

Impact of Perceived Social Support in Self-esteem and Aggression among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at finding the relationship between perceived social support, self-esteem and aggression and its effect among adolescents on gender differences and socio-economic status. A sample of 243 adolescents consisting of 116 males and 127 females between the age group of 11 to 17 years 11 months was taken for the study. Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) and Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire were used to measure the variables in the study. Spearman correlation, Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal Wallis test and Regression analysis were used for the statistical analysis of the data. The results of the present study showed that perceived social support (significant others ($r = .26$), Family ($r = .33$) and friends ($r = .19$)) was positively significant to self-esteem and was negatively related to aggression ($r = -0.05$). Males tend to have higher scores in aggression compared to females and no effect of gender on self-esteem and social support. Also, there was no significant difference of socio-economic status was found on social support, self-esteem and aggression. The present research findings can encourage family support system more to enhance self-esteem of adolescents and also offers the development of comprehensive home and community-based services and support.

Keywords: *Perceived Social Support, Self-Esteem, Aggression, Adolescents*

Adolescents is the crucial period of human development process and is defined as the stage of growth between childhood and adulthood (World Health Organization, 2006). The fundamental goal of adolescents is to accomplish a successful self-developmental task is their ability to cope with stress. Adolescence is not only the period of physical changes but also it affect the emotional well-being (Adams, 1995). It is time when adolescents gain social support from social environment like family, friends, neighbours and significant others (Barker, 2007).

Adequate social support from family, friends and significant others can positively influence adolescent's behavior and help to reduce the effect of low self-esteem and aggression

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(Batanova & Loukas, 2014) and effectively help individuals to cope with stress (Callaghan & Morrissey, 1993; Shonkoff, 1984) and psychological problems (Lara et al., 1998).

A basic belief of social-developmental research is that supportive relationships with parents and friends positively influence psychological well-being during childhood and adolescence (Laursen & Collins, 2009; Rubin et al., 2006). Social support refers to support systems in which an individual receives emotional, social and cognitive aid from his surroundings (Cohen, 2004). Cohen & colleagues (2000) refer to social support as “any process through which social relationships might promote health and well-being”.

Perceived social support is defined as individual perception of whether social network is adequately supportive or not (Eker et al., 2001). The perceived social support is the individual’s sense of self evaluation (Sorias, 1988 b). Perceived social support assesses individuals’ confidence of the availability of adequate support when needed (Kim et al., 2008). Multidimensionality of social support has been widely used.

Social support has long been associated with self-esteem and aggression (Kumar et al, 2014; Self-esteem is the individual’s personal judgement of his own worth and that give positive and negative dimension about himself (Sanaktekin and Sunar, 2008). Rosenberg (1965) defines self-esteem as “a favourable and unfavourable attitude toward the self”. Copersmith (1967) explained that the amount of care and acceptance that one gets from other people have a significant role in the development of self-esteem. Individuals who have high level of self-esteem show the tendency to be happy, productive and healthy (Coleman & Hendry, 1990). The level of self-esteem is high during childhood and decline during adolescence and gradual increase occur during adulthood (Tsai et al., 2001).

Aggressive behavior influences social relationships and seriously affect victims. The researchers explained the effects of aggression and its aggressive behavior on both perpetrators and victims (Card et al., 2008). Aggression is an aversive stimulus which intended to harm others, when the other person is trying to escape from the harmful situation (Russell, 1999). Prevalence rate of aggression was greater among adolescents and it ranges from 17.7% (Sharma & Marimuthu, 2010) to 66.5% (Dutt et al., 2013).

There are different studies focused the risk factors that explain the development of aggressive behavior. Among social, psychological and biological factors, family factor plays a key role to the development of aggressive behavior which affect directly or indirectly (Raine, 2002). Parenting style is one of the chief components that influence the mental well-being of children (Crick et al. 1999). Support, care and warmth from both parents has a greater influence on the behavioral development (Ruiz-Hernández et al., 2018).

Objectives

On the basis of review of literature, the present study focuses on the relationship between perceived social support, self-esteem and aggression among adolescents and to find the effect of perceived social support on self-esteem and aggression. It also emphasis whether gender differences and socio-economic status cause any changes in perceived social support, self-esteem and aggression among adolescents.

Hypotheses

H1a: There will be a significant relationship between perceived social support and self-esteem

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H_{01b}: There will be no significant relationship between perceived social support and aggression

H_{01c}: There will be no significant relationship between self-esteem and aggression

H₀₂: There will be no significant effect of social support on self-esteem and aggression

H₀₃: There will be no significant differences between male and females on social support, self-esteem and aggression.

H₀₄: There will be no significant differences in social support, self-esteem and aggression on different socio-economic status (SES).

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A sample of 243 (N=243) adolescents were taken for the study (116 males and 127 females) between the age group of 11 to 17 years 11 months. The study was conducted in Kottayam, Pathanamthitta, Trissur, Ernakulum and Palakkad districts of Kerala. Students whose parents have given informed assent for the study was included and students having mental disorders or intellectual disabilities was excluded.

Measures

Administration

Google forms were used to collect data and said forms included a demographic sheet, consent form, informed assent from parents and three self-measure questionnaire- Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) and Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire. Students were assured confidentiality of results and consent and also assent from parents for their willingness to do the test in the beginning of the form before they started filling in their data. The Google forms were distributed among adolescents through online platform using WhatsApp and Instagram.

Tools for the study (Reliability and Validity)

- **Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet, et al., 1988):** MSPSS consists of 12 questions which is answered in a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree), with a total score range from 12 to 84. A total score of 50 or more represents good perceived social support. The scale is divided into further sub variables like family subscales, friends subscale and significant others subscales. Total score is calculated by mean of all subscales divided by 12. There is no reverse scoring. The MSPSS has been identified as having high internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's α : 0.92).
- **Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965):** It has 10 questions that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. It is a 4-point Likert type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree), with a total score range from 10 to 40. Questions 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9 are reversed scored. Higher scores on the scale items indicate higher levels of self-esteem. The Test-retest reliability for the RSE is 0.82 and validity of the tool is found to be 0.55.
- **Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992):** The Buss & Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) consists of 29 items rated on a 5- point Likert scale (1= uncharacteristic of me to 5= very characteristics of me). It includes four subscales: Physical aggression (items 1-9), Verbal aggression (items 10-14), anger (15-21) and hostility (22-29). Two items (9 and 16) are reverse scored. The total score of

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aggression is the sum of these scale scores. Higher scores indicate higher aggressive behavior. The test-retest reliability of the tool is found to be 0.78.

Procedure

Participants were selected by purposive sampling. It is a non-probability technique where participant conformed to certain criteria are purposefully selected. The study was completely adhere to the ethics. Participants was the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point if they wish to do so. Any type of communication in relation to the research was done with honesty and transparency. The responses of the participants were only used for research purposes.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive analysis, Mann-Whitney U test, Spearman correlation, Regression analysis and Kruskal-Wallis test were used to analyse obtained data.

RESULTS

The final data was analysed using statistical software SPSS 20. A normality test is used to determine whether the sample data has been drawn from a normally distributed population. It was found that at histogram and normal probability plot an outlier has caused the non-normality and thus the values were significant. Hence non-parametric statistics was used for the entire study.

Table 1: The relationship between perceived social support and self-esteem

	Sig others	Family	friends	Social support
Self-esteem	0.26**	0.33**	0.19**	0.34**

**0.01 Level of Significance

According to above table, there is a significant positive correlation between social support with self-esteem among adolescents ($p < 0.01$).

Table 2: Relationship among perceived social support and aggression

	Friends	Family	Social Support	Physical Aggression	Verbal Aggression	Anger	Hostility	Aggression
Sig.Others	0.43**	0.52**	0.81**	-0.07	0.02	-0.00	-0.03	-0.05
Friends		0.36**	0.71**	-0.04	0.00	0.02	-0.02	-0.01
Family			0.64**	-0.10	-0.02	-0.07	-0.18**	-0.13*
Social Support				-0.09	0.02	-0.05	-0.09	-0.08
Physical Aggression					0.56*	0.55**	0.39**	0.81**
Verbal Aggression						0.55**	0.46**	0.77**
Anger							0.46**	0.80**
Hostility								0.73**

*0.05 Level of Significance, **0.01 Level of Significance

The above table shows that, there is a negative relationship between perceived social support and aggression. However, there is a negative significant relation between physical aggression and social support.

Table 3: The relationship between self-esteem and aggression

	Physical aggression	Verbal aggression	Anger	Hostility	Aggression
Self-esteem	-0.07	0.01	-0.09	-0.23**	-0.14*

*0.05 Level of Significance, **0.01 Level of Significance

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The above table shows a negative correlation between self-esteem and aggression among adolescents ($p < 0.05$).

Table 4: Regression analysis of variance related to the role of social support on self-esteem and aggression

Predictor	β	T	p
Self-esteem	.40	6.64	.00
Aggression	-.03	-.59	.55

$R^2 = .16, F(2,240) = 23.45$

The above table shows that to what extent social support explains self-esteem and aggression using regression analysis. Findings suggested that social support contributes 16% variance in predicting self-esteem which is statistically significant ($F = 23.45, p < 0.01$).

Table 5: Significance of difference in the variables of social support, self-esteem and aggression between Males and Females (male, $N=116$ and female $N=127$)

Variables	Gender	N	Mean Rank	U	P value
Sig_others	Male	116	117.21	6810.00	0.28
	Female	127	126.38		
Friends	Male	116	114.31	6474.00	0.08
	Female	127	129.02		
Family	Male	116	115.42	6603.00	0.13
	Female	127	128.01		
Social Support	Male	116	116.29	6704.00	0.19
	Female	127	127.21		
Self-esteem	Male	116	122.77	7276.500	0.87
	Female	127	121.30		
Physical Aggression	Male	116	136.90	5637.500	0.02
	Female	127	108.39		
Verbal Aggression	Male	116	123.96	7139.00	0.67
	Female	127	120.21		
Anger	Male	116	127.30	6751.00	0.26
	Female	127	117.16		
Hostility	Male	116	112.50	6263.500	0.04
	Female	127	130.68		
Aggression	Male	116	126.24	6874.500	0.36
	Female	127	118.13		

From the above table, it can be seen that females have more social support than males in all dimensions (sig_others: $M = 117.21, 126.38$; Friends: $M = 114.31, 128.2$; Family: $M = 115.42, 128.01$). In terms of self-esteem males having more score than females ($M = 122.77, 121.30$). Those with aggression were high on males than females ($M = 126.24, 118.13$).

However significant difference is reported only on the following dimensions of aggression: physical aggression ($p < 0.05$) and hostility ($p < 0.05$). Hence it may be said that the hypothesis is partially accepted.

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Table 6: Social support, self-esteem and aggression among different socio-economic status

Variables	SES	N	Mean Rank	Chi square	P
Sig_others	Low	6	66.50	1.23	0.54
	Average	162	88.76		
	High	7	88.79		
Friends	Low	6	78.17	1.22	0.54
	Average	162	89.11		
	High	7	70.79		
Family	Low	6	60.92	2.09	0.35
	Average	162	89.11		
	High	7	85.50		
Social support	Low	6	67.00	1.27	0.52
	Average	162	88.85		
	High	7	86.43		
Self-esteem	Low	6	72.00	1.55	0.46
	Average	162	87.79		
	High	7	106.57		
Aggression	Low	6	101.58	1.06	0.58
	Average	162	88.15		
	High	7	72.86		

From the table it was identified that social support was more among individuals having average socio-economic status ($M = 88.85$), self-esteem is more in individuals having high socio-economic status ($M = 106.57$) whereas aggression is more with people having low socio-economic status ($M = 101.58$). Table shows that no significant differences was found in social support, self-esteem and aggression with different levels of socio-economic status. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

DISCUSSIONS

The aim of the study was to find perceived social support and its impact cause changes in self-esteem and aggression among adolescents.

In the present study adolescents getting the support from family enhances more than the support from friends and significant others. As the level of support from care givers, friends and others will influence adolescent's self-esteem. Individuals tend to be more aggressive by nature when they have less control over their behavior (Komasi et al., 2016). Social support can increase or lessen once attitude and it will negatively affect ones behavior. High peer pressure also causes low level of self-esteem which lead for the development of aggressive behaviors (Martinez et al., 2009), low life adjustment (Alcantara et al., 2016). There are some studies which support the result which indicate that adolescents show more aggressive behavior and sensation-seeking behavior due to their lack of ability to manipulate their inhibitions and emotions, while others exhibit such behavior due to the dependency from parental control (Dolcini & Adler, 1994).

The study also found that female adolescents have more social support than males. This might be related to the dependency of female adolescents towards families in terms of seeking help and needs. Whereas compared to female the low social support among male adolescents might be independence characteristics. Sometimes they feel ashamed to seek help from others. Female adolescents are more in a protective environment where they share

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their concerns and always abide with family and others. Male adolescents always take decision by their own thus they lack support from parents whereas it lead increase in self-esteem. Lack of social support lead to increase in amount of aggression among males. In social learning theory, Bandura hypothesised that there is a significant relation between different parenting style and child's behavior (Bandura, 1973) which may lead to child aggression. From the results it showed that physical aggression and hostility is significant is explained by to get more attention from others, mental provocation from friends and emotional cut-off from families and peer groups. Physical changes behavioral changes and the male authoritarian power might the reason for the increase in aggression among males. Studies showed that self-esteem of male adolescent is high compared to female adolescents as well as male adolescence scored high on different dimensions of aggression in comparison to female adolescence. Several studies confirmed that self-esteem is more among male which might be explained by the ability of males to cope favourably with changing situation.

The results also indicated that no significant differences was found between social support, self-esteem and aggression in terms of different socio-economic status (SES). A family's socioeconomic status is based on family income and the educational and occupational levels of the adults in the household. Low income, unhygienic, no support from others, lack of medical care and low family status could be a reason for high level of aggression among people with low economic status. SES can be considered as an important domain of self-esteem. The persons with high SES perceive authority and control. In the present study self-esteem is more in individuals having high socio-economic status. Neighborhood also plays a role in adolescent's life. Living in a poor neighborhood with large number of unemployed people decreases the availability of social support and whereby it enhances the young people to available (Black & Krishnakumar, 1998). Bowker et al., 2012, Khatri & Kupersmith, 2003 proved that aggression among adolescents has an association with substance use, peer relationship, and other psychological problems.

Implications

The findings suggest that social support can help to enhance students' self-esteem and thus help them obtain better lifestyle and protect them from emotional exhaustion, which indicates that fostering supportive environments should be useful in enhancing adolescent's better life. The findings from the study has thrown a new light to the existing understanding of how parents support influences the adolescents with respect to gender and socioeconomic status.

The results of the present research can form a basis in forming psychoeducation programs for parents to help them understand the importance of support given to adolescents that decrease the level of aggression.

Development of comprehensive home and community-based services and supports can also helped the adolescents and family to understand more about their problems.

CONCLUSIONS

The support from family either enhance or decrease one's life and also low family support can lead to aggressive behavior among adolescents. The study also proved that the support from family enhances more than the support from friends and significant others. Parenting style is one of the chief components that influence the mental well-being of children. Support, care and warmth from both parents has a greater influence on the behavioral

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development. A balanced attachment within the family and an effective interaction if parent-child can reduce the risk factors.

Scope for Future Research

Future researches can include the technology use that affect the level of support that an individual gets from his or her own family or others.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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