

Research Paper

Aggression, Mental Well-Being and Inter-Personal Relationship among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Young adults' emotional functioning and behavior have been greatly impacted by the changes and pressures they have faced in the social, academic, and interpersonal spheres in recent years. Despite these developments, it is still difficult to assess and comprehend how aggression regulation impacts their interpersonal relationships and mental health. Aggression expression and suppression are significant emotional processes that influence how people control their inner emotions and interactions with others. While expression enables people to express their feelings publicly, suppression entails regulating or preventing emotional expression. These processes are essential in determining social functioning and psychological adjustment. The current study looks at how young adults' mental health and interpersonal relationships are affected by the expression and repression of aggression (N = 200). Gender differences in these relationships are further investigated in the study. The measures included mental health (e.g., emotional stability and positive functioning), interpersonal relationships (e.g., communication, trust, and relational adjustment), and the suppression and expression of aggression (e.g., inhibition and outward communication of anger). While expressing aggression had a positive impact on male interpersonal relationships and female mental well-being, suppressing aggression was found to have a negative impact. The study's implications are highlighted and its findings are discussed.

Keywords: *Aggression, Interpersonal Relationships, Mental Well-Being*

Emotions are essential to human functioning; they affect how we think, act, and connect with others in our surrounding. Multiple different emotions exist, but anger is one of the most complicated because of its dual adaptive and disruptive potential. Anger can be a defense mechanism in response to what someone thinks is unfair, irritating, frustrating, or dangerous, exceeds to set limits and stop wrongdoing. Anger relies mostly on how it is controlled in the aspects of psychological and social context. According to Emotion Control Theory – individuals can manage emotional experiences through strategies such as suppression and expression (Gross & John, 2003).

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Suppression of aggression defined as the inhibition of outward emotional display while the internal emotional experience continues. While suppression may help to avoid on-the-spot conflict with others, study shows that long-term inhibition can lead to more mental stress, ruminating, and physical arousal (Shao et al., 2015). Studies have linked anger suppression with depressive symptoms, mental exhaustion, and reduced quality of life (Cheung & Park, 2010; Kahnert et al., 2021). Psychosomatic symptoms have also been linked to prolonged suppression, showing how closely emotional processes and bodily functions are linked (Suh et al., 2021).

Expression of aggression, on the other hand, refers to showing rage to other people or the outward communication of anger. Expressing yourself can be helpful, like when you talk to someone directly, or destructive forms, like when you get angry or lose control (uncontrolled outburst). Research shows that regulated and context-sensitive expression can enhance emotional clarity, lower internal mental tension, and carry adaptive coping (Gross & John, 2003). But unregulated aggression can enhance angry thought patterns and make the interpersonal disputes worse. Recent studies highlights that the psychological outcomes of anger expression depend not merely on its occurrence but on its severity, regulation, and social situations (Karppinen et al., 2023; Zou et al., 2024). Gender and cultural norms also affect how people act and think about suppression and expression, this is especially true in collectivist societies where suppressing your emotions may be seen as socially valued (Zhu et al., 2022).

Mental well-being means having a balanced mind with stable emotional state, the strength to overcome from stress, and the ability to cope with negative thoughts. According to the World Health Organization (2004) mental well-being is not only the absence of mental illness but it includes positive functioning, life satisfaction, and adaptive emotional regulation. Researchers have found over and over again that maladaptive ways of controlling emotions, especially expressive suppression, are linked to more mental discomfort and less positive affect (Cheung & Park, 2010; Braun-Lewensohn et al., 2021). According to (Yan et al. 2023), relying on suppression has been linked to increased anxiety and reduced perceived quality of life during times of high stress, like the COVID-19 pandemic. (Zou et al. 2024) say that on the other hand, being able to control your emotions in a adaptable way and expressing them in a healthy way that have been linked to better resilience and psychological restoration. These studies highlight the importance of understanding the relationship between anger management techniques and overall mental well-being.

Emotions also play a crucial role in an important context like interpersonal relationships. Communication, empathy, trust, and good dispute resolution are all signs of a healthy relationship. Being honest about your feelings/ emotions is a crucial part of staying close to your loved-one, while suppressing your feelings can make it difficult to get close and understand each other. Uehara et al. (2018) showed that suppression of anger can make relationships dissatisfying by preventing emotional healing. At the same time, overtly aggressive expression may also hinder relational stability by increasing hostility and defensive responses. Organizational and social psychology studies also shows that ways of regulating your emotions can affect how well a group works together and how friendly the relationships are (Kunze & Menges, 2017). Therefore, both suppression and expression of aggression occur to have implications for interpersonal functioning, depending on how they are regulated and socially interpreted.

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All together, we know so far depicts that controlling our emotions both suppressing and expressing aggression, may be connected to our mental well-being and our interpersonal relationships. Emotional processes operate simultaneously at intrapersonal and interpersonal levels, affecting both how people think and act inside (psychological functioning) and outside of relationships (social context). Systematic empirical research is needed to find out how these concepts interact with in groups of young adults, especially in certain social and cultural context.

Thus, our research is an unique attempt to understand the relationship between these variables and try to recommend why the issues of suppression of aggression has negative impact in young adults. Further, the study also analyse the impact of expression and suppression both on the emotional-wellbeing and interpersonal relationships, specifically among young adults.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Anger is a common and powerful human emotion. Moreover, it plays an important role in both psychological functioning and social interaction. Although anger can serve adaptive purposes, such as motivating self-protection or boundary-setting, its outcomes largely depend on how it is regulated. Research has examined two major forms of regulate anger among people on the whole: suppression and expression. Suppression refers to the deliberate holding back of violent displays; expression means to let one's emotions fly outwards. either constructively or aggressively (Gross & John, 2003). The significance of understanding the regulation strategies in relation to mental well-being and interpersonal relationships cannot be overemphasized, especially during the young adulthood stage, which is marked by academic pressure, identity development, and an increasing social circle.

Suppression of aggression has been found to be negatively related to psychological outcomes. Gross and John (2003) reported that people who often suppress their emotions experience lower levels of positive affect and life satisfaction. Although the study was based on self-report measures, it offered excellent theoretical evidence for the proposition that suppression could lead to emotional confusion and internal pressure. Moreover, Cheung and Park (2010) also found that anger suppression played a mediating role between temperament and depression in college students. This study suggests that people who tend to suppress their anger are likely to internalize their distress, which makes them more susceptible to depression. However, the cross-sectional design of the study prevents any conclusions about long-term implications.

These findings have been supported by recent studies. Conrad et al. (2021) showed that anger expression is a significant predictor of social anxiety and is linked to insecure attachment styles. The results of this study suggest that not only the internal emotional state but also the security of relations can be negatively influenced by suppression. Along the same lines, Suh et al. (2021) carried out a systematic review of chronic anger suppression in the Korean population and found strong links between chronic suppression and psychosomatic symptoms, thus supporting the relationship between emotional inhibition and physical health. Kahnert et al. (2025) This research contributes to the body of research by showing that anger suppression is a predictor of poor psychological and social quality of life, even when controlling for other mental health variables. Despite the clinical nature of the sample, the results offer strong evidence that suppression could be an independent predictor of poor mental well-being.

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However, emerging research with a focus on the COVID-19 pandemic era provides additional information. Braun-Lewensohn et al. (2021) and Yan et al. (2023) found that people who tended to use emotional suppression as a means of dealing with stressful situations tended to have more anxiety and lower mental well-being. Taken together, these studies support the argument that suppression can increase distress when under stressful circumstances.

The link between suppression and interpersonal relationships is complex. Uehara et al. (2018) conducted an experiment that showed that non-expression of anger led to more dissatisfaction with relations than constructive expression. While the experimental method used in this study allows for causal inference, it may not be representative of real-life relational processes. Conrad et al. (2021) also found that suppression was linked to relational insecurity. However, Zhu et al. (2022) argued that in collectivistic societies, suppression of emotions can, at times, be a factor in the preservation of social harmony. This suggests that suppression does not have a negative effect on interpersonal relationships in all cases.

Aggression expression has shown inconsistent results. Constructive expression, such as assertive expression, has been associated with emotional awareness and authenticity (Karppinen et al., 2023). The dyadic design used in Karppinen et al. enabled the investigation of both members in a relationship, thus increasing ecological validity. However, the study did not focus on young adults or cultural differences. On the other hand, Zou et al. (2024) found that adaptive expression of emotions is associated with rumination and cognitive processing, suggesting positive effects on mental health. On the other hand, Shao et al. (2015) found that frequent expression of aggression can maintain aggressive cognitive styles, suggesting that not all expressions are positive.

Gender differences have also been observed in contemporary literature. Certain studies have found that women may benefit more from constructive emotional expression because it is linked to lower rumination and internal stress levels (Zou et al., 2024). On the other hand, men may gain relationship benefits if expression is in the form of assertive communication and not hostility. However, results are not conclusive, and a great many studies have not compared gender-based results. Moreover, most studies have been carried out in Western societies, which makes it difficult to generalize findings to Indian youth, where gender norms have a great impact on emotional expression.

When integrating results from studies, several trends are found. First, suppression is always related to poor mental well-being. Second, the impact of suppression on interpersonal relationships is culture-dependent. Third, expressive behavior can improve results if it is constructive, but can worsen results if it is aggressive or poorly regulated. The apparent contradictions are mostly related to interpersonal relationships and gender-related interpretations. Moreover, there are limitations in methodology. Many studies use cross-sectional self-reporting, which limits the ability to make causal inferences. Few studies investigate suppression and expression in the same model and also evaluate mental well-being and interpersonal relationships.

The present study is grounded in the General Aggression Model (GAM) (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) and Cognitive Appraisal Theory (Lazarus, 1991). Together, the theories provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between both the expression and suppression of aggression and mental health, as well as overall interpersonal relationships, in young adults.

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According to the General Aggression Model, aggressive behavior and emotional experience arise from a combination of internal experiences, such as what we think, feel, and are physiologically aroused by, in interaction with the situation we are in. When we suppress our aggression, we may be able to control our external behavior, but our internal arousal and angry thoughts may still be present. This internal fire can add up to a lot of psychological pressure, thinking, and imbalance in our emotions, which is very bad for our mental health. On the other hand, expressing our aggression can have very different effects on our internal experiences. If we express it in a constructive manner, it can be a way of releasing emotional pressure and gaining clarity of thought. However, if it is uncontrolled or angry, it can lead to more aggressive thoughts and conflict with others.

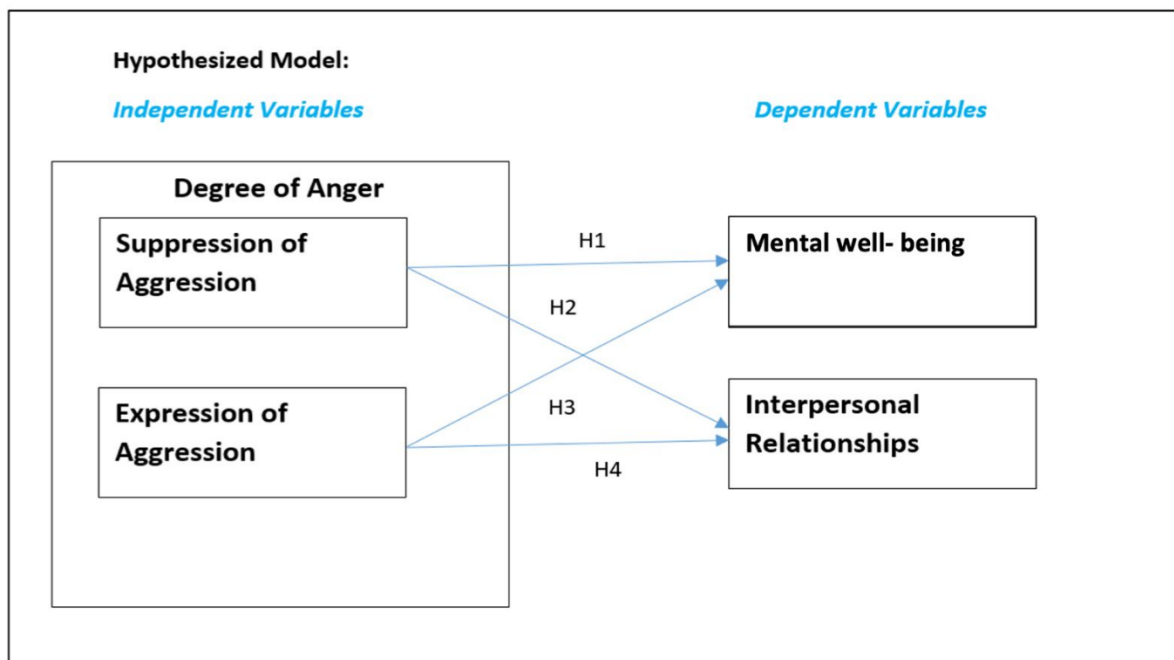
According to the Cognitive Appraisal Theory, our emotions are a result of our interpretation of what is happening. When anger is suppressed, the cycle of appraisal remains incomplete, and we are left with our thoughts and feelings that can have a negative impact on our mental health. On the other hand, constructive expression of anger can help us reappraise the situation and bring our mental balance. In interpersonal relationships, the management of aggression is also dependent on how others perceive it. Assertiveness can be perceived as confidence or aggression, depending on the social and cultural context, while suppressing emotions can be perceived as maturity or withdrawal. These perceptions influence our satisfaction with relationships and communication style.

Integrating the concepts, this research study considers the suppression and expression of aggression as two regulatory mechanisms that influence both internal mental health and external relationships through a complex web of thoughts, feelings, and appraisal. The integrated approach provides a comprehensive framework to examine how anger management strategies influence not only internal mental processes but also the way young adults interact with others.

The existing literature always highlights the importance of anger regulation. However, the literature is quite fragmented. Many studies focus on internal processes (for example, depression or anxiety) or relationship processes (for example, satisfaction or attachment) without adequately integrating the two. Moreover, there is a lack of studies conducted on non-clinical young adults in India. The cultural norms of Indian society often promote emotional control, particularly for women, which may influence the impact of suppression and expression on well-being and relationship processes.

The above discussion reveals the lack of research on the complex relationship between suppression and expression of aggression and their linkages with mental well-being and interpersonal relationships, especially in the Indian context. Most of the existing research on these issues is done in isolation or in Western contexts, which makes them less applicable to the Indian young adult population, where cultural factors often influence the patterns of emotional regulation. In addition, most of the existing research on these issues is done on clinical samples or in controlled experimental settings, with relatively fewer studies done in a correlational fashion using standardized psychometric measures to simultaneously tap these constructs within a single framework.

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Therefore, the current study represents a novel attempt to explore this issue in the Indian young adult population using a correlational design and standardized measures. By filling both contextual and methodological gaps, this study aims to contribute to a more holistic understanding of emotional regulation and its effects on mental well-being and interpersonal relationships. The results of this study may provide important practical insights to practitioners, students, policymakers, and decision-makers in the development of effective strategies to promote healthy emotional regulation and constructive social functioning.

Rationale

The significance of this research is rooted in the increasing awareness of the importance of emotional regulation in terms of maintaining mental health and healthy interpersonal relationships, particularly among young adults. In today's world, young adults are increasingly faced with academic pressures, career uncertainty, and performance expectations, which increase their emotional experiences of anger and frustration. In the Indian socio-cultural setting, anger is often considered undesirable, and people tend to suppress their anger rather than expressing it in a constructive manner. While suppressing anger may reduce conflict in the short term, it has been found to be associated with emotional distress and psychological imbalances in the long term. On the other hand, the expression of aggression may either facilitate emotional clarity and communication or create interpersonal problems, depending on the regulation style. While the prevalence of these emotional experiences is widespread, there is a need to systematically explore the relationship between the suppression and expression of aggression and mental health and interpersonal relationships among young adults.

This study focuses on anger regulation strategies as core mechanisms that mediate both internal psychological processes and external interpersonal outcomes. By exploring the inter-relationship between the suppression and expression of aggression, mental health, and interpersonal relationships in a single framework, this study hopes to provide more in-depth understanding of the role of emotional processes during early adulthood. The results of this study may help mental health professionals, educators, counselors, and policymakers

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understand the psychological and interpersonal implications of anger regulation strategies. This study, therefore, helps to shed light on the importance of emotional regulation in the Indian setting and provides evidence for the development of more effective emotional skills training and counselling programs for young adults.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the relationship between suppression of aggression and mental well-being among young male and female adults.
2. To examine the relationship between suppression of aggression and interpersonal relationships among young male and female adults.
3. To examine the relationship between expression of aggression and mental well-being among young male and female adults.
4. To examine the relationship between expression of aggression and interpersonal relationships among young male and female adults.

Hypotheses

1. There would be negative correlation between suppression of aggression and mental well-being among young male and female adults.
2. There would be negative correlation between suppression of aggression and interpersonal relationships among young male and female adults.
3. There would be positive correlation between expression of aggression and mental well-being among young male and female adults.
4. There would be positive correlation between expression of aggression and interpersonal relationships among young male and female adults.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

For the present study, a total of 200 young adults were selected from universities and educational institutions located in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. The sample comprised 100 male and 100 female participants, ensuring equal gender representation. The age range of participants was between 19 to 25 years. Participants included students from intermediate, undergraduate, and postgraduate levels.

Participants were selected using a convenience sampling method. The inclusion criteria were: (a) individuals aged between 19–25 years, (b) currently enrolled in an educational institution, and (c) willingness to participate in the study. The exclusion criteria included individuals outside the specified age range and those unwilling to provide informed responses.

Measures

The following standardized measures were used in the study. Detailed psychometric properties of the instruments can be found in their respective manuals.

State–Trait Anger Expression Inventory-2 (STAXI-2)

Aggression was assessed using the State–Trait Anger Expression Inventory-2 (STAXI-2) developed by Spielberger (2000). The scale measures both suppression of aggression (anger-in) and expression of aggression (anger-out). It consists of items assessing two dimensions: suppression of aggression (inhibition of outward emotional expression) and expression of aggression (outward communication of anger). Participants were required to respond to each

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item based on their typical emotional responses. Higher scores indicated greater use of the respective aggression regulation strategy.

Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)

Mental well-being was measured using the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) developed by Warwick Medical School (2006). The scale consists of 14 items assessing positive aspects of mental health, including emotional stability, positive affect, and psychological functioning. Participants rated each item on a Likert scale reflecting their experiences over time. Higher scores indicate greater mental well-being.

Interpersonal Relationships Scale (IP-32).

Interpersonal relationships were assessed using the Interpersonal Relationships Scale (IP-32). The scale consists of 32 items designed to evaluate relational functioning, including communication, trust, emotional closeness, and conflict resolution. Participants responded based on their experiences in social and relational contexts. Higher scores indicate better interpersonal functioning.

RESULTS

Table 1. Demographic profiles of the sample

Demographic	Male			Female		
Gender	100 (50%)			100 (50%)		
Education	Intermediate	Graduation	PG	Intermediate	Graduation	PG
	12 %	69%	19%	12%	69%	19%

Table 1. presents the demographic details of the participants (N=200). The study collected 200 questionnaire responses from students from universities and institutions. The table revealed that 50% of the respondents were male and 50% were female young adults. This shows that both male and female opinions were considered in the study for a comprehensive viewpoint. Considering the education level of students, the distribution shows that 12% belonged to intermediate, 69% were graduate, and 19% were PG students who participated in the survey. Considering the age group, 100% of students belonged to the age range of 19–25.

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviations on Suppression of Aggression, Expression of Aggression, Mental Well-Being, and Interpersonal Relationships Measures

Variables	Male		Female	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Suppression of Aggression	19.32	3.68	18.46	3.85
Expression of Aggression	17.12	4.01	15.02	3.30
Mental Well-Being	46.82	8.45	45.50	9.12
Inter-personal Relationships	90.67	16.91	81.88	16.54

Table 2. shows the descriptive statistics compare the male and female young adults across four important constructs, i.e., SOA, EOA, MWB, and IPR, with a sample size of 200 inclusive of both male and female. The results indicate that male respondents have higher mean scores for all four constructs (SOA=19.32, EOA=17.12, MWB=46.82, and IPR=90.67) compared to their female counterparts (SOA=18.46, EOA=15.02, MWB=45.50, and IPR=81.88). Overall, the descriptive analysis shows that the male adults consistently report higher levels across all four constructs, while SD indicates that there are comparable

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levels of distinctions and dispersion with both groups (Male SD: SOA=0.68, EOA=4.01, MWB=8.45, and IPR=16.91) and (Female SD: SOA=0.85, EOA=3.30, MWB=9.12, and IPR=16.54).

Table 3. Correlation Scores of Suppression of Aggression, and Expression of Aggression with Mental Well-Being, and Interpersonal Relationships Measures among male and female young adults

Variable	SOA	EOA	MWB	IPR
SOA		.294**	-.252*	.281**
EOA	.474*		.074	.267**
MWB	-.239*	.205*		.201*
IPR	.215*	.135	-.077	

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

The correlation **table 3.** for male young adults shows that for a sample of (N=100), the correlations between EOA and MWB have a significant negative association ($r = -.252^*$). This indicates that the higher the SOA, the lower the MWB will be in male adults (**H1 is accepted for males**). On the contrary, for SOA, the correlations with IPR are positive ($r = .281^{**}$). This reflects that if the SOA is increasing, in turn, IPR has been reducing among male adults. This finding is contrary to our proposed hypotheses (**H2 rejected for male**). Considering the EOA and MWB relationships, the results show, contrary to our proposition, that there are negative correlations between them ($r = .074$, insignificant). This is counterintuitive because expression of aggression generally improves MWB in individuals (**H3 rejected for males**). Similarly, for EOA and IPR correlations, there is a positive association ($r = .267^{**}$) between them, which indicates that once EOA increases among males, it also enhances the IPR (**H4 accepted for males**). The table shows the detailed findings for male respondents.

Considering the female adults, we can observe from the **table 3.** that for SOA, the correlations are negative on MWB ($r = -.239^*$), which shows that when SOA increases in female adults, the MWB gets hampered and can increase personal and relational conflicts (**H1 accepted for female**). On the contrary, we observe the SOA correlations on IPR; it has a positive association ($r = .215^*$), which indicates when SOA increases, the IPR has increasing effects (hence **H2 is rejected for females**). From the table, it is also found that EOA has positive correlations with MWB ($r = .205^*$); hence, H3 is **supported for females**. However, EOA and IPR have insignificant ($r = .135$) correlations, as the p-value is insignificant; thus, **H4 is rejected for females**.

DISCUSSION

The study aims to understand the correlation between suppression and expression of aggression among young adults and its impact on mental well-being and interpersonal relationships. Further, the study also attempts to uncover these relationships at the gender level, i.e., male and female. The study adopted a quantitative method to analyze these correlations. From the analysis, we found interesting results on the research objectives.

According to the findings of the study, it is revealed that the suppression of aggression would have a negative impact on the mental well-being of both male and female young adults; **Hypothesis 1 is being accepted**. The finding supports our proposition for both cohorts. This finding suggests that individuals who habitually suppress their aggressive

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feelings tend to experience lower mental and cognitive well-being in life and the workplace. Psychologically speaking, if an individual suppresses their internal regulations, frustrations, and impulses, that can consume mental energy and may result in stress, anxiety, boredom, rumination, and internal conflicts. These findings are in line with other research findings (Gross & John, 2003; Bushman, 2002). Since mental processing mechanisms are directly connected to our neural system and overall physiological functioning, it is obvious that suppression and unexpressed aggression can disturb the pattern of our cognitive thinking and can drain our mental energy, physiological functioning, and brain functioning. The finding also reveals that suppression of aggression is common in both males and females, and there is no consistency for them.

The second hypothesis did not support our assumptions and hunches (guesses), i.e., suppression of aggression would negatively affect the interpersonal relationships between male and female (***Hypothesis 2 rejected***). The findings highlight that it is not necessary that suppression always benefits relationships. The findings indicate that suppression of aggression did not weaken interpersonal relationships in the expected manner among male and female young adults. Generally, in many social situations, suppression of aggressive feelings may contribute to maintaining social harmony rather than damaging relationships at large. One possible explanation for our findings could be that, in social contexts, specifically among young adults, they are actively engaged in forming and maintaining friends, relationships, and peer networks. At this stage of development, young adults place more emphasis on social acceptance, mental balance, and conflict avoidance. Young adults often learn to control their impulses to avoid heated arguments, rejections, or social isolation. Supporting the findings of the study, it can be highlighted that often young adults suppress aggression to prevent immediate confrontations, reducing interpersonal conflicts, especially in the environments of colleges, workplaces, and other social groups. From the Indian cultural settings, young adults are taught to suppress aggression, as open expression can be perceived as an immature mind, disrespect, or socially undesirable behavior and attitude. The second explanation could be that young adults used to manage their impression and regulate their expressions to maintain a positive image and protect healthy relationships. Lastly, we can also infer that the suppression of aggression can also help individuals avoid hurting others mentally and emotionally, damaging trust, and creating distance in relationships. These findings substantiate the results of other researchers' work (Zhu et al., 2022; Braun-Lewensohn et al., 2021).

From the results, we have found an interesting fact. Our proposition was that the expression of aggression would positively influence mental well-being in both males and females. However, the findings show gender-specific conclusive evidence (***Hypothesis 3 partially accepted***). The hypothesis for males was rejected; however, for females, it was accepted. This means that the expression of aggression contributes to better mental health and well-being among young adult females; however, it does not produce the same positive correlations among their male counterparts. From the cognitive perspective, the expression of aggression in young adult males may not necessarily lead to emotional clarity and satisfaction. Research says that often expression of aggression may reduce internal tension; however, cognitive theories revealed that repeated outbursts of expression can reinforce aggressive mental patterns of the brain and body as well. Considering the Indian culture aspects in young adults, the male is traditionally socialized to appear strong, emotionally controlled, and resilient. Young adults are more aware that the expression of aggression can also lead to damaging reputations and relational harmony in society. In contrast and supporting our propositions, the female young adults can improve their mental state by

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expressing more to others about their social distress, which can reduce internal rumination and emotional suppression. Recent research also supports this proposition that expression in females can allow for cognitive tension release, emotional-positive processing, and restoration of self-control. In India, the young adult females express aggression constructively, which represents psychological independence from restricted gender norms.

From the study results, it is found that our *hypothesis 4 is partially accepted*. The result uncovers some interesting facts about interpersonal relationships in context. The hypothesis was accepted for males and rejected for females. This indicates that expression of aggression appears to strengthen interpersonal relationships more among male than female young adults. Considering the social settings of young male students, it is pertinent to note that the open expression of aggression may form an assertive communication and social skills enhancement rather than hostility. When young adult males express themselves consciously to their partners and in other social relationships, this will lead to positive relationships. Because suppression can lead to misunderstanding and can enhance active-aggressive actions and behaviors. Contrary to our propositions, expression of aggression did not show the same sense for young adult females. This can be because, in the Indian cultural context, females are taught to be introverted rather than extroverted. Further, for females, open expression may be perceived as harsh and confrontational behavior among females socially. Indian society expects that females should be more empathetic and judgemental rather than expressing confrontations during social interactions and communication.

Taken together, the findings of the present study can be theoretically understood through the General Aggression Model (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) and the Cognitive Appraisal Theory (Lazarus, 1991). The General Aggression Model explains how suppression and expression of aggression influence internal cognitive, affective, and physiological states, which subsequently shape psychological and relational outcomes. Suppression may sustain internal arousal and maladaptive cognitive patterns, thereby reducing mental well-being, whereas expression—when regulated constructively—may alter internal states and influence interpersonal responses.

In a way that is in line with the Cognitive Appraisal Theory, the outcomes of emotions are dependent on the appraisal and interpretation of situations that cause anger. Suppression may be associated with the extension of unresolved appraisals and rumination, whereas expression may be associated with cognitive reappraisal and emotional resolution. Furthermore, interpersonal outcomes are dependent on the social appraisal of aggressive behaviors in the context of cultural and gender settings. Therefore, by integrating these theoretical approaches, a coherent explanation of the observed relationships between aggression regulation strategies, mental well-being, and interpersonal relationships among young adults is provided.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the relationship between the suppression and expression of aggression and mental as well as relational well-being is a counterintuitive relationship among young Indian adults. Furthermore, it is important to note that the expression of aggression among this group of people has gender differences. For males, the expressions occur in different contexts, whereas for females, the corresponding interpretations tend to be more divergent.

Implications and Limitations

The findings suggest that the repression of aggression can have a negative impact on mental health and thus highlight the need for healthy expressions of anger. This could be achieved by incorporating programs on emotional regulation and communication skills in educational settings and work environments. In view of the gender differences, it is essential that interventions be designed with a gender perspective. In the Indian socio-cultural setting, there is a need for increased awareness about the difference between destructive aggression and healthy emotional expression. The findings of this study can contribute to preventive mental health programs and may also lead to further research on the dynamics of anger regulation.

The current study has a number of limitations. The correlational and cross-sectional nature of the study prevents causal conclusions and the evaluation of long-term outcomes. The use of self-report measures may be vulnerable to social desirability bias, particularly in the measurement of aggression-related variables. Moreover, the study was conducted on a population of young adults in a specific cultural setting, which may impair generalizability. Other potentially relevant variables, such as personality and socio-economic variables, were not considered. Future studies should employ longitudinal or experimental methods, multi-method procedures, and more representative samples.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the link between suppression and expression of aggression and their correlations with mental well-being and interpersonal relationships among young adults, focusing on gender differences. The findings showed that suppression of aggression was significantly and negatively related to mental well-being for both males and females, indicating that chronic emotional restraint could be a potential risk factor for internal distress. However, suppression did not significantly affect interpersonal relationships, suggesting that emotional restraint could be a socially adaptive strategy in a given culture. Expression of aggression showed gender differences, with positive correlations with mental well-being for females and interpersonal relationships for males.

These findings can be considered from two perspectives. First, the General Aggression Model (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) proposes that what is happening in our minds, our thoughts, feelings, and level of arousal, influences our behavior and interactions with others. Bottling up our emotions keeps our arousal levels high and those negative thoughts circulating in our minds, which can impair our psychological well-being. On the other hand, the Cognitive Appraisal Model (Lazarus, 1991) suggests that it is our appraisal of our emotional experiences that influences our psychological adjustment. Venting and expressing our emotions constructively can help us work through things and come to terms with how we feel, while suppressing our emotions can leave us stuck in negative thinking patterns, such as rumination. Gender differences in these patterns are likely reflecting culturally taught standards for emotion appraisal.

Although the current study has its limitations—being correlational, relying on self-report measures, and being specific to a particular culture—it contributes to the literature on emotion regulation by combining cognitive and aggression-related theories in a single study of young adults.

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Conflict of Interest

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