

Impact of Aggression and Perceived Stress on the Social Competence of Adolescent Girls with Living and Deceased Parents

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ABSTRACT

Teenagers are an asset to every nation, and young women play a crucial part in the development of a nation's capabilities. This study revealed that an increase in aggression and perceived stress diminishes the social competence of adolescent females and that the parents' status (life/death) significantly affects their aggression level. This paper explored the relationship between adolescent girls' aggression, perceived stress, and social competence by explicating the impact of aggression and perceived stress on social competence. This study also revealed differences in mean test results based on parental status (alive or dead). The sample consisted of 230 girls between the ages of 12 and 18 years old. Utilizing a correlational study design and a purposive sampling technique, participants were provided with standardized measuring instruments. The statistical analysis revealed that aggression has a significant negative effect on the social competence of adolescent girls. Furthermore, the correlation analysis of aggression and perceived stress revealed a significant negative relationship with social competence and a significant positive association between aggression and perceived stress in the sample. The mean analysis elucidated substantial differences in the aggressiveness scores of teenage girls based on parental status (alive/deceased). This article would inform clinical psychologists, education counselors, psychologists, clinicians, family members, and educators about the possible causes of aggression, perceived stress, and poor social skills in teenagers, allowing them to design better interventions to improve their skills and personality.

Keywords: *Social competence, Perceived stress, Aggression, Teenager girls, Parental status, Pakistan*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the most exciting period of role identity and challenges for individuals. Bad effects like anger outbursts, friends' expectations, and influence, association with society, and deviant behavior can be part of this phase of life. Boys and girls get subjected to the roller coaster of feelings and somatic instability during high school age because of their surroundings. Teenagers are influenced by their house environment as well as their peer interaction. Additionally,

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aggression and stress can come from interpersonal relations, educational ups and downs, and their reaction or control of all these things. By considering female teenagers during this age frame, struggle for their individuality and plan to become self-reliant on their parents and guardians (Marcia, 2001). Behaviorally disturbed teenagers often create grave issues for themselves, their parents, and society as well. Mostly such youngsters have a deficiency in the ability to respond rationally towards the difference of ideas, discontent, and anger, as a substitute they skill themselves in socially deviant activities like physical fights, backbiting, chastening, troublesome, influencing or directing others of different ages (Cillessen & Mayeux, 2004).

Teenage perceived level of stress refers to the intermix of complicated and dynamic processes among the individual and their environment. Such distress often leads the person to psychological problems in the individual's perception of the event (Joseph & Henry, 2009) as it is a perceived phenomenon it may be caused by any occasion, idea, or person. Various competent researchers in the social sciences field described that perceived stress and its association with teenagers need broad studies to eliminate its unhealthy effect (Biro et al., 2011). Perceived stress from studies among teenagers is taken as the usual practice of college period for them. In various daily life situations, their help-providing system becomes feeble like parents, siblings, and previous close friends, and communication/behavior-related problems can occur in the social environment (Naiemeh et al., 2007). Perceived stress was usually taken as a thinking style or feeling that is subjective in conduct and can be modified from time to time (Burns et al., 2002).

Agnew (2001) directed from research that perceived stress fluctuates in severity from one person to another and subsequent deleterious effect and aggression can be seen as linked (Berkowitz & Jones, 2004). It was seen in the literature that aggression has a mediating effect between stress and anger (DeCoster & Kort Butler, 2006). Perceived stress of a teen girl may have been linked with homicidal anger outbursts and may produce stress for the entire family as well (Piquero & Sealock, 2000). It was testified during research of a medical college in Pakistan that perceived stress of teenagers may be associated with a lower level of social competence, unforeseen anger outbursts, corporeal issues, lack of support, educational achievement, and pocket money restraints as well as gender. In the same study, it was emphasized that girls are more predisposed to perceived stress than boys in the same age group (Abdul Ghani et al., 2011).

Here Social Competence can be understood as the skill to enhance kindness, cooperation, self-control and decisiveness; it is also related to multiple elements that are invaluable for youngsters and post teenagers together with a facilitating attitude towards others, leading others warmly, and athleticism (Farmer et al., 2003; Lease et al., 2002). Previous studies narrated that social skills are mandatory for collective function and interactive success in the public, society, and on supportive platforms (Bhardwaj & Basanti, 2012). It has also been directed that the social competence of dysfunctional household youngsters is poorer than that of healthy family adolescents (Saleem & Gul, 2016).

United States adolescent girls' study indicated that suppressing problems have a damaging influence on social competence, and it may further lead the person toward stress (Obradovic & Hipwell, 2010). If social competence befits poorer, then issues like anxiety, stress, and aggression may exacerbate (Kraut et al., 2002; Desjarlais & Willoughby, 2010). The deviant behavior of

young girls ranges from not following the rules of their associations, home, or state to more serious deviant and violent actions, like the demolition of someone's property or even physically hurting others are taken under the umbrella of aggression (Dowden & Andrews, 2000). Indeed, during early puberty, girls count on interpersonal belligerence to attain and ensure social status (Rose et al., 2004).

Various studies in US and UK, it was revealed that the crime rate has increased tremendously in the past few years for female juveniles (Collishaw, Maughan, Goodman, & Pickles, 2004; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2006; Youth Justice Board, 2009). The research concluded that female teenage offenders may develop negative effects due to nonparental, and things like anti-social personality, aggression, and low social skills along with poor health habits and physical conditions can be seen in them (Odgers et al., 2008).

It was seen in extensive work that the family affects the emotional content of teenagers especially the development and projection of aggression. The presence of parents and their absence both have a significant impact on the thought patterns, social skills, aggression, and stress levels of adolescents. They also learn anger management from their homes. When parents are dead then the primary caregivers affect the teen's behavior and rejection of caregivers can lead to disciplinary issues and a display of wrath. Impulsivity and insecurity due to a lack of parents are the major factors in the lives of teens (Estevez, Murgui, Musitu & Moreno, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

1. To study the impact of aggression and perceived stress on the social competence of adolescent girls.
2. To study the relationship and mean differences among aggression, perceived stress, and social competence of adolescent girls having parents alive or dead.

Hypotheses

1. There will be a negative correlation between social competence, aggression, and the perceived stress of adolescent girls.
2. There will be a positive correlation between perceived stress and aggression among adolescent girls.
3. Aggression and perceived stress would have an adverse impact on the social competence of adolescent girls.
4. Adolescent girls with deceased parents will show higher scores on aggression and perceived stress, while low scores on social competence as compared to adolescent girls with alive parents.

Research Design and Sample

The correlational design used a total of N =230 female adolescents through a purposive sampling technique. The age range was from 12 years to 18 years. Female teenagers having parents alive (n=162) and dead (n=68) were included in the study.

Instruments

Brief Aggression Questionnaire (BAQ) was used to assess the level of aggression along with its types. BAQ was developed by Gregory D. Webster and colleagues (2014) and consists of 12 items; the original scale comprised 29 items and was given by Buss and Perry (1992). This scale has 7-point Likert type scoring which ranged from 1 (none), 2 (least), 3 (mild), 4 (average), 5 (moderate), 6 (severe), and 7 (extreme), while item 7 has reversed scoring. The potential minimum score of the scale is 12 and the maximum could be 84. The alpha reliability is 0.70 in this study.

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) was originally developed by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983). This study used 10 items revised version (2009) for a standardized measure of perceived stress. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from never (0) to almost always (4). Reverse-scored items are positively worded i.e., 4, 5, 7, and 8, the higher scores suggesting a higher level of perceived stress. 13 is the cutoff score and is taken as average. Scores of 20 or higher are believed to be high stress (Cohen et al., 1983). The alpha reliability of the scale is 0.76.

Social Competence Scale (SCS) consists of 9 items and is appropriate for adolescents. This tool was developed by Walker, Hill, McConnell, and Scott at Child Trends for the Flourishing Children project (1995). It is 5 points Likert scale with a minimum score of 0 and a maximum of 36. The scores directly indicate the level of social competency. The alpha reliability was 0.62 in this study.

Demographic Information was collected via semi-structured interviews having parental status in consideration.

Procedure

Firstly, permission was taken from the corresponding authors of all the study instruments and then from the heads of the departments of the respective institutions of participants. The participants (female adolescent students) were approached from different areas of the country. The students were acquainted with the objective and aims of the study and briefed about the demographic form and scales. The demographic information form was filled in and followed by the instructions to fill out the questionnaires. Consent was taken from the participants. Before finishing the questionnaires, participants were instructed to “fill out the questionnaires carefully; without skipping any question. They were assured of the privacy of the data and identities.

Results

Table 1 Demographic information of participants (N=230)

Demographic variables	<i>f</i>	%
Parental status		
Alive	162	70.4
Dead	68	29.6

Table 1 indicates the frequency and percentage of teenage female participants; parental status alive ($f=168$, 70.4%), dead ($f=68$, 29.6%).

Table 2 Psychometric properties and Pearson correlation of aggression, perceived stress, and social competence (N=230)

Variables	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range		1	2	3
				Potential	Actual			
1. Aggression	.70	46.9	9.78	12-84	28-68	-	.40**	-.20**
2. Perceived Stress	.76	24.5	3.30	0-40	17-34		-	-.16*
3. Social Competence	.62	23.9	2.21	0-36	22-32			-

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 2 indicates the satisfactory values of reliability coefficients for aggression, perceived stress, and social competence as .70, .76, and .62 respectively. Statistics further showed a significant negative correlation between aggression and social competence $r(228) = -.20$, $p < .01$, while a positive significant correlation between aggression and perceived stress $r(228) = .40$, $p < .01$, and perceived stress has a significant negative correlation with social competence $r(228) = -.16$, $p < .05$.

Table 3 Linear regression analysis indicating the impact of aggression and perceived stress on the social competence of female adolescents (N=230)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	Social competence	
				95% <i>CI</i>	
				<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
(Constant)	29.352***	3.62		22.18	36.53
Aggression	-.148**	.04	-.30	-.234	-.061
Perceived stress	.062	.14	.04	-.221	.344
R^2				.072	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Linear regression analysis (Table 3) indicates the impact of aggression and perceived stress on the social competence of female adolescents. The R^2 value of predictors revealed that 7.2% variance is present in the outcome with $F(3,227) = 5.81$, $p < 0.01$. Similarly, the findings revealed that aggression significantly negatively impacts teenage girls' social competence ($\beta = -.30$, $p < .01$).

Table 4 Mean, standard deviation, and t-values on aggression, perceived stress, and social competence of participants having alive and dead parents (N=230)

Variables	Alive (n=162)		Dead (n=68)		t (228)	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Aggression	46.03	9.44	49.90	10.3	2.0	.04	-5.6	.10	-.48
Perceived Stress	24.59	3.22	24.50	3.51	.13	.98	-1.2	.08	-
Social Competence	23.78	2.05	24.25	2.54	1.6	.08	-.97	1.0	-

Table 4 indicates the significant mean differences, standard deviation, and t-values of aggression on participants' parental status alive ($M=46.03$, $SD=9.44$) and dead ($M=49.90$, $SD=10.3$) with $t(228) = 2.0$, $p < .05$.

DISCUSSION

This study explained the relationship between social competence, perceived stress, and aggression of teenage girls along with a comparison of study variables on their parental status (alive/dead). Frequency and percentages of adolescent girls concerning parental status (alive/dead) marked that the parents of most girls were alive. Psychometric properties indicated that the questionnaires used for data collection have a satisfactory level of reliability.

The results of the first, second, third, and fourth hypotheses revealed statistically significant values (table 2) showing that aggression and perceived stress have an adverse relationship with social competence but a positive association with perceived stress. The findings of the current study are in alliance with previously done work that stated that the stress perceived by teens often results in externalizing syndrome including aggression (Abdul Ghani, Al Kanhal, Mahmoud, Ponnampuruma, & Alfaris, 2011). These inferences were consistent with previously done work on similar variables (Verona & Kilmer, 2007; Verona & Sachs, 2005). Aggression is often presented with behavioral issues and social communication and relation problems in adolescent girls, and the same is proven in this current study's results (Table 3) (Carter, Garber, Ciesla, & Cole, 2006). It was described in a study that teen girls' aggression is linked with lower social skills and results in distress (Romeo, 2010; Krueger, Baumeister & Campbell, 2003). Another piece of research literature highlighted the association between these variables among young females; they get affected by anger and perceived stress and subsequently went into the deterioration of social communication and social skills (Bhardwaj & Basanti, 2012).

It was also proved in the study that there is a difference in mean scores of aggression, of teenage girls based on parental status (alive/dead). The results showed statistically significant results (Table 4) for aggression while perceived stress and social competence had non-significant values. The results were consistent with the previously done work that indicated the living condition of teenagers affected the development of adolescents and harms nonparent upbringing

(Cebe, 2005; Biro, Adany & Kosa, 2011). Teen girls who have no parents or single parents have poor anger control (Ustuner, Erol & Simsek, 2005). Research indicated that anger outbursts are more common in girls having no parents/ orphans and indicate compromised psychological health and socio-cognitive maturity (Marcus, 2007), depression and stress are also associated with such conditions (Dodge, Coie & Lynam, 2006; Obradovic & Hipwell, 2010). A study compared girls as teenagers have a higher probability of having anger issues than boys especially because of no parenting and guidance (Hampel & Petermann, 2006). They develop poor social skills, but the present study has non-significant results that might be due to peer influence and caregivers' social support. Although they have emotion-based coping and are quite maladaptive; peer groups and social interaction can help adolescent girls to cope with their social communication issues as well as perceived stress.

Limitations and Suggestions

This study has a few limitations; Firstly, this study took the data from 230 teenage girls; it could have been taken from more girls to enhance its generalizability in the country. Secondly, in this study, the parental status (alive/dead) of teenage girls was included other factors can also be explored.

It is suggested for further studies that gender differences could give a broader implication of this study to enhance social competence in the future generation, so boys can be added to future research. Single parenting and doubling parenting can also be taken under study in future research in this domain. Qualitative methods can also play an interesting and more clarifying role in future studies with the same variables.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research highlighted the adverse effect of aggression on the social competence of teenage girls. Nowadays: it has been observed that adolescent girls often become the victim of perceived stress, and aggressive reactions, and often lack social skills especially when parents are not there for support. They are also in a confusion regarding their perusal of passion, self-identity, and independence. Hence, they can give a negative impression to others due to the emotional and psychological pressure they are facing. This study has given insight into such pitfalls of adolescent age and spotted the limelight on the parental role in controlling anger or channelizing it in a better way.

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