individuals adapt to their social and environmental demands. Adjustment encompasses emotional stability, social competence, and academic achievement, and is essential for resilience, self-esteem, and secure interpersonal relationships. Research indicates that aggression and adjustment share a reciprocal relationship: elevated aggression frequently predicts poor adjustment, which may manifest as internalizing problems such as anxiety, depression, and loneliness, or externalizing problems including delinquency and academic difficulties.

This relationship is complex and influenced by cognitive and social factors. According to the Social Information Processing Model, youth who exhibit aggression may misinterpret neutral social cues as hostile, leading to defensive-aggressive reactions that further isolate them from peers. Modern developments, particularly the rise of cyber-aggression, have expanded these challenges, allowing relational harm to extend beyond physical settings and complicating the adjustment process. Understanding the mechanisms underlying aggression and adjustment—including emotional regulation, parenting styles, and school climate—is critical for designing interventions that promote healthy developmental outcomes. By addressing these factors, psychologists and educators can support youth in developing the social and emotional skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex society.

Review of Literature

Prevalence and Typology of Youth Aggression

Aggression is widely recognized as a significant concern among adolescents. Crick and Grotpeter (1995) distinguished between **physical (overt) aggression** and **relational aggression**, observing that boys are more prone to overt physical acts, whereas girls are more likely to engage in relational forms of aggression. Similarly, Alsawlaqa et al. (2020) found that aggression levels among general student populations tend to be moderate; however, higher aggression is consistently associated with poorer social-psychological adjustment.



Determinants of Aggression and Adjustment

Multiple studies identify family and school environments as key determinants of aggression and adjustment in youth.

Family Dynamics: Parenting styles exert a significant influence. Authoritarian and neglectful parenting is associated with elevated aggression, while democratic or supportive parenting acts as a protective factor against maladaptive behaviours (Mrug et al., 2008).

School Environment: A positive classroom climate, characterized by supportive teacher-student relationships and cooperative peer interactions, is negatively correlated with behavioural problems and promotes better adjustment (Povedano et al., 2015).

Media and Technology: Exposure to violent media, including video games, may desensitize adolescents to aggression, reduce empathy, and contribute to higher aggressive tendencies (Bushman et al., 2016).

Gender Differences in Adjustment Patterns

Gender plays a nuanced role in the manifestation of aggression and adjustment outcomes. While traditional perspectives suggest males exhibit higher levels of aggression, more recent evidence indicates that antisocial behaviours among females are on the rise (Ghosh, 2012). Furthermore, females are more likely to experience internalizing symptoms such as anxiety and depression following aggressive encounters, whereas males are more likely to display externalizing behaviours, including delinquency and conduct problems (El-Sheikh et al., 2010).

Collectively, these findings suggest that aggression in youth is influenced by a complex interplay of individual, familial, and contextual factors, which in turn affect their overall psychological adjustment. Understanding these dynamics is critical for designing interventions aimed at promoting healthy developmental outcomes.

Significance of the Study

Research on aggression and adjustment in youth is significant for several reasons. Clinically, understanding subtypes of aggression, such as reactive and proactive aggression, enables mental health professionals to design targeted interventions that help adolescents regulate anger, develop empathy, and build healthier relationships. From an educational perspective, the findings can inform school policies by



supporting social-emotional learning (SEL) programs, which reduce bullying, promote positive peer interactions, and enhance overall classroom harmony. In terms of public health, youth aggression is a key predictor of future antisocial behaviour, criminality, and long-term mental health challenges; early intervention can therefore mitigate these risks and reduce societal and healthcare burdens. Finally, because aggressive behaviours are inversely related to study habits and academic performance (Dey et al., 2013), addressing aggression can improve educational outcomes and support the holistic development of youth.

Objectives

1. To measure aggression in youth
- 2 To measure Adjustment in youth
3. To check the correlation between aggression and Adjustment

Null hypothesis

1. There will be no significant difference in aggression in youth
2. There will be no significant difference in Adjustment in youth
3. There will be no correlation will be found between aggression and Adjustment

METHOD

Research Tools:

Aggression Scale: The study used the Aggression Scale developed by Pragati Bansal (2021) to measure aggressive behavior among youth. The scale contains 30 items and demonstrates good reliability ($\alpha = 0.82$) and validity (0.74), making it a robust tool for assessing both overt and relational forms of aggression.

Adjustment scale: The Adjustment Scale by Pramod Kumar (1999) was employed to evaluate adolescents' overall adjustment, including emotional, social, and academic domains. This 40-item scale shows strong reliability, with a test-retest coefficient of 0.84 and split-half reliability of 0.70, and possesses high content and concurrent validity, ensuring accurate measurement of the adjustment construct.



Sample:

The study was conducted on a total of 140 participants, comprising an equal number of males and females (70 males and 70 females), to ensure gender balance in the analysis. All participants were adolescents and young adults selected from Rajkot city. The sample was chosen to represent a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds and educational settings within the city, providing a comprehensive view of youth experiences. Participants were selected using [mention sampling technique, e.g., purposive or random sampling, if applicable], ensuring that they met the inclusion criteria for the study. This balanced and adequately sized sample allowed for reliable statistical analysis of gender differences and overall patterns in aggression and adjustment among youth.

Procedure of data collection:

In accordance with the purpose of the present study, the investigator explained the objectives of the research to all participants. The procedure for completing the inventories was described clearly and thoroughly, and the instructions provided on the questionnaires were carefully explained. Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential. During the administration of the inventories, it was ensured that no participant left any question unanswered and that none selected multiple responses for a single item.

Research Designs

t- test and correlation analyses to explore Aggression and Adjustment in the sample.

Result and Discussion:

The main purpose of present study was to Aggression and Adjustment in youth result is as under:

Table-1

Showing the mean, SD and t-value of Aggression

Sr. No	Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
1	Male	70	72.69	16.53	11.57	0.01
2	Female	70	60.63	13.63		

Sig. Level = 0.05 = 1.98, 0.01=2.63



The table presents a comparison of aggression scores between male (N=70) and female (N=70) participants. Males reported a significantly higher mean aggression score (72.69) compared to females (60.63). The calculated t-value is 11.57, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that the probability of this difference occurring by chance is less than 1%, confirming that males in this sample are significantly more aggressive than females. The Standard Deviation (SD) for males (16.53) is higher than for females (13.63), suggesting that there is more variation in aggression levels among the male participants than among the females.

Psychological Reasons for Gender Differences in Aggression

Psychologists generally attribute these differences to a combination of biological, social, and evolutionary factors:

Biological and Hormonal Factors

One of the most common explanations is the presence of testosterone. Research has consistently linked higher levels of testosterone to increased physical aggression and dominance-seeking behaviour. Since males typically have higher levels of this hormone, it is often cited as a primary driver for the higher mean score seen in your table.

Social Learning Theory (Nurture)

According to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, behaviour is learned through observation and imitation.

Gender Roles: Society often encourages or tolerates "toughness" and assertiveness in boys, while encouraging "niceness" and emotional regulation in girls.

Reinforcement: Boys may be rewarded (or at least not punished) for aggressive displays in sports or social hierarchies, whereas girls may face social disapproval for similar behaviours.

Evolutionary Psychology

From an evolutionary perspective, aggression in males may have been historically adaptive. In ancestral environments, physical aggression was often a means for males to compete for resources, protect kin, and



secure mates. While modern society has changed, these deep-seated evolutionary predispositions may still influence behaviour.

Expression of Aggression

It is important to note that many psychologists argue that females are not necessarily "less aggressive," but rather express it differently.

Direct vs. Indirect: Males tend to display more physical (direct) aggression.

Relational Aggression: Females often score higher in relational aggression, which involves social manipulation, exclusion, or spreading rumours. If the scale used to gather this data focused primarily on physical or verbal outbursts, it would naturally result in higher scores for males.

Table-2

Showing the mean, SD and t-value of Adjustment

Sr No	Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
1	Male	70	22.83	7.61	9.84	0.01
2	Female	70	32.67	10.89		

Sig. Level = 0.05 = 1.98, 0.01=2.63

The table compares the adjustment scores of male (N=70) and female (N=70) participants. Females have a substantially higher mean score (32.67) than males (22.83). Depending on the specific scoring manual of the adjustment inventory used a higher score often indicates poorer adjustment or higher levels of maladjustment .The t-value of 9.84 is significant at the 0.01 level. This confirms that the difference between the two groups is not due to chance and is statistically "highly significant." The Standard Deviation for females (10.89) is higher than for males (7.61), indicating that females showed a wider range of responses and more individual differences in their adjustment patterns than males.

Psychological Reasons for Gender Differences in Adjustment



Adjustment is the process by which a person attempts to maintain a balance between their needs and the obstacles of their environment. The difference in scores can be attributed to several factors:

Socialisation and Cultural Expectations

In many cultures, females are socialised to be more sensitive to interpersonal relationships and emotional environments. This heightened sensitivity can lead to higher "maladjustment" scores if they are more affected by family conflicts or social pressures. Males, conversely, are often socialised to suppress emotional difficulties, which might lead to lower reported scores on adjustment scales.

Emotional Processing and Expressiveness

Psychological research often indicates that females tend to internalise stress (leading to anxiety or social withdrawal), while males may externalise it. If the adjustment scale focuses on internal emotional states, social anxiety, or health-related concerns, females often score higher because they are more aware of and willing to report these feelings.

Multiple Role Demands

The "Role Strain" theory suggests that women often face more complex adjustment challenges due to the pressure of balancing multiple roles (e.g., academic expectations, domestic responsibilities, and social standards). These competing demands can lead to higher stress levels, reflecting as a higher score on an adjustment inventory.

Biological and Developmental Factors

During adolescence and young adulthood, hormonal fluctuations can play a role in emotional stability. Studies often show that females report higher levels of "neuroticism" (in the context of the Big Five personality traits) on average, which is a personality dimension closely linked to how one adjusts to stressful environments.

Table -3

Showing the correlation between Aggression and Adjustment

Sr No	Variables	N	Mean	r	Sig.
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1	Aggression	140	66.66	-0.54	0.01
2	Adjustment	140	27.86		

Sig. Level = 0.05= 0.15 , 0.01= 0.21

The table illustrates the correlation between Aggression and Adjustment for a total sample of N=140. The value of -0.54 indicates a moderate negative correlation. This means that as Aggression scores increase, Adjustment scores tend to decrease and vice versa. A value of 0.54 suggests a substantial relationship where approximately 29% of the variance in adjustment can be explained by aggression levels. The relationship is significant at the 0.01 level. This means there is a 99% certainty that this link exists in the broader population and is not a result of a sampling error. The average score for Aggression (66.66) is notably higher than the average for Adjustment (27.86).

Psychological Discussion

The data suggests that individuals who struggle to manage aggressive impulses often find it difficult to adapt to their social, emotional, or professional environments.

Social Friction: Aggressive behaviour (whether verbal, physical, or passive) creates conflict. Frequent conflict leads to strained relationships, which is a primary indicator of poor social adjustment.

Emotional Regulation: High aggression is often a by product of poor emotional regulation. If an individual cannot manage anger, they likely lack the coping mechanisms required for healthy "adjustment" to life's stressors.

The "Vicious Cycle": Poor adjustment (feeling misunderstood or out of place) can lead to frustration, which in turn fuels further aggression.

Underlying Psychological Reasons

Why does this inverse relationship exist? Psychologists point to several key factors:

Social Information Processing: Aggressive individuals often have a "hostile attribution bias." They perceive neutral actions from others as threats. This misinterpretation makes it nearly impossible to adjust harmoniously to a group.



Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis: When a person fails to adjust to their environment or meet their goals (maladjustment), they experience frustration. This frustration is frequently discharged as aggression.

Lack of Social Skills: Adjustment requires empathy, negotiation, and patience. Aggression is often a "shortcut" used by those who lack these complex social tools.

Developmental Factors: Often, a lack of secure attachment in early childhood can lead to both high trait aggression and a lifelong struggle with emotional adjustment.

Conclusion:

The study establishes clear gender-based differences in both psychological domains. Males exhibit significantly higher levels of aggression ($t=11.57$), likely driven by a combination of biological factors (testosterone) and social conditioning that reinforces "toughness." Conversely, females show higher scores in adjustment ($t=9.84$), which suggests they may experience higher levels of emotional sensitivity or role strain, depending on the specific metrics of the inventory used. The core finding of this research is the significant moderate negative correlation ($r=-0.54$) between Aggression and Adjustment. This indicates that aggression and adjustment are functionally incompatible; as an individual's aggressive tendencies increase, their ability to successfully adapt to their environment and maintain balanced social relationships diminishes.

Limitations:

Limitations include the small sample size and focus only on youth. Future studies should include larger, more diverse samples and employ varied data collection methods.

Suggestion for future Research:

Future research should expand sample diversity, include other population and utilise diverse data collection methods to enhance study reliability.

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