



## Relationship between Self-Esteem and Aggressive Behaviour among Youths

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### Abstract

*The present study aims to find out the relationship between self-esteem and aggression among youths in Manipur. A sample of 300 participants was selected from the colleges of Imphal-East and Imphal-West areas of Manipur, out of which 150 cases were males and the other 150 cases were females. Students within the age group of 18-29 years, graduate and above and who are willing to give consent for participating in the study were selected. Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale and The Aggression Questionnaire by Buss and Perry (1992) were used for measuring self-esteem and aggression, respectively.*

*The finding of the study shows that, in the subscales of aggression, physical aggression and hostility were found to be negatively significant with self-esteem. But, the subscales such as verbal aggression and anger did not show correlation with self-esteem. However, the total score of aggression was found to have significant negative correlation with self-esteem.*

**Keywords:** *Self-esteem, Aggression, Youth.*

### Introduction

Aggression can be defined as any form of behaviour directed towards the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment.<sup>1</sup> The aggressive act can be expressed in many forms such as physical versus verbal, direct versus indirect, and active versus passive.<sup>2</sup> Physical aggression involves harming others physically such as hitting, kicking, stabbing or shooting them. Non-physical aggression includes verbal aggression (such as yelling, screaming, swearing and name calling) and relational or social aggression, which is defined as intentionally harming another person's social

relationship, for instance, by gossiping about another person, excluding others from the friendship or giving others the silent treatment.<sup>3</sup> The different forms of aggression can be expressed directly or indirectly. With direct aggression, the victim is physically present (eg., hitting on the face) and with indirect aggression, the victim is absent (e.g., destroying another person's property when he or she is not looking).<sup>4</sup> Each year, more than 1.3 million people worldwide lose their lives to violence.<sup>5</sup> There are numbers of studies as to explain the factors affecting aggression among youths. Many researchers have identified a number of risk

factors that are associated with aggressive behaviour and have found that self-esteem as one of the particular factor that is known to have an impact on aggression. One longitudinal view in psychology believes that low self-esteem is associated with bad things, such as behaving aggressively.<sup>6</sup> Self-esteem is a subjective feeling of self-worth built from the respect and sense of self-worth reflected back on the person from significant other and can be altered through labelling and social interaction.<sup>7</sup> Low self-esteem people tend to be more sensitive to criticism, and tend to interpret these events as signs of inadequacy and rejection. People with low self-esteem tend to view themselves as being less confident than people with high self-esteem. This negative self-appraisal result in a self-fulfilling prophecy because they have low self-confidence, they are less inclined to explore new relationships and experiences, reducing the chance of positive feedback, and reinforcing the negative self-appraisal.<sup>8</sup> Self-esteem is the panacea of modern life. It is seen as the key to financial success, health, and personal fulfilment, and it is regarded as the antidote to underachievement, crime, and drug abuse.<sup>9</sup> Ostrowsky<sup>10</sup> suggested that aggression may provide individuals with low self-esteem with an increased sense of power and independence, that aggression may serve as attention seeking behaviour which enhances self-esteem, or that individuals with low self-esteem may externalize blame for their problems and failures to protect themselves against feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, and shame, which leads to aggression towards others. Similarly, an individual with lower self-esteem establishes a weaker attachment towards society and as a result, the individual does not conform to social norms, thereby increasing delinquency and aggressive behaviours.<sup>11</sup> However another study by Baumeister and colleagues argued that what causes violence is not too little self-esteem, but too much. According to him, when their exceeding egotism is threatened by some environmental event, they react with

aggression and violence.<sup>12,13</sup> He strongly emphasized on the threatened egotism hypothesis, whereby aggression occurs in response to the sense that one's favourable views of self-have been impugned by others.<sup>12</sup>

Violence can lead to many crimes, injuries as well as death and aggression leads to violence. According to a study in India, nearly 17.7% of youths experience anger and 17% of them had physical aggression.<sup>14</sup> Manipur are classified as one of the disturbed areas, hence are vulnerable to conflicts. Also aggressive behaviours against colleagues, school mate and others are increasing. Youths plays an important role in restructuring our nation. Thus, this study will throw some lights for the researchers in this area and help the educators, families, caregivers, and the youths themselves to have knowledge of how self-esteem and aggression is related. The knowledge will facilitate planning and appropriate management can be taken up.

### Materials and Methods

A cross sectional study design was used in the present study. The data was collected from the four colleges situated in Imphal-east and Imphal-West areas through convenient sampling technique. The sample consists of 300 college students of which 150 were males and the other 150 were females. Students within the age range of 18-29 years, who are willing to give consent for participating in the study, were selected for the present study.

### Inclusion criteria

1. Students within the age group of 18-29 years
2. Graduate level and above.
3. Gender: Both male and female
4. Students willing to give informed consent.

### Exclusion criteria

Students with any serious psychiatric illness, head injury, physically and mentally handicap.

### Assessment tools

- 1) Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg M, 1965)<sup>15</sup>

- 2) The Aggression Questionnaire by Buss and Perry (1992)<sup>16</sup>

### Procedures

For the purpose of the study, the researcher approached the colleges situated in Imphal-East and Imphal-west, Manipur. Necessary permissions are taken from the concerned authorities and thoroughly explained about the purpose of the study. After this, the students were also informed about the purpose of the study. An attempt was made to approach all the youths who have fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Study aims, interviewing procedures and methods for maintaining confidentiality was explained to the participants. An informed consent was also taken from each of the participants. Once this procedure was carried out, questionnaire on Self Esteem and Aggression were given and administered.

### Plan for Statistical analysis

The data was analysed using SPSS software 23<sup>th</sup> version. Pearson Correlation statistics was used to test for association between variables and level of significance.

### Results

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to analyse the relationship between self-esteem and aggression among youths. The sample consists of 300 participants, of which 150 were males and the other 150 were females.

Table showing Correlation between self-esteem and aggression

Aggression Subscales	Pearson correlation	p-value
Physical Aggression	-0.134	0.020*
Verbal Aggression	-0.063	0.281
Anger	-0.056	0.332
Hostility	-0.121	0.036*
Total Aggression	-0.155	0.007*

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

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

The table shows the coefficient of correlation (r-value) between the different sub-scales of aggression and self-esteem of the study samples. The table shows that there is a negative correlation

between physical aggression and hostility towards self-esteem as manifest by p-value = 0.020 and p-value = 0.036, respectively. These findings reveal that students who have low level of self-esteem will have higher physical aggression and hostility. Other sub scales of aggression such as verbal aggression (p-value = 0.281) and anger (p-value = 0.332) are not having any correlation with respect to self-esteem. The finding of the total aggression shows negative correlation with respect to self-esteem as evident by p-value = 0.007.

### Discussion

The present study aims to analyse the relationship between self-esteem and aggression among youths. According to the findings, there is a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and aggression. This indicates that participants who have low self-esteem will have higher aggression and vice-versa. Several other studies support the present findings of negative correlation between self-esteem and aggression. They found that subjects with low self-esteem are also at risk for poor mental health and physical health. They will tend to have worse economic prospect than those with high self-esteem. In addition, they were more likely to be convicted of a crime during adulthood. In the subscales of aggression, physical aggression and hostility was found to have significant negative correlation with self-esteem. This indicates that participants who have high physical aggression and hostility will have low self-esteem. But, the other subscales i.e., verbal aggression and anger did not show correlation with self-esteem.

### Conclusion

The present study shows that there is a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and aggression among youths. This indicates that people with low level of self-esteem are inclined to be more aggressive in nature. The information gathered from the present study will help the caregivers or parents, educationists and the youths themselves, to understand the role of self-esteem

on aggression and seek for consultant from experts. The results will also yield important clinical information to mental health practitioners/professionals so that relevant management can be taken up.

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