

RESEARCH ARTICLE		Self-esteem and its Relationship with Aggressive Behavior among a Sample of Fourth-Year Middle School Students	
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Abstract			
<p>This study examines the relationship between self-esteem and aggressive behavior among 4th-year middle school students. Aggression, which is common during adolescence, can manifest in various forms—physical, verbal, and emotional—and may be influenced by an individual’s self-perception. The main objective is to assess the extent to which low self-esteem is linked to increased aggression, while also observing gender differences. To achieve this, a descriptive correlational method was adopted with a sample of 153 students (71 boys and 82 girls) from a middle school in the commune of Berrika, Batna province. Two tools were used: Maliji Bada’s Aggression Scale (1996) and Coopersmith’s Self-Esteem Inventory. The results revealed a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and aggression, suggesting that students with high self-esteem are less aggressive. Furthermore, boys were found to be more aggressive than girls. These findings highlight the importance of fostering self-esteem as a means of reducing aggressive behavior among adolescents.</p>			
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Introduction

Aggression represents an important topic in the heritage of modern and contemporary psychology. Many studies have focused on explaining aggressive behavior, identifying its causes, and finding ways to control and manage it, as it has become a widely spread behavioral phenomenon that almost encompasses the entire world. It is no longer limited to individuals but has expanded to include groups and societies (Al-Maghribi, 1987, p. 45)

Although aggression is generally a widespread behavioral phenomenon across all age groups, it is more prevalent during adolescence. The behavior of unsocialized children and adolescents poses a significant challenge to society,

as rates of aggressive behaviors and criminal acts are particularly high, especially in school settings and among experienced adolescent groups. This phenomenon tends to intensify during the middle school stage, since adolescents undergo numerous bodily, cognitive, sexual, and emotional changes. The effects of these changes are reflected in behaviors such as rebellion and defiance against parental authority, schools, and society. During this stage, feelings of satisfaction decrease while anxiety and depression increase, along with higher rates of aggression, violence, mischief, smoking, and substance and drug abuse. This may be attributed to the search for self-identity, making violence possibly the most common behavioral pattern during this phase (Hussein Taha 2007, p. 96)

Many theories have attempted to explain aggressive behavior, given its various forms and motives, and they differ in attributing this behavior to different factors and causes. Some have explained it based on psychological theories such as psychoanalytic theory and frustration-aggression theory, others have attributed it to heredity, and some have linked it to cognitive processes within the individual.

Self-esteem is considered an important dimension of personality. Each individual—through their self-esteem—is essentially seeking the value of their self as a person, as well as their identity in relation to other significant people around them. The individual influences and is influenced by these people because there are relationships connecting them, relationships that originated through the primary socialization process the child receives in their family, then extending to the influence of the school. Peer groups in society also form part of this interconnected chain, all of which affect the individual to varying degrees. This shapes the individual's concept in the eyes of others and their importance within their community, thus clarifying their significance and value to them. Consequently, this forms a set of perceptions and attitudes through which the individual estimates their self-worth, fulfilling needs for love, belonging, care, and achievement, as well as satisfying needs for social esteem and self-esteem.

Self-esteem represents a behavioral phenomenon that is assumed to be measurable; therefore, it can be addressed and studied scientifically. As a result, any of its aspects or attributes can be accepted or rejected. Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, the term "self-esteem" has become more widespread among writers and researchers, many of whom have noted its relationship with other psychological variables. Self-esteem and the awareness of it are among the most important psychological experiences for humans. A person is the center of their own world, seeing themselves as an object evaluated by others. Humans typically change their behavior patterns in a typical manner as they move from one role to another. Despite this, they usually do not think about themselves as others perceive them but rather speak about themselves as they perceive themselves (Adel Ezz El-Din, 1988, p. 33)

If we look at the concept of self-esteem as a psychological concept, we find that it includes many behavioral styles as well as being related to various variables such as self-reliance, feelings of self-confidence, a person's sense of competence, acceptance of new experiences, effectiveness of social communication, and avoidance of aggressive behavior. According to these variables, the concept of self-esteem is considered an indicator of mental health. Ruth Willey emphasized that individuals with psychological disorders often suffer from feelings of worthlessness, low status, incompetence, and inability to cope; they tend to be less resistant to life's pressures and more prone to using defense mechanisms (Dowidar, 1992, p. 27)

Furthermore, Abd El-Wahab Kamel believes that self-esteem stems from a healthy and objective awareness and perception of the self, which, if not accepted by others, results in certain types of aggressive behavior, including verbal aggression (Abdel Wahab, 1993, p. 45)

Kinard's (1978) study aimed to identify the nature of the relationship between self-concept and aggressive behavior in children. The study's results concluded that there is a positive correlation between a negative self-concept and aggressive behavior (Jawad Mohamed, 2005, p. 85)

This finding was echoed in the study by Burdett and Jenson (1993), which aimed to examine the relationship between self-concept and aggressive behavior in children. Their results also showed a positive correlation between a negative self-concept and aggressive behavior. Additionally, the study found that males are more aggressive than females (Jawad Mohamed, 2005, p. 87)

Jwad Mohamed El-Sheikh's (2005) study investigated the relationship between aggressive behavior, self-esteem, and assertiveness among high school students. The study found a significant negative correlation between the overall level of aggressive behavior and both self-esteem and assertiveness. It also found statistically significant differences between males and females in the overall level of aggressive behavior, with males scoring higher (Jawad Mohamed, 2005, p. 87)

The sociologist Richard Felson expanded on the deep thinking behind aggression as an attempt to manage impressions (creating a good impression on others). In his analysis, most people believed that personal challenge casts them in a negative light, especially if they are attacked, or they may resort to counterattacking in an effort to erase the negative identity. They are concerned with demonstrating strength, competence, and courage, and by

striking the offenders, they seek to show that they are the ones who deserve respect from others (Al-Aqqad, 2001, p. 35)

From the above, we infer the role of this study, which is to identify the nature of the relationship between self-esteem and aggressive behavior among fourth-year middle school students.

Based on the previous discussion, the study problem can be formulated as follows: Is there a correlation between self-esteem and aggressive behavior among fourth-year middle school students? And are there statistically significant differences between genders in the degree of aggressive behavior?

This study is based on two main hypotheses: The first assumes the existence of a negative correlation between self-esteem and aggressive behavior among fourth-year middle school students, meaning that as self-esteem increases, the level of aggressive behavior decreases, and vice versa. The second hypothesis states that there are statistically significant differences between genders in the degree of aggressive behavior, with males exhibiting higher levels than females. The importance of this study stems from its contribution to clarifying the relationship between self-esteem and aggressive behavior during a critical age stage, which helps in gaining a deeper understanding of concerning behaviors within educational institutions, especially amid the worsening phenomenon of aggression in schools. Additionally, the study provides a unique cultural perspective on addressing this topic within Algerian society and highlights the role of the family, school, and peer groups in shaping self-esteem and influencing aggressive behavior. Moreover, understanding self-esteem helps improve educational and social interaction mechanisms, whether within the family or the school environment, through adopting sound psychological upbringing methods that enhance social adjustment and reduce manifestations of violence and aggression.

1- Theoretical Framework and Study Terminology:

1-1 Self-Esteem: The topic of self-esteem occupies an important place in personality, as its function lies in striving for the integration and consistency of the personality, enabling the individual to adapt to the environment in which they live and to have an identity that distinguishes them from others. Self-esteem aims at the cohesion and preservation of personality and is considered one of the factors that influence behavior. The individual influences others to behave in ways consistent with their characteristics; on one hand, it determines the style of the individual's interaction with others, and at the same time, it influences how others interact with them.

This is what both "Sayed Mohamed Khairallah and Abdel Moneim Al-Kanani" (1997) stated, saying: "The need to establish fulfilling relationships with the self and with others is represented by the individual enjoying acceptance and appreciation as a person who is respected, has a status, and avoids rejection, ostracism, or disapproval. The desire to satisfy this type of esteem directs the individual's behavior towards meeting the demands of others, exerting every effort to perform what is expected as a socially valuable work for those others and to gain their appreciation through success in that work. This generates in the individual a self-esteem and an evaluation of their abilities, opinions, and level. The individual's behavior thus shifts from merely satisfying the need for esteem to being guided by it, after it was previously limited to external guidance. (Sayed Mohamed & Mamdouh Abdel, 1997, p. 61)

Ziller (1998) defined self-esteem as the set of perceptions an individual holds about their own value. These perceptions are connected to and influenced by the perceptions and reactions of other people who hold a certain status for the individual. Self-esteem develops through a social process related to the behavior and skills of the self and the skills of others (L'Ecuyer, 1978, p. 22)

Rosenberg (1997) defined it as the evaluation that an individual makes and usually maintains regarding themselves. It expresses an attitude of approval or rejection. He explains that high self-esteem indicates that the individual is competent or valuable and respects themselves, whereas low self-esteem points to self-rejection and lack of self-acceptance (Mohamed Said, 1998, p. 55)

1.2 Operational Definitions in This Study:

Self-esteem is operationally defined in this study as the evaluation a student gives to themselves. This can be either a high self-esteem, characterized by feelings of confidence, competence, and worthiness, or a low self-esteem, characterized by feelings of inferiority, rejection, and lack of self-acceptance. This is measured through responses to the statements in the Self-Esteem Scale by "Coopersmith," translated by Farouk Abdel Fattah.

Aggressive Behavior: Aggression represents a widely spread behavioral phenomenon that nearly encompasses the entire world. Aggression is no longer limited to individuals; its scope has expanded to include groups and

communities. Aggressive behavior in children disrupts the smooth functioning of classroom groups, negatively affects education, increases its difficulty, and creates problems related to discipline, which in turn have various mostly negative consequences. Furthermore, the child behaves in ways that make their education more difficult (Saeed Morshed Naji, 2005, p. 42)

Sears (1990) defined aggression as an event in which the child deliberately intends to harm another person or something else. Therefore, hitting a toy unintentionally is not considered aggression. We cannot directly observe the intent and purpose, but we observe the actual situation and then try to infer the intent and purpose based on what we have seen.

Berbocoitz (1967) defined it as behavior aimed at causing harm to some persons or objects (Sharafoukh, 2006, p. 95). Aggression is also behavior in which the aggressor intends to harm another person. It is a type of social behavior aimed at fulfilling a loud desire for control and harming others or oneself as compensation for deprivation or causing inhibition. It is considered a natural response to frustration (Al-Sharbini, 1994, p. 36)

Aggression is operationally defined in this study through the total scores obtained on the items of the Aggressive and Hostile Behavior Scale for Adolescents and Youth by Amal Abdel Samie Maliji Bada. The higher the score on the scale, the higher the level of aggressive behavior.

2- Field Study and Its Procedures:

2-1 Study Methodology: The current study used the descriptive method, which is suitable for this research because it aims to reveal the nature of the relationship between the study variables. It is a method of scientific and organized analysis and change to achieve specific objectives related to a social situation or social problem (Bouhoush & Al-Dhuneibat, 1995, p. 101)

2-2 Study Sample: The study sample consisted of 153 students (boys and girls) from the fourth year of middle school, selected from one middle school belonging to the municipality of Berrika in Batna Province. The following is the distribution of the sample members by gender:

Table 1. represents the distribution of the sample members according to gender

Gender	Number	Percentage (%)
Males	71	46
Females	82	54
Total	153	100

It is clear from Table (01) that the percentage of females, estimated at 54%, exceeds that of males. This reflects the reality of our educational institutions, where the majority of students are female.

2.2 Study Instruments:

- The Aggressive and Hostile Behavior Scale for Adolescents and Youth by Prof. Amal: Abdel Samie Maliji Bada: The scale was designed by the researcher Amal Abdel Samie Maliji Bada in 1996. It measures aggressive behavior in three forms: physical aggression, verbal aggression, and indirect aggression. This scale includes four main dimensions: physical aggressive behavior, verbal aggressive behavior, hostility, and anger. Each subscale contains 14 items:

The responses to the scale items are given on five levels ranging from (0-4), with the specific expressions for the behavior level as follows: (Very often, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never). A high score indicates a high level of aggression, hostility, or anger, while a low score indicates a low level. Scores can be calculated for each dimension separately or as a total overall score.

The levels of aggressive behavior were defined as follows:

- Level One: High aggression, from 93 to 180 points.
- Level Two: Moderate aggression, from 59 to 92 points.
- Level Three: Low aggression, from 17 to 58 points.

The scale enjoys a high degree of reliability and validity, estimated at (0.86). It is clear that the test has a strong capability within its environment. The reliability coefficient was determined in our local context by a test-retest method on a sample of 50 students from the second year of secondary school, with a two-week interval between

the two applications. The correlation coefficient between the first and second test scores was (0.79), which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. (Yahyawi, 2010, p. 87)

- **Self-Esteem Scale by Kooper Smith:** This scale was originally designed by the American psychologist Kooper Smith in 1967 to measure evaluative attitudes toward the self in social, academic, family, and personal domains. The scale includes different versions: one for children and students, and versions for adults. Farouk Abdel Fattah translated and adapted this scale for the Arab environment and applied it in 1981.

Psychometric properties of the test:

- **Reliability of the scale:** Numerous foreign studies have indicated that the reliability coefficient of the scale ranged between (0.07 – 0.88).
- The reliability coefficient was calculated in the Arab environment using the Kuder-Richardson formula 21 (KR-21) on a sample of (526) individuals (370 males and 156 females). The reliability coefficient was found to be (0.74) for males and (0.77) for females, while for the total sample, it was (0.79).
- The reliability was also calculated by the split-half method. After removing item number (13) and calculating the correlation between the scores of the first and second halves of the sample, the split-half reliability coefficient was (0.84) for males, (0.88) for females, and (0.94) for the total sample. (Layla, 1984, p. 72)

Validity of the scale: According to the scale's internal validity in the foreign environment, it was found that 90% of the scale's items had significant correlation coefficients, while 10% of the items did not show statistically significant correlations. This analysis indicates that the scale's items effectively measure self-esteem.

The validity of the self-esteem scale in the Arab environment was confirmed by calculating the correlation coefficient between the scale scores on a sample of 152 students. The validity coefficient was 0.84 for males, 0.94 for females, and 0.88 for the total sample

3. Results and Discussion

There is a negative correlation between self-esteem and aggressive behavior among fourth-year middle school students.

Table 2. Pearson's correlation coefficient between self-esteem and the total score of aggressive behavior among fourth-year middle school students.

Sample Size	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level
153	-0.44	0.01

The results indicate a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and aggressive behavior among the students, meaning that as self-esteem increases, aggressive behavior decreases, and conversely, as self-esteem decreases, aggressive behavior increases among the students. This result can be explained by the fact that a positive self-esteem in a student builds their self-confidence and helps their psychological adjustment and social adaptation. Such a student loves others, trusts them, and forms close relationships characterized by love and security. All of this is reflected in their behaviors, as they engage in various desirable behaviors that earn the approval and appreciation of others. On the other hand, a student with low self-esteem feels inferior and inadequate compared to their peers, perceiving them as better than themselves. Therefore, they lack self-confidence and may feel jealousy and hatred toward their classmates, directing their aggression toward them. This aggression can manifest in different forms, such as verbal aggression through cursing and insulting, or physical aggression such as hitting and damaging property at school. This finding is supported by previous studies that showed a negative correlation between self-esteem and aggressive behavior, such as the study by Jawad Mohammed Al-Sheikh Khalil (2005) and the studies by Kinard (1978) and Burdett & Jenson (1993), which concluded that there is a positive correlation between negative self-concept and aggressive behavior in children – meaning that the higher the negative self-concept, the greater the aggressive behavior among children.

Second – Presentation and Discussion of the Second Hypothesis: Hypothesis text: There are statistically significant differences between genders in the level of aggressive behavior in favor of males.

Table 3. Tests for the significance of differences between genders in the total score level of aggressive behavior.

Gender	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	Calculated t-value	Tabulated t-value	Significance Level	Degrees of Freedom
Male	71	14.70	6.21	0.54	3.20	0.5	151
Female	82	14.18	5.54				

The table shows that there are no statistically significant differences between males and females in the level of aggressive behavior. Therefore, the second hypothesis was not confirmed. From this result, it can be concluded that gender does not affect the degree of aggressive behavior, which contradicts the findings of the studies by Jawad Muhammad Al-Sheikh (2005) and by Brodett and Jensen (1993).

The lack of differences between genders can be explained as follows: At this age period, both genders undergo physiological changes during puberty, a stage characterized by many bodily and organic changes. These changes are accompanied by internal secretions in the body that lead to mood swings and emotional instability in females, making them sometimes aggressive toward others. (Saadia Bahader, 1986, p. 25)

This view was supported by , who explained that changes in the balance of endocrine gland secretions during puberty and thereafter are among the main factors behind emotional tension and aggressive behavior in females.

The factor of socialization also plays a significant role in reducing the differences between genders in the level of aggressive behavior. This was confirmed by a cross-cultural study, which found that women in Australia and New Zealand exhibited more aggressive tendencies than men in Sweden

In light of the above, we conclude that aggressive behavior is linked to an individual's self-esteem. If a person has high self-esteem, they are less likely to resort to aggressive behavior. Conversely, individuals with low self-esteem tend to use aggression to assert themselves in front of others. Therefore, it is important to help adolescents understand and appreciate themselves with high self-regard and accept themselves as they are. They should also be trained to understand the feelings and needs of others, communicate with them, and avoid resorting to violence and aggression. Among the recommendations we propose are:

- Paying special attention to the adolescent stage by conducting more studies, as psychologists and educators emphasize its importance. It is necessary to give it special care to protect adolescents from psychological and behavioral problems.
- The necessity of holding training courses for teachers to equip them with skills on how to deal with aggressive students and those with low self-esteem, and how to develop this self-esteem within the classroom and school.
- The necessity of studying aggressive behavior during childhood before it develops into later stages that are more difficult to control.
- Developing counseling programs in schools to help students overcome aggressive behavior problems and to implement behavioral treatment programs for aggressive students.

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