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Psychological Problems of Interaction of Aggression and Self-Esteem in Students

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ABSTRACT

This article is dedicated to the study of the relationship between aggression and selfesteem in students. A.Bass and A.Darki's method of indicators and diagnosis of aggression (adapted by A.K.Osnitsky) and Rosenberg's method of self-esteem were used in the research. The research was conducted on 135 undergraduate students. It was determined that there was a negative relationship between self-esteem level and aggression. It can be concluded that as the level of self-esteem increases, the probability of decreasing the level of aggression increases. Low self-esteem is often associated with aggression because people with low self-esteem may feel threatened, which may cause them to respond with aggressive behavior. It was also found that the likelihood of a decrease in the level of selfesteem increased as a result of an increase in negative emotional traits such as irritability, guilt and resentment. Based on the results of the study, we can conclude that the proper development of selfesteem can be an important tool in reducing students' aggression levels and improving their overall psychological state.

KEYWORDS: Aggression, self-esteem, students, forms of aggression.

1. Introduction

The increase in aggression and aggressive behavior in modern times calls for more careful study and research of this problem. Large-scale incidents of student aggression are becoming more frequent. The peculiarities of the current era are striking in terms of the proliferation of factors that encourage the increase of aggressive behavior, especially among young people and students. Incidents of aggression are posted on the internet and social networks and are discussed and even normalized among students. As a result, aggressive behavior among students, resulting in serious health problems and fatalities, is leading to an increase in crime.

Fromm (1973) stated that aggression is a form of destructive behavior that is contrary to the norms and rules of society and causes physical or psychological harm to the person (Fromm, 1973).

Nemov believes that human aggression is a necessary response to external stimuli (people, circumstances, conditions). Some sources consider aggression as a personality trait that makes a person ready for any aggressive action to achieve certain goals. Scientists studying the problem of aggression divide it into 2 parts: aggressive behavior and aggression as a feature of the psyche, that is, aggression manifests itself in all manifestations of the human psyche. Thus, aggression refers to any concrete event, and aggressive behavior refers to specific actions performed by a person.

According to Austrian psychiatrist Freud, the founder of the psychoanalytic movement in psychology, the tendency to aggression and aggressive behavior is the first instinctive tendency of every human being (Freud, 1923). As a result of the observations made, it can be said that the most common type of aggression in the student environment is verbal aggression, which is accepted as a normal reaction over time. And it is even justified and approved by society. The normalization of such behaviors can have negative consequences on both individual and societal levels, which can lead to bigger problems.

The main signs of aggressive behavior are:

- 1. the tendency to dominate others;
- 2. using other people to achieve their aims and desires;
- 3. the desire to destroy;
- 4. Harming people, animals and things in the environment;
- 5. The tendency to show violence and cruelty. (Savina, 2018).

There is an opinion in the scientific literature that adequate aggression is necessary for the harmonious development of personality, the condition for its successful social adaptation and the ability to overcome obstacles in its path. In addition, adequate aggression plays an important role in the formation of such important qualities as perseverance, initiative and leadership, strengthens the ability to protect one's ideals and fight for them. Foreign psychologists emphasize that the absence of a certain level of aggression can lead to passivity in a person's behavior, weakness in decision-making, difficulty in adapting to the environment and, as a result, to a weakening of social status and position in society. On the other hand, excessive and uncontrolled aggression can harm both the individual and the environment.

It should be noted that all people show aggression, but for each person it is at a different level and characterized by certain features. The strength, frequency, direction and duration of aggressive reactions depend on many different factors.

Therefore, aggression in any situation needs to be analyzed in terms of the influence of physiological, psychological, social and situational factors on the person. However, despite the presence of psychological, physiological and social factors, the main causes and conditions for the emergence of aggression are conflicts (interpersonal or intrapersonal, conscious or unconscious). Therefore, any manifestation of aggression is the result of a person's dissatisfaction with the reality that surrounds him or her, with the standard of living, with other people or with

himself or herself.

Self-esteem is a psychological concept that refers to how one evaluates oneself, how much one values oneself and one's attitude towards oneself. It is related to selfacceptance, confidence in one's own abilities and values, and how one feels about oneself. Children with high self-esteem generally feel good about themselves and are better able to resolve conflicts with other children, think logically when solving problems and are psychologically resilient. Self-esteem is one of the most important human characteristics for achieving goals. The term "self-esteem" refers to one's attitude towards oneself and how one values oneself. The concept of "I" is related to one's self-knowledge, beliefs and personal values. In addition, the level of selfesteem is closely related to how one feels about oneself and how one relates to others. High self-esteem increases a person's motivation and standing in society, while low self-esteem often leads to behavioral problems and social isolation. Strong willpower and selfconfidence, decision-making power and originality, creativity, mental health and spiritual health are directly related to self-esteem and a sense of self-worth. It also refers to one's sense of worth or value, or how much one values, loves, rewards or cherishes it. If an individual's feelings are respected, their thoughts valued, their abilities recognized, their self-confidence is strengthened. When the child's feelings are ignored, when the child's thoughts are rendered meaningless, when the child's abilities are criticized, the person's self-confidence remains at a low level of development and therefore weakens. Over time, a person encounters many situations. In success or failure, in every situation of life, selfesteem strengthens or weakens significantly, depending on the person's reaction. Self-esteem is defined as the evaluation of oneself according to one's own worth. Increases and decreases in self-esteem often lead to strong emotional reactions (Aliyeva et al., 2021).

In this context, we think that there may be a certain dependency between the increase in students' aggression and their self-confidence. Undoubtedly, self-esteem is the basis of personality and in this respect, the level of self-esteem can be estimated by determining the level of aggression. The facts show that in most cases the emergence of aggressive behavior is associated with disturbing factors, but its persistence may depend on the student's level of self-esteem. The main purpose of this study is to find the relationship between students' self-esteem levels and aggressive behavior levels. We believe that the discovery of this relationship may lead to the development of new methods and approaches to increase self-esteem while decreasing aggression.

2. Methodology

The main purpose of the article is to determine the relationship between the level of aggression and self-esteem in students. 135 students from various specialties participated in the study. The following methods were used in the research:

- A.Bass and A.Darki's Indicators and Diagnosis of Aggression methodology (adapted by A.K.Osnitsky)
- Rosenberg's methodology of self-esteem (1965)

The scale is a ten-item Likert-type scale answered on a four-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. According to the instructions of the test, the person has to answer the statements with one of 4 options. Circle A if you strongly agree, B if you agree, C if you disagree and D if you strongly disagree. The evaluation of the test is as follows: For items 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7: A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1. For items 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10 (reverse scores): A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4 The scale is 0-40. A score of 0-18 is considered as low, 19-22 as medium, 23-34 as high and 35-40 as very high.

Bass and A. Darkey solved the difficult task of taking into account all types of aggressive responses when creating a questionnaire. The advantage of this methodology is that it allows to study not only aggression but also forms of aggression. The methodology consists of 75 statements, which are answered with one of 4 options: "Yes", "Probably yes", "No", "Probably no". During data processing, the answers "yes", "probably yes" (aggregated as yes answers) and also the answers "no" and "probably no" (aggregated as no answers) are combined. A question with a "-" sign is scored 0 points if the answer is "yes" and 1 point if the answer is "no". The forms of aggression measured and the calculation keys are noted.

- 1. Directing physical force at another person Physical aggression (a = 11):
- 1+, 9-, 17-, 25+, 33+, 41+, 48+, 55+, 62+, 68+.
- 2. Verbal aggression is negative emotions during a conversation, discussion or clarification of relationships, as well as threats, curses, wishes for misfortune, illness Verbal aggression (a = 8):

3. Indirect aggression is indirect aggression towards another person (gossip, jokes, sarcasm, cruel jokes) (a = 13):

4. Negativity is oppositional behavior towards recognized authorities, leaders or management. This expression of rejection can be variable in nature: from passive resistance to protest behavior (a = 20):

5. Tendency to irritation caused by mild irritation. Irritability (a = 9):

6. Suspicion (a = 11) - a tendency to distrust and caution towards people, arising from the belief that others intend harm:

7. Real or imagined pain from someone or the whole world occasional expression of jealousy and hatred towards others, conditioned by feelings of dissatisfaction, anger - Anger (a = 13):

8. The person believes that he/she is a bad person who commits wrong actions - Guilt (a = 11):

Here's the scoring:

- 1. Physical aggression. The maximum possible score is 110. Weak level 0 to 37, medium level 38 to 75. Strong level 76 to 110.
- 2. Verbal aggression. The maximum possible score is 104. Weak level from 0 to 35, medium level from 36 to 71. Strong level from 72 to 104.
- 3. Indirect aggression. The maximum possible score is 117. Weak level from 0 to 39, medium level from 40 to 79. Strong level from 80 to 117.
- 4. Negativity ("militant pessimism"). The maximum possible score is 100. Bad level from 0 to 33, average level from 34 to 67. Strong level from 68 to 100.
- 5. Irritability. The maximum possible score is 99. Weak level from 0 to 33, medium level from 34 to 67. Strong level from 68 to 99.
- 6. Suspicion. The maximum possible score is 110. Weak level 0 to 37, medium level 38 to 75. Strong level 76 to 110.
- 7. Anger. The maximum possible score is 104. Weak level from 0 to 35, medium level from 36 to 71. Strong level from 72 to 104.
- 8. Guilt. The maximum possible score is 99. Weak level from 0 to 33, medium level from 34 to 67. Strong level from 68 to 99.
- "1" + "2" + "3" gives an overall index of the aggressiveness of the personality. The maximum score is 331. Low severity level of personality aggression from 0 to 110 points, medium severity level of personality aggression from 111 to 221 points. High severity of personality aggression from 222 points to 331 points. For statistical processing of the empirical research results, mathematical statistical methods such as r-Spearman correlation coefficient were used, and quantitative data processing was carried out using the SPSS Statistics 22 computing program.

3. Results

Self-esteem is a psychological concept that expresses the value and respect given to oneself and plays a determining role in the mental and social health of the individual (Rosenberg, 1965). Aggression, on the other hand, can be defined as a person's outward, harmful or unwanted behavior and can be seen as a

result of low self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

In the literature, self-esteem has been found to be related to many psychological and behavioral variables. Especially the link between low self-esteem and aggressive behavior has been emphasized (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). However, there

are inconsistencies between various theories and findings explaining this relationship. While some studies have revealed that individuals with high selfesteem exhibit less aggression, other studies have revealed that aggressive behaviors are more closely related to low self-esteem. Such contradictions emphasize the complexity of the issue and the need for more comprehensive research (Baumeister, Smart & Boden, 1996).

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and aggression in students. Taking this into account, we conducted an experimental-psychological study to find out the degree of influence of these factors on students.

Hypothesis 0: As students' self-esteem increases, their aggressive behaviors will decrease. Students with low self-esteem may see themselves negatively and exhibit more aggressive behaviors.

Hypothesis 1: When students' self-esteem is low, aggressive behaviors are expected to increase. In other words, students with high self-esteem will show less aggression.

Considering these hypotheses, Spearman correlation test was conducted to evaluate the relationship between self-esteem and aggression in students. According to the results of the Spearman correlation test, the correlation between Rosenberg's self-esteem level indicators and other variables is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The relationship		

Self-esteem level	Spearman
Aggression	-0.538
Age	0.245
Course	0.277
Physical aggression	-0.154
Verbal aggression	-0.062
Indirect aggression	-0.117
Negativity	0.087
Guilt	-0.272**
Anger	-0.281**
Suspicious	-0.146
Resentment	-0.251**

*** Significant at the 0.01 level ** 0.05 (2-sided)

First of all, we can state that there is a moderately strong negative relationship (r = 0.538) between the level of aggression and the level of self-esteem. This result shows that as the level of aggression increases, the level of self-esteem of individuals decreases. This shows that aggression can have a negative effect on an individual's self-confidence and self-esteem.

At the same time, the results of the study show that there are statistically significant relationships between some psychological indicators and individuals' self-esteem. First of all, a negative and statistically significant relationship was found between negative emotional traits such as irritability (r=0.281), guilt (r=-0.272) and resentment (r=-0.251) and self-esteem level (p<0.01). This result shows that as the level of these traits increases, the individual's self-esteem decreases. This suggests that negative emotional traits negatively affect an individual's self-confidence and self-worth.

In addition, positive correlations were found between demographic indicators such as age (r= 0.245) and course (r= 0.277) and self-esteem level, but these relationships did not reach statistical significance. This result means that indicators such as age and course may have a positive effect on the self-esteem level of the individual, but the strength of this effect is not significant.

At the same time, although a weak positive relationship was found between physical (r= 0.154) and indirect aggression (r= 0.117) and self-esteem level, it was not possible to conclude that this relationship was statistically significant.

Table 2. Correlation indicators between self-esteem indicators and aggression level

Aggression	Spearman
Self-esteem	-0.538
Age	0.402
Cours	0.386

Based on the relationship between the level of aggression and the level of self-esteem in the table above, the result has already been noted. A weak positive correlation (r=0.402) was found between aggression and age. This indicates that aggressive behaviors will increase with age. This observed increase in aggressive behavior of the elderly may be due to their life experiences, social-emotional pressures and other challenges in life. These results emphasize the reasons for the aggressive behaviors of the elderly and the importance of increasing the support provided to them. A weak positive correlation (r=0.386) was found between aggression and progress. This indicates a slight increase in aggressive behaviors as the academic course level increases.

Stress factors, competition and high expectations that students face in the academic environment may explain these results. It reveals the importance of taking measures to protect and support students' psychosocial health in the education system. In general, the results of this study show that as the level of negative emotional traits increases, the individual's self-esteem decreases. This result is important in terms of planning psychological interventions and implementing measures to increase individuals' selfesteem.

4. Discussion

The relationship between self-esteem and levels of aggression is long-term and has been investigated from different perspectives. The existence of researchers finding both negative and positive correlations suggests that the relationship between self-esteem and aggression in students is complex and depends on various factors. Although the results of this study show that there is a negative relationship between self-esteem and aggression levels among students, the fact that some previous studies have shown a positive correlation shows that the debate in this field is still ongoing. However, a negative relationship between "self-esteem and aggression" has also been reported (Rosenthal et al. 2011). Similarly, other studies have shown that the real cause of aggressive tendencies is low and high self-esteem (Walker and Bright 2009).

In addition, Falkenbach et al. (2013) argued that the only determinant of aggressive

behavior is selfesteem instability. At the same time, another result was obtained from the research conducted by Falkenbach et al: People with psychopathic and narcissistic traits may show more aggressive behaviors due to their low self-esteem (Falkenbach et al., (2013).

A meta-analysis study conducted by Baumeister et al. (1996) evaluated the relationship between aggression and self-esteem over many studies. According to the results, aggression is strongly associated with low self-esteem. The research shows that aggressive behaviors often occur as a result of low self-esteem and internal dissatisfaction (Jabbarov, 2020).

Aggressive behaviors, especially physical violence and emotional coercion, make people feel weaker towards others, which leads to lower self-esteem. Baumeister et al. (1996) also note that aggression can be used to "hide" or "mask" low self-esteem, meaning that people sometimes use aggression as a defense mechanism to protect themselves or appear strong (Baumeister et al., 1996).

Brent and colleagues' (2005) research results show that people with low self-esteem exhibit higher levels of aggression and antisocial behavior. This is directly related to negative effects in social relationships and emotional problems. Low self-esteem has been found to be associated not only with aggression but also with aggressive behavior. In other words, such individuals may exhibit criminal behavior. Research findings suggest that it is necessary to work on antisocial behaviors to reduce low self-esteem (Brent et al., 2005).

A large-scale study is a study conducted by Teng (2015) et al. on Chinese students. The article examines the relationship between self-esteem and aggression levels more broadly by bringing together data from various studies. The results show that as the level of self-esteem increases, the level of aggression decreases, that is, there is a negative relationship. It is also stated that the social environment (family, friends, school) affects self-esteem and aggression. Social support and positive relationships can help reduce aggressive behaviors by increasing self-esteem (Teng et al., 2015).

According to the results of the research conducted jointly by Chamundeswari and Savarimuthu (2019), students with high self-esteem have lower rates of aggressive behavior. Increased self-esteem positively affects students' emotional health and helps to reduce negative emotions. Low self-esteem leads to difficulty in controlling aggression. The social isolation that comes with low self-esteem increases aggressive behavior in young people because they feel more alone and therefore want to be seen as aggressive. At the same time, when self-esteem is low, the ability to control emotions is also low (Chamundeswari & Savarimuthun, 2019).

Another study with similar results is the study by Wu et al. (2023) in which brain structure was also taken into account. This study examines the interaction between self-esteem, cortical thickness and aggression in healthy children. The results of the study show that high self-esteem is positively associated with reduced aggressive behavior in children. In other words, children with high self-esteem are less aggressive. The thickness of certain parts of the brain also influences aggressive behavior. Research has shown that increased cortical thickness in childhood is a

potential mechanism linking low self-esteem to aggression (Wu et al., 2023).

Similar findings are reflected in the study by Jabbarov et al (2023). Here, the faculty where the student is studying is also considered as an influential factor. According to the conclusion of the article, low levels of self-esteem are associated with increased aggressive behavior among students. There are differences between the self-esteem and aggression levels of students from different faculties. For example, students studying humanities have higher self-esteem and lower levels of aggression. It was also noted that social environment and academic requirements are important factors affecting students' psychological state (Jabbarov et al., 2023).

These articles and studies analyze the negative relationship between aggression and self-esteem from different perspectives. Many studies show that low self-esteem can lead to aggressive behavior and a damaged sense of identity due to internal turmoil. The authors of these articles contribute to the development of effective ways to combat aggression by analyzing this relationship in terms of different age groups, genders, social conditions and other factors.

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