



Relationship between Relational Aggression and Interpersonal Problems among Adolescents

Dr. Sadaf Jabeen, Assistant Professor, Research and Evaluation Department, LCWU, sadaf.jabeen@lcwu.edu.pk

Dr. Tahira Kalsoom, Assistant Professor, Research and Evaluation Department, LCWU, tahira.kalsoom@lcwu.edu.pk (Corresponding Author)

Fakhra Aziz, Assistant Professor, Research and Evaluation Department, LCWU, fakhra.aziz@lcwu.edu.pk

Abstract: Relational aggression is also defined as an intentional behavior to harm a person through damaging or manipulating relationships with others by ignoring, exclusion of an individual and spreading rumors. The current study tried to explore the relationship between relational aggression and interpersonal problems. A sample of 240 adolescents (12-14 years of age) from public/private schools of city Lahore was selected, i.e. 120 boys and 120 girls. The sample of study will be selected through purposive sampling technique. The interpersonal problems were measured through Inventory of Interpersonal Problems, 2000 (IIP-32) and relational aggression was measured through Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale, 2010. For statistical analysis, correlation and t-test statistics were used. Results showed a significantly positive correlation between interpersonal problems and relational aggression ($r=.223$, $p<0.01$). Female adolescents show more relational aggression than male adolescents ($t=-2.238$, $p<0.05$). Male adolescents are more distressed with interpersonal problems/difficulties than female adolescents ($t=3.537$, $p<0.01$). Public school adolescents experience more interpersonal problems than private school adolescents ($t=2.945$, $p<0.01$). This study can be helpful for counselors, students, parents and teachers to help adolescents improve their relations with others and in controlling or lessening their aggression.

Keywords: Relationship, relational aggression, interpersonal, problems, adolescents

I. INTRODUCTION

Human aggression is a kind of behavior which is directed towards another person which is done with the purposeful motive to cause harm or to injure. In addition, the offender must assume that such behavior will hurt the targeted person, and the victim is trying to avoid this behavior (Geen 2001, Bushman & Anderson 2001, Baron & Richardson 1994).

Relational aggression is one of the forms of aggression. Relational aggression can be described as an act aiming to harm others through damaging (or the threat of damaging/ harming) social status or relationships over and above feelings of friendship, acceptance and inclusion in a group (Simmons, 2002). Relational aggression is also defined as an intentional behavior to harm a person through damaging or manipulating relationships with others by ignoring, exclusion of an individual and spreading rumors (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). An interpersonal problem alludes to a specific sort of personal or social distress that describes usual behavior of a person in interpersonal circumstances (Horowitz, 2004).

Hampel, Manhal, and Hayer (2009) investigated the impact of diverse forms of victimization as well as bullying on dealing with psychological adjustment and stressors of interpersonal among children and adolescents. The sample consisted of 409 participants (6-9 graders) with an age range of 10-16 years. Results of the study indicated that all forms of victimization reflected increased maladaptive coping along with heightened behavioural and emotional problems. Moreover, it was found that the negative outcomes of direct and to some extent victimization and relational aggression on psychological adjustment were mainly heightened by maladaptive coping amongst boys and girls.

Kusy (2011) investigated the association between social anxiety, indirect aggression and social avoidance. This study has identified four different groups of aggressors (victim, perpetrator, neither and both). Results of the study indicated that individuals who experience indirect aggression showed higher levels of social avoidance and social anxiety in comparison with those who didn't experience or had little experience. Moreover, individuals who considered themselves as victims of indirect aggression were experiencing social avoidance and social anxiety. Further, a very few participants considered themselves as perpetrators and female participants were more victim of indirect aggression than males.

Leary, Twenge and Quinlivan (2006) investigated the relationship between aggression and interpersonal rejection by reviewing available literature. The results showed a variety of possible justifications for rejection leads to aggression including rejection serving as a source of pain and frustration, threat to self-esteem. On the contrary, how aggression enhances the moods includes, aggression provides a sense of control over others, retribution, increases social influence and disinhibition.

Malhi, Bharti and Sidhu (2014) have conducted a study concerning the prevalence of relational and physical victimization along with its relationship with depressive signs and symptoms, behavioural as well as emotional problems. The sample comprised of 376 adolescents from grade 9th and 12th with an age range of 14.82 years. The participants were divided into three groups: victims of relational bullying, victims of physical bullying, and participants who neither been perpetrators and victims of bullying. The results have shown that one-fourth of the participants were victims of bullying. Relational bullying was accounted for 12% of the total participants, physical aggression 8% and 4 % accounted for relational and physical aggression. Girls have reported more relational bullying in comparison with boys. On the contrary, boys largely experienced direct victimization. Moreover, victimization was significantly relevant to self-reported depression. The results have further shown that relational aggression victims have scored higher on conduct problems and depression; whereas, victims of physical aggression reported more peers related problems.

Mwanza and Menon (2015) have conducted a study to explore the prevalence of relational aggression and gender differences along with relationship among relational aggression and perpetrators psychological wellbeing. The sample consisted of 170 participants (86 boys and 84 girls) from grade 6 and 8. The results showed relational aggression was prevalent in schools and students reported that they have been involved in relational aggression few times or once in a month. Moreover, 36% of the students have reported their high participation in relational aggression. There was positive correlation between relational aggression and perpetrators psychological well-being. Similarly, perpetrators of relational aggression experience hyperactivity conduct problems and peer problems.

Kuperminc and Allen (2001), conducted a study regarding motivations and problem behaviors towards solving interpersonal problems among adolescents with high risk. The sample consisted of 113 participants and the results showed that problem behaviors of individuals can be prevented by making individuals using the skills that they already possess.

Smetana, Barr and Metzger (2006) investigated the development of adolescents in both social and interpersonal contexts. This study focused upon finding the theoretical and empirical advancements in research regarding the development of adolescents in their social and interpersonal context. This study has undermined a variety of factors and relations that play a vital role in adolescent development. The results have revealed different dimensions that play an important part in the development of adolescent including the relationship between parent and adolescents, and the impact of parenting styles, relationship with siblings and other relatives. Moreover, relationship of adolescent's with peers, romantic partners and their involvement with their community and society.

Regarding age, Birditt, Fingerman and Almeida (2005) investigated the role of age difference in exposure and reactions to daily life interpersonal tensions. The sample consisted of ($n=666$) with a wide age range of 25-74 years and data was collected through phone interviews. The results showed a significant difference regarding the age difference and individual's responses to their tensions. The results have shown that older adults experience less interpersonal problems tensions in comparison with the younger adults. Moreover, women considered tensions to be more stressful than men. The results have also shown that younger adults were more likely to argue and respond to tensions in comparison with older adults.

As per the literature review mentioned above most of the researches were conducted in single aspect. The researcher wants to explore the relationship between relational aggression and interpersonal problems among adolescents. A little research is available on this particular type of aggression i.e relational aggression as well as its relationship with interpersonal problems among adolescents. In this way this study will add significant knowledge to the present body of available literature.

Statement of the problem:

Aggression is commonly considered in terms of physical fights but there is more to it. A number of studies are available on aggression as a whole and its relationship with interpersonal relations/problems but a little research is available on this particular form of aggression i.e relational aggression and its relationship with interpersonal problems among adolescents. In this way this study will add significant knowledge to the present body of available literature. The main objective of the study was to find out relationship/association between relational aggression and interpersonal problems among adolescents.

Research questions:

- Is there any relationship exists between relational aggression and interpersonal problems among adolescents?
- To what extent there exist gender differ in terms of relational aggression?
- What is the difference between public and private school adolescent's interpersonal problems?
- What is the gender difference in interpersonal problems among adolescents?
- What is the level of difference in relational aggression of public and private school adolescents

Population of the study:

The population of the study consisted of female and male adolescents from private and public schools of Lahore city.

Sample:

A sample of 240 adolescents from city Lahore was selected. The sample of the study was taken out by using purposive sampling technique. The age range was 12- 14 years as some researches (Karriker-Jaffe, Foshee, Ennett, & Suchindran, 2008) shows at this age level adolescents are relatively more inclined to relational aggression rather than physical aggression. The sample was drawn from public and private school adolescents. i.e. 120 boys and 120 girls.

Research design:

In this study, the correlation design was adopted based on quantitative approach. It was designed to find out the relationship (association and difference) between relational aggression and interpersonal problems among adolescents.

Instruments:

Two instruments were used in this study: "Inventory of Interpersonal Problems" and relational aggression.

"Inventory of Interpersonal Problems" (IIP-32). There are numerous IIP measures (full review in Barkham&Hughes, 2005) which have produced from the original IIP developed by Baer, Horowitz, Ureno & Villaseñor, Rosenberg (1988). The IIP-32 is an instrument in which individuals self-report their common interpersonal problems. It consists of 32 statements for identifying commonly occurring interpersonal difficulties and problems taken out from 127-items for identifying interpersonal problems. A five point rating scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely). The respondents have to respond to two types of items; interpersonal behaviors that are "hard to do" and that "you do too much". The IIP-32 yields eight subscales scores with each subscale indicating an interpersonal problem: **Domineering/Controlling, Vindictive/Self-Centered, Cold/Distant, Socially Inhibited, Non-assertive, Overly-Accommodating and Self-Sacrificing sub scales.**

Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale: This measure was developed by Horton, 2014. Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale was a self-report instrument consists of 27 items for identifying relational aggression. It is a four-point rating scale. The Diverse Adolescent Relational Aggression Scale represented 9 subscales. These subscales were Ridicule, Covert Ridicule, Ecological, Rumor, Encoding Cues, Gender Perspectives, Passive Ridicule, Staring and Popularity.

Procedure

The study was undertaken in private and public schools of Lahore city. An informed consent was taken from the administration and the participants of the study. After taking permission, the nature of the study was briefly explained and then the students were asked to fill out the questionnaire. Data were collected by using purposive sampling technique. After data collection the results were statistically analyzed. For statistical analysis, correlation, and t-test were used.

Data analysis

Pearson correlation (r) was applied to see relationship between relational aggression and interpersonal problems among adolescents. T-test for independent sample was applied to see difference on gender and school type.

Table 1
Relationship Between of Relational Aggression and Interpersonal Problems

Variables	n	r	p
Inter personal problems & relational aggression	240	0.623**	0.000

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

Table 1 shows the results of Pearson's correlation showed that there was a significant positive correlation between Interpersonal problems and relational aggression ($r = .623, p < 0.01$).

Table 2
Independent Sample t-test by Gender Regarding Relational Aggression

Variable	Gender	M	SD	df	t	p
Relational aggression	Males	74.7250	8.56214	238	-2.238*	0.006

Females 76.9667 6.86354

** Difference is significant at the 0.01 level.*

Table 2 illustrates the mean differences on relational aggression scale with regard to gender. It shows that a significant difference exists between male and female adolescents on relational aggression scale as t-value (t= -2.238) was significant at p<0.05. Female adolescents (M=76.9667, SD=6.86354) have higher mean scores on overall relational aggression scale than male adolescents (M=74.7250, SD=8.56214). The negative sign of t-value (t= -2.238) shows that female adolescents are more involved in exhibiting relational aggression than male adolescents.

Table 3
Independent Sample t-test by School Type Regarding Relational Aggression

Variable	School Type	M	SD	df	t	p
Relational aggression	Public	76.4417	8.24906	238	1.181*	0.239
	Private	75.2500	7.36132			

** Difference is significant at the 0.01 level.*

Table 3 illustrates the mean differences on relational aggression scale with regard to school type. It is also observed that t-value (t= 1.181) was insignificant at p <0.05 concluding that there was insignificant mean difference among public and private school adolescents showing relational aggression.

Table 4
Independent sample t-test by gender regarding interpersonal problems.

Variable	Gender	M	SD	df	t	p
Interpersonal Problems	Male	59.1250	13.7874	238	3.537*	0.000
	Female	53.1167	12.49617			

** Difference is significant at the 0.01 level.*

Table 4 illustrates the mean differences on IIP-32 scale with regard to gender. It shows that a significant difference exists between male and female adolescents on IIP-32 scale as t-value (t= 3.537) was significant at p<0.01. Male adolescents (M=59.1250, SD=13.78744) have higher mean scores on IIP-32 scale for interpersonal problems than female adolescents (M=53.1167, SD=12.49617). The t-value (t= 3.537) reveals that male adolescents are more distressed with interpersonal problems/difficulties than female adolescents.

Table 5
Independent Sample t-test by School Type Regarding Interpersonal Problems.

Variable	School Type	M	SD	df	t	p
Interpersonal Problems	Public	58.6417	13.47441	238	2.945*	0.004
	Private	53.6000	13.04124			

** Difference is significant at the 0.01 level.*

Table 5 illustrates the mean differences on IIP-32 scale with regard to school type. It shows that a significant difference exists between public and private school adolescents on IIP-32 scale as t-value (t= 2.945) was significant at p<0.01. Public school adolescents (M=58.6417, SD=13.47441) have higher mean scores on IIP-32 scale for interpersonal problems than private school adolescents (M=53.6000, SD=13.04124). The t-value (t= 2.945) reveals that public school adolescents are more distressed with interpersonal problems/difficulties than private school adolescents.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

As the results of this study indicated that there exists a positive and significant correlation among

relational aggression and interpersonal problems. Similar findings have been obtained in the previous researches that when measured independently, overt as well as relational aggression, both forms of aggression had predicted significant aspects social adjustment for adolescents in future (Crick, 1996; Marshall, Arnold, Rolon-Arroyo, & Griffith, 2015; Flack, 2020). This conclusion is in the line with results shown by past literature (Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006). Interpersonal rejection not merely distresses aggressive behavior problems but also it facilitates aggression such as anger and the straying of other individuals.

The result of the study showed that female adolescents exhibits more relational aggression than male adolescents. These results are congruent with the results shown by past literature aimed to identify peer victimization among adolescents, relational and physical aggression in schools of India. The results showed that male students were more displaying direct or physical victimization whereas female students were more inclined to relational aggression (Malhi, Bharti, & Sidhu, 2015). Similar study was conducted to get an insight of physical and relational aggression among girls as well as boys and their teachers. The results indicated that girls were the perpetrator of relational aggression. However, boys were likely inclined to physical aggression (Paris, 2006; Page & Smith, 2012, 2016).

The results of present study showed that there is no significant difference among the adolescents of public and private school in terms of relational aggression. A limited literature is available with respect to public and private school settings. Campano and Munakata (2004) investigated the level of anger and aggression among the secondary school students of Philippines. The results showed that private school students had more overall anger as well as aggression than public school students. The differences in the results of present study and literature exists because of cultural context as well as the significant difference occurs in public and private school students particularly with respect to anger and aggression not in terms of relational aggression. In present study the public and private school system do not consider gossiping, rumors and excluding others from group as form of aggression may serve as a cause of insignificant difference between private and public school adolescents.

As the results of this study showed that there exists significant difference among female and male adolescents with interpersonal problems. Male adolescents are more distressed with interpersonal problems/difficulties than female adolescents. These results are in line with past literature. Schneider (2014) examined the association between interpersonal distress, interpersonal problems and depression. The results disclosed that depressed individuals has greater interpersonal distress and problems. The gender analyses with respect to interpersonal problems predicted that of males had significantly greater interpersonal difficulties and problems than females.

As the results of this study suggested that there is significant difference among private and public school adolescents with interpersonal problems. Public school adolescent experienced more interpersonal problems than private school adolescents. A limited literature is available with respect to public and private school settings and interpersonal problems. Pervious study aimed to find the extent of shyness in adolescents of schools. There was no significant difference found in public and private school adolescents (Kiran, 2016). The results of past literature were incongruent with present results because only a single aspect of interpersonal problems is measured between the adolescents of private and public schools.

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