

Exploring The Trauma: Depression, Childhood Emotional Neglect and Aggression Among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Depression is a serious medical illness that interrupts one's emotions, way of thinking and behaving to a significant level. There are numerous factors responsible for the experience of depression in a person. Previous literature is evident that childhood emotional neglect and aggression plays a major role in developing depression among the individuals. The present research has studied the relationship of depression with emotional neglect and aggression. For this purpose, the data of 100 young adults was collected from different colleges of Hoshiarpur district of Punjab. Standardised questionnaires have been used. For the analysis, Correlation and multiple regression were calculated with the help of SPSS-20. The results show that there is a significant correlation between depression and emotional neglect. Significant association between depression and aggression was also found. Further, when taken as a set, emotional neglect, aggression and gender accounts for 26% of unique variance in predicting depression. When taken individually, emotional neglect, aggression and gender again shown as predicting a unique variance for depression among young adults.

Keywords: *Young Adults, Emotional Neglect, Depression*

Depression known as major depressive disorder, is a common and clinically serious mood disorder. The experience of Depression includes persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness. Those who suffers from depression also experience absence of interest in activities they once feel enjoyable. Physical symptoms are also frequently seen along with emotional deterioration in depression.

A study investigated the prevalence of Depression among young adults in South India. The result revealed that out of the sample of 1500 participants, 34.4% felt minimal depression, 38.0% felt mild depression, 13.2% had moderate depression, 4.5% had moderate to severe depression and 1.7% had severe depression. This result concluded that depression is common among young adults (Pandian et al., 2017).

Childhood Emotional Neglect is connected to the lack of efficient parenting and family system which often leads to some major negative consequences in an adult's personality who faces this neglect during early years of life. Our emotions are spiral into us since we are born. Emotions works as a valuable internal feedback system that motivates us, puts energy

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Received: July 15, 2023; Revision Received: December 14, 2023; Accepted: December 18, 2023

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into us. And during the early years of life, emotions play a very crucial role in developing one's personality. Emotions of a child are very personal and deep and these feelings of emotions are actually the most personal and biological expressions of who they are. It becomes extremely difficult and confusing for a child to interpret the behaviour of his parents which seems as if he is unacceptable or does not exist. Particular with the case of emotional neglect, parents are unable or having trouble in understanding the needs for love, care and affection and support of their child or may feel it burdensome or overwhelming to assist to their needs on a consistent basis. There is evident that the parents of the children who are victim of emotional neglect, as children, themselves were the victim of emotional neglect (not in all cases). So, they themselves experience somewhere the lack of satisfying emotional adult relationship. In the preoccupation of their own needs, they fail to consider their child's needs for love, support and care.

A report by the Ministry of Women and Child Development showed that in India, 69% of the children and young people in the general population experienced physical abuse in one or more situations by significant others. Emotional abuse was reported for about 50%. Parents were the abusers in most cases (83%). Majority of the girl child neglect (70%) was being reported (Kacker et al., 2007).

Emotional Neglect can be explained as a relationship pattern between the child and a significant other in which an individual's affectional or emotional needs persistently neglected, disregarded, ignored or unappreciated.

Although, Emotional abuse and emotional neglect are usually taken together but they cannot even mistakenly be used interchangeably. Where Emotional abuse is the abrupt way of handling child's emotions. On the other hand, Childhood Emotional Neglect is different from emotional abuse in the sense that in case of childhood emotional neglect, there is an absence of response from the parents to the emotions of the child or absence of acknowledgement of the child's emotions. So, childhood emotions neglect involves absence of something.

The Clinical definition as per the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders (DSM-5), depression is "a period of at least two weeks in which the person experienced low mood or loss of interest in daily activities, and also suffers from specified symptoms, such as lack of sleep, loss of appetite, less energy, lack of concentration, or self-worth." This definition as can be clearly seen excludes grief after mourning. There are growing evidence that individuals with emotional maltreatment are vulnerable to poorer course of depressive symptoms.

As per U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Emotional Neglect is the failure to provide the child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, medical care and supervision to the degree that the child's health, care and well-being is being threatened. Emotional Neglect can be explained as a relationship pattern between the child and a significant other in which an individual's affectional or emotional needs persistently neglected, disregarded, ignored or unappreciated.

There has been a constant research going on about the major factors involved and serious consequences of the childhood Emotional Neglect. It is evident from the previous studies done on this matter that emotional neglect is highly associated with depression. In fact over

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decades, incontrovertible conclusion have been come upon by the numerous studies done on emotional neglect i.e. childhood sexual, physical and emotional abuse along with childhood emotional neglect all these factors lead to a significant level of increase in the risk of depression and other related disorders like mood and anxiety disorders in later age.

Aggression can be described as a behaviour which intends to harm others physically or mentally. Social psychologists define aggression as the behaviour that intends to harm another person while the another person avoids the harm. Aggression can be overt or covert.

To great extant, Depression and Aggression emerge from similar biological underpinning and physiological processes. There are some specific neurochemicals in the human body that regulates both aggression and depression in certain respect (Duke et al., 2013).

Serious consequences can be seen when there exist the comorbidity of aggression and depression in individuals such as chronic and highly persistent depressive symptoms.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is plethora of literature present on the effect of neglect and trauma at early age on risk of psychopathology and other medical disorders. First, Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) epidemiological study was done to measure childhood trauma and adult pathology. The study was comprised of 17,421 adult members in a health maintenance organisation in San-Diego. Investigators assessed eight early life trauma events and took an ACE score as a measurement to determine the relationship between trauma and adult pathology. The results of the study were as follows: with the increasing number of traumatic events, there was significant level of increase in depression, panic attacks and anxiety (Vincent, J.F. & Perm, J. 2002)

Another recent research by Panday et. al., (2020) on Childhood Maltreatment and its Mental Health Consequences among Indian adolescent also suggested that emotional abuse along with emotional neglect has a wide ranging impact on the mental health among the adolescents. The study consisted of 132 subjects the large proportion of which showed the direct or indirect victimisation of the abuse and neglect (100%) and also experience of symptoms of some form of psychiatric disorder (86%).

Another study on school going adolescents in India by Daral et al. (2016) has shown physical abuse is the most common form of childhood maltreatment (42.6%), then comes emotional neglect (40.1%) and emotional abuse (37.9%). Childhood maltreatment leads to the negative consequences during adulthood lasting throughout the old age. These negative consequences can range from mood disorders, depression, anxiety, eating disorder, suicidal tendencies, and personality disorders (Bendall et al., 2008; Muniz et al.,2019)

A more evident research on the relationship between emotional trauma and depression has been conducted by Kaufhold et al.,(2015). The tests were administered on 349 chronically depressed patients. The result of the study showed that 75.6% of the chronically depressed patients reported the history of childhood trauma in some form including the emotional neglect and abuse.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the relationship between the Depression and Emotional Neglect.
- To study the relationship between the Depression and Aggression.

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- To study the Emotional Neglect, Aggression, and Gender as the predictors of Depression.

Hypotheses

- H₁: There is significant relationship between Emotional Neglect and Depression.
- H₁: There is significant relationship between Aggression and Depression.
- H₁: The experience of Emotional Neglect is a significant predictor of Depression among young adults.
- H₁: The experience of Aggression is a significant predictor of the Depression among young adults.
- H₁: Gender as a variable is a significant predictor of Depression among young adults.

METHODS

Sample Size

A sample of 100 Young adults age ranging from 18 to 24 (50 males and 50 females) was randomly selected from different colleges of Hoshiarpur district of Punjab. Participants were selected on a specific criterion and were given no credit for their participation. The experiment is a correlation between the three variables (Emotional Neglect, Depression and Aggression) and the Regression Analysis for the prediction of Depression (dependent variable) by taking Emotional Neglect and Aggression (independent variable) as the predictors.

Tools

The tests used in present study are the combination of Childhood Trauma Questionnaire given by Bernstein et al, 1994), Buss Parry Aggression Questionnaire by A.H. Buss and M.P. Parry, and Beck's Depression Inventory created by Aaron. T. Beck.

Statistical Analysis

Correlation and Multiple Regression with the help of SPSS-20 was applied and calculated for Depression, Emotional Neglect and Aggression from collected data.

RESULTS

Table No. 1: Pearson Product moment correlation coefficient of Emotional neglect and Depression among young adults.

Correlations

S.no.	Independent variable	Dependent variable	No. of Subject	P value	Obtained value
1.	Emotional Neglect	Depression	100	0.26	0.376**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table No. 2: Pearson Product moment correlation coefficient of Aggression and Depression among young adults.

Correlations

S.no.	Independent variable	Dependent variable	No. of Subject	P value	Obtained value
1.	Aggression	Depression	100	0.26	0.281**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

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Table No. 3: Table no. 3 shows the regression analysis model summary of the three predictors taken together and the dependent variable i.e. Depression.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.505 ^a	.255	.231	8.4688

a. Predictors: (Constant), GENDER, EN, AGG

Table No. 4: Table no. 4 shows the Anova summary table for the three predictors taken as a set and the dependent variable i.e. Depression.

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2259.637	3	753.212	10.502	.000 ^b
	Residual	6598.269	96	71.720		
	Total	8857.906	99			

a. Dependent Variable: DEP

b. Predictors: (Constant), GENDER, EN, AGG

Table No. 5: This coefficients' table shows the significant level of each of predictors separately.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-14.829	5.689		-2.607	.011
	EN	.769	.210	.343	3.669	.000
	AGG	.135	.061	.209	2.231	.028
	GENDER	4.571	1.733	.238	2.638	.010

a. Dependent Variable: DEP

DISCUSSION

The current research was conducted to study the association of depression with emotional neglect, and aggression, and to predict whether emotional neglect and aggression are significant predictor of depression or not. For this purpose, the data of 100 young adults was collected from different colleges of Hoshiarpur district of Punjab. The questionnaire used for the current study were The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, The Aggression Questionnaire, and The Beck's Depression Inventory. After the collection of Data, the calculations were done with the help of SPSS-20 and the results were displayed in tabular form. The discussion of Ex each table is given below:

TABLE 1: The above mentioned table shows the correlation between Depression and Emotional Neglect. From the table, it can be seen that the obtained value of correlation is 0.37 which is more than the table value i.e. 0.26 at the significant level of 0.01. This means there is a significant level of positive correlation between the depression and emotional neglect. In other words, we can say that childhood emotional neglect can significantly accounts for depression in young adults. So, our hypothesis 1 is accepted. The result is similar to the previous studies that showed 44.6% of individuals who consumed methamphetamine reported modern or severe childhood abuse or neglect. From this sample,

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56.9% of individuals were diagnosed with depression (Chen et al., 2019). A meta-analysis which included 12 primary studies with a 4372 participants revealed that psychological abuse and neglect were strongly associated with the outcomes of depression (Infurna et al., 2015). Another study done by Al Shawi et al (2019) on a sample of young adults from Iraq exhibited the most common forms of adverse childhood experiences are physical neglect (19.8%), Emotional Neglect (19.2%), Physical Abuse (17.21%) and Sexual Abuse (7.52%). Statistically significant association between the most common forms of adverse childhood experiences; especially of emotional abuse, emotional neglect, physical abuse and physical neglect with depression was well evident from the results. This correlation between both the variable can help seen Emotional Neglect as a source of prediction for depression which is yet to be analysed in this particular research.

TABLE-2: The above mentioned table shows the correlation between Depression and Aggression. From the table, it can be seen that the obtained value of correlation is 0.292 which is slightly higher than the table value i.e. 0.267 at the significant level of 0.01. This means there is a significant level of positive correlation between the depression and Aggression. In other words, we can say that aggression can significantly accounts for depression in young adults. So, our hypothesis 2 is accepted. This result is well evident in some literature studies. A study examining the link of aggression to depression for rural women in United States showed for the sample of 54 participants, mean total score for aggression in depressed women was significantly higher as compared to non-depressed women ($p < 0.001$). Within the whole sample, depression scores were significantly related to aggression; with aggression explaining 16% of variance found in depression scores ($\beta = .399, r^2 = .159, p = 0.003$) (Meyrueix et al., 2015). Another study investigated the relationship of aggression, depression and social well-being of university students in Jordan ($r = .364, p < 0.001$) (Alerani & Alradaydeh, 2017). Evidences showed the significant positive correlation between depression and aggression among them. This correlation between both the variable can help seen Aggression as a source of prediction for depression which is yet to be analysed in this particular research.

TABLE-3: This table shows the model summary for the multiple regression analysis. Basically this model summary explains how much the predictors (when taken as a set) accounts for the variance in the variable in question. For our current research, two factors that are important to analyse are R-square and the standard error of estimate. The value of R^2 is 0.255 which means taken as a set, the predictors account for 26 per cent of the variance in depression. While the value of standard error of estimate is 8.73.

TABLE-4: This Anova table shows whether our value of R-square is significant or not. From the table, we can clearly see that the value of R square is significantly greater than zero. At df (3,96), the value of F is 10.502 and our P value is less than the .001. It means our predictors (when taken as a set) are significantly accounts for the variance in depression. In other words, our regression model is significant.

(test using $\alpha = .05$)

$F(3,96) = 10.502$

$P < .001, R^2 = .255$ or 26%

TABLE-5: This coefficient table shows how much of unique variance is accounted for by the each of predictors separately.

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EMOTIONAL NEGLECT AS A PREDICTOR: From the table, it can be seen that the p value of emotional neglect is .000 that is definitely less than 0.05 which means Emotional Neglect is a significant predictor of Depression. A follow-up study by Paterniti et. al. (2017) showed that among 119 participants (50% of the entire sample), 45.4% had not recovered or remitted from depression during the follow- up period. Further, the result showed that the childhood history of emotional neglect was an independent predictor of depression recurrence. Childhood emotional neglect predicts a less favourable course of depression.

AGGRESSION AS A PREDICTOR: The coefficient table shows that the p value of aggression is 0.028 which is clearly less than 0.05. This is evident from the values that Aggression is also a significant predictor of Depression. Increase in aggression among 3rd, 4th and 5th grade children was significantly associated with increase in depression; this relation was mediating through increase in peer rejection. Results of the study supported the cognitive diathesis- stress model in children. Surveillance and control for initial levels of depression, the interaction between stress (resulted from increase in peer rejection) and depressogenic attributional style leads to significant prediction of self- reported depressive symptoms (Panak, W. F., & Garber, J. 1992).

GENDER AS A PREDICTOR: The value of this variable is 0.010 which is less than the value 0.05 which means gender is also a significant predictor of depression when taken alone. Previous studies have shown that females are more prone to depression. However, the present study does not made any such analysis. Females were more prone than males to experience a major depressive episodes in any month of the two years period of follow- up study. They are marginally more likely to experience a relapse. 60% of females had relapse as compared to 51% of males by the period of 12 months. Several factors works as predictors for worse outcomes for both men and women such as childhood abuse, earlier age of onset of first MDE, Bipolar disorder etc. (Oquendo et al., 2013).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we can say that this study adds to the evidences of previously done studies on Depression. All the hypotheses have been accepted according to the results of this research. It provides evidences to prove that a child who experiences emotional neglect is likely to develop depression later in life. Also, Aggression and Depression co-exist and provides for the significant amount of association between both of them. Gender, however, does not make any major difference in the experience of depression.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Kaur, M. (2023). Exploring The Trauma: Depression, Childhood Emotional Neglect and Aggression Among Young Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(4), 2184-2191. DIP:18.01.203.20231104, DOI:10.25215/1104.203