

## **DIFFERENCES IN AGGRESSION ACCORDING TO THE LEVEL OF GLOBAL SELF-ESTEEM**

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**Abstract:** This article looks at the role of the global self-esteem and its relation to aggressive behavior among pupils aged between 8 and 15 age old. When analyzing the relationship between global self-esteem and aggressive behavior, it is recognized that self-esteem is a decisive factor in the nature of human behavior. We accept that the concept of developing self-esteem in school plays a vital role in an effective school climate. This study confirms the crucial role of factors such as school, family, peers in aggressive incidents among students. Shows the significant differences in aggressiveness according to the level of global self-esteem in Greek students. The analysis carried out showed that the students with normal level of global self-esteem demonstrated higher level of aggressiveness than the students with low level of global self-esteem. The results make it possible to outline guidelines for dealing with children identified as aggressive.

**Keywords:** aggressive behavior, global self-esteem, bullying, school, students

### **Introduction**

In literature there have been many studies about aggression and self-esteem with conflicting results and different approaches. However, findings of studies enrich and enhance the database of knowledge in order to have a better

approach of the same topic. This survey focuses on aggressive behavior and self-esteem of children.

As it is stated in research literature ,the highest self-estimation a person have less attraction for bullying (Rosenbaum & Decharms, 1960). Children with low self-esteem feeling easily engage in offensive actions. (Patterson, 1982, Rigby, 2008). Riga (in Nestor, 1997) states that people make violence, or participate in violence acts when their self-perception is affected. The function of aggressive is determined by sociability and ratification (Champlin, 1989). Jones and Compton (2003, p.224) said that people with aggressive behavior as narcissistic, appreciate themselves as superior, and they have extremely high emotional self-state. From Elliot (1997, p.156)'s research for the self-concept and aggressive behavior in a sample of 783 public classes students from 30 Dublin schools showed that children who had been victims of school violence had significantly lower self-concept than children who have not been subjected to violence. According Olweus (1996, pp.331-359) states that people who intimidate, do not suffer from low self-concept. Murrey-Close et.al., (2009) argue that low self-esteem is one of the characteristics of children involved in bullying, either as perpetrators or as victims. The treatment of aggression and bullying is not an easy case. The difficulty increases because the victims themselves do not always reveal what is happening to them, fearing the revenge of the perpetrator. Indirectly, teachers and parents may realize possible victimization of their students or their children.

### **Review of Literature**

In the last 10 years the aggressive behavior and bullying have been in the center of attention of schools in Greece. Students and teachers are observing different types of verbal, physical, psychological violence with victims students

during school hours. We might consider them as witnesses. These aggressive phenomena have been in Europe and in all over the world. The safety standards or security in school are considered as an important and vital issue and has been discussed in the European conference of the city of Utrecht of Holland, in February 1997. This conference aimed to the analysis, discussions and implementation of safety in school, in order to have an effective and efficient teaching environment for students in a national and European status (Artinopoulou, 2001).

In Europe, the phenomenon of violence is accepted as more globally, complicated and multi-dimensional psychological construct. In schools of Germany, according to the University of Bochum, 1993, verbal aggressiveness existed in schools for Primary Education. In Sweden 90% of schools have a stable policy for aggressive problems. England, generally speaking, has a policy of prevention in violence, applying rules of discipline and respect. In France society and scientific community shows interest in this problem, having strategies for prevention of aggressive problems. In Greece few studies have been done, showing the seriousness of this problem. However, it is important to mention the Research University Institute of Psychological Health, 2000 did a survey about the social and psychological health of Greek students between 11 and 15 years old. The results of this study showed that 45% of boys and 30% of girls do not feel safe in school and the percentages of victimization is about 34% of boys and 39% of girls.

Another research was from Petropoulou & Papastylianou (2001), which the results revealed that verbal violence is increased in Primaries schools from students to classmates and to teachers. Many thefts are happening between students in urban regions. Andreou (2000) showed that in schools of Volos and

Ioannina students of 8-12 years old are participated in victimization actions in 47,5%.

Each study and research of aggressiveness and bullying phenomenon is considered as a remarkable effort giving extra knowledge and data for a better understanding of the problem, and making strategies of prevention and intervention.

Starting defining the boundaries of term, aggression, it should be said that aggression is, somehow, a behavior intends to provoke harm in a repeated way. Nowadays, aggressiveness has been considered as a social problem and a frequent one as part of violence in our lives (Neto, 2005). This phenomenon between students is a contemporary social issue with serious consequences in their learning process and their emotional development' process (Smith et.al., 2004. Georgiou & Stavrinides, 2008). Aggressiveness is reported as a vital component of violence and bullying. In Greece, this problem has been taken worrying dimensions (Sapouna, 2008). Bullying may be derived in childhood by the lack of emotional intelligence of a child and, especially, the lack of development of its self-esteem. Besag (1989) mentioned aggressive behavior as intention more than action, explaining that is a multifactor problem with many processes such as personality, social behavior, the self-esteem level, communication level of a person etc.

Nowadays, various scientific fields have study and present this problem and have reported strategies of prevention and intervention for an effective treatment. The participation –cooperation of all factors involved in school life at aggressiveness has been urgent necessity for a good management (Artinopoulou, 2001). My research is about the aggressiveness and self –esteem of students in Greek schools of central Greece.

In addition, Torregrosa et.al. (2011, p.202) refer that “Thus, aggressive behavior is defined as any behavior that implies using coercive methods to hurt

other peers in specific situation”. Barry & Lochman (2004, p. 4-1) mention that “Indeed, childhood aggression is often viewed as an indication of a broader syndrome, frequently involving oppositional and defiant behavior towards adults and convert rule-breaking behaviors”. Also, Seixas, et.al. (2013, p.68) note that “It seems that being aggressive is related to feeling more confident in oneself, less rejected and less capable”.

In order to examine this phenomenon, it is important to refer to some criteria for the development of an aggressive behavior (Pasxalis, 1997. Gewrgas, 1990. Parke & Slaby, 1983).

- a) the tension and the consequences;
- b) the duration;
- c) the frequency;

d) the intentions of an aggressor Important parameter is the intention of a person who presents aggressive behavior.

Aggressive behavior is presented by children into their adolescence (Nenniger & Frey, 2013). It is a natural characteristic of a human person during its socialization’s process. During children’s maturation, the tension and frequency of aggressiveness are decreased and the capacity of self-esteem and social responsibility are increased, if children are grown on and developed in a supportive and friendly environment.

Researchers have concluded that effective interventions for aggressive behavior should be implemented and developed. (Hughes et.al., 1999). A child should learn to handle emotions such as anger, revenge, hostility in an acceptable way for himself and others. Thus, a child should develop skills for solving aggressive problems, get rid of negative feelings, boost more positive emotions and participate to worthy actions such as athletics.

Physically, one person (aggressor) may hit, push, injure, humiliate the other person (victim). The aggressor may use his/her physical power in a negative way. Especially, some children are taller, stronger than others classmates in their late childhood and early adolescence. Here, Torregrosa et.al. (2011, p.201) note that “Adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by important physical, cognitive and social changes”. The signs of aggressive behavior are obvious but in most cases the victims are not refusing this behavior. They are more afraid and much closer to themselves that they accept this behavior as a normal situation. Moreover, Barry & Lochman (2004, p. 4-1) mention that “ ..verbal and physical aggression often are the first signs, as well as later defining symptoms of several childhood psychiatric disorders”. They continue that: “For example, children with difficult temperaments and early behavioral problems are at greater risk for later adolescent aggression and conduct problems”.

It is imperative to report the role and relation of aggressiveness with self-esteem of students. Self-esteem is or may be the internal factor which provokes or hides aggressive behaviors. Self-esteem is a measure of how a student accepts or realizes its own self according with the familiar individuals, peers, friends, relatives and so on. Sonia Raquel Seixas et.al (2013, p.55) report that “Understanding self-esteem as another health and well-being psychological indicator, several studies have demonstrated that bullies, victims, and students not involved in bullying behaviors differ in their levels of self-esteem. Great similarity has been observed in the results obtained by different studies, in different countries with students from 7 to 16 years old”. Also, Taylor et.al. (2007, p.130) note that “it is unclear what the role of self-esteem is in predicting aggression in children”. Interestingly, they continue in p. 131 that “An individual with high self-esteem thinks she or he is good; a narcissistic individual thinks she or he is

better”. Of course, positive self-concept expresses positive attitudes and overall behavior to others.

In other words, we should report that self-esteem or otherwise total self-value is about the total evaluation of a person for its value as identity and consists of all psychological and emotional estimations of itself for himself and his lifetime. Other studies report that a profile of a student with a lot of failures has impact to his self-esteem (Chatsikyriakou, 2014). Persons with low self-esteem are more sensitive than others because they feel fear to ask help. This shows weakness to others.

Commonly, self-esteem and aggressiveness are related in the sense with some of the elements and components of human nature. It is important to be analyzed and approached the self-esteem in order to improve life conditions and make life happy and simple in all aspects of life. Self-esteem and aggressiveness concern psychological health. Harati et.al., (2011, p.705) mention that “To create a healthy lifestyle and provide a variety of needs, human beings have always relied on physical and psychological healthy in order to make progress and growth”. The main point is to analyze, approach and find the actual causes of aggressive behavior, to find ways to increase self-esteem and “vacant his aggression” (p.708). A normal self-esteem develops and grows strong and powerful personality.

It is vital to mention that school is an arena in which staff, teachers, students are working together in daily basis for the students’ academic achievement. A negative school climate and bad relations with students increases the chances for aggressiveness situations. Russel & Fontanini (2000, p.4) point out that “General antisocial behavior such as fighting, vandalism and truancy also decreased while student satisfaction with their school increased”. Furthermore, they continue (p.4) that “In order to create a school climate that discourages

bullying, school staff and parents must become aware of the extent of bully-victim problems in their own school". Also, Sonia Raquel Seixas et.al. (2013, p.70) report that "The effects of bullying contribute substantially to the development of an unsafe environment in schools and to a decline in the academic and social performance of students involved in bully/victim experiences".

Additionally, as far as self-esteem concern, Coopersmith (1967) recognized three basic conditions which provide high self-esteem in the family environment:

- Love and care without conditions;
- Correct limits that set and constantly applied;
- Respect to the children in a daily basis;
- If parents love and respect their children, then they feel value of love and respect.

A basic issue of self-esteem is love for self. Meaning that thoughts, attitudes, trends, expectations, emotions and feelings for our self forms our behavior. Determination, self-acceptance, internal power, progress in life time are a situation that develop when we decide what *we are is what we want to be*. There is a harmony balance. Thus, we support our self positively. Our positive value for our personality reduces any kind of questioning our abilities and feelings of stress. Low self-esteem develops negative and depressed behavior which persuade our self for self-rejection. According to Ellen Langer, professor of social psychology and writer, "inner critic voice of our self" could be a powerful force in life. It depends on the position which we decide to give to it. This critic may be a useful consultant for our decisions or a catastrophic pointer to life moments. Characteristic words are the following those of William Shakespeare, an English Dramaturgies' (1564-1616): "Love all people, trust few of them, harm no one".

## **Research methods**

This present paper **aims** to the study differences in aggressiveness according to the level of global self-esteem in Greek students aged 8-15 years old.

Aggression in the study is considered as a major element of antisocial behavior.

(1) *The Aggression Questionnaire Buss-Perry* 1992 has been used for students. This method has been used by Vitoratou (2004). The Aggression Questionnaire consists of scales correspondingly to Anger, Physical Aggression, Verbalism or Verbal Aggression and Hostility of students from 8 to 15 years old. The answer scale is the Likert scale of 5 points. Also, the demographic characteristics of the sample as well as the perceptions of the teachers regarding the students' verbal communication during the school breaks will also be mentioned, via tables and diagrams. For instance, the statement “Some of my friends think that I am a hothead” shows Anger statement (Buss Pery).

The Aggression scale consists of 4 factors, Physical Aggression (PA), Verbal Aggression (VA), Anger (A) and Hostility (H). The total score for Aggression is the sum of the factor scores.

Norms:

AGGRESSION (the sum of the four factors of Buss & Perry)

If AGGRESSION < 68 => LOW AGGRESSION

If 68 < AGGRESSION < 90 => NORMAL AGGRESSION

If AGGRESSION > 91 => HIGH AGGRESSION

(2) *The self-esteem questionnaire of Rosenberg* has been used and presented in Greek population by Kalpidou et.al. 2013; Katsigianni Victoria, 2006; Kitsaki Vasiliki, 2010. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (RSEI) is a 10-item

measure of an individual's level of global self-esteem. Rosenberg's self-esteem scale is a self-report scale and was created to measure the level of perceived self-esteem. It consists of ten proposals, of which five are reverse rating. Proposals refer to the individual's qualities (eg, I'm capable of doing things as well as other people) and to his feelings (eg I feel like I deserve at least as much as other people). The answer scale is the 4-point Likert scale where 0 = Absolutely agree and 3 = Absolutely disagree. The total score is calculated from the sum of the participants' answers to the ten questions. The higher the average is, the higher the level of self-esteem is too. Example items include "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself" and "At times I am no good at all" (reverse scored) (Mancheva, 2016).

### **The sample**

The sample in this study consists of 213 Greek students aged from 8-15 years old.

### **Hypothesis**

**It is assumed that the students with low global self-esteem will demonstrate lower level of aggressiveness, then the students with normal global self-esteem.**

### **Results**

Below (table 1) are presented the results from Independent Samples T-test, aimed at determining whether there are differences in aggressiveness according to the level of global self-esteem in Greek students aged 8-15 years.

Table 1. *Differences in aggressiveness according to the level of global self-esteem in Greek students*

	Self-esteem	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t (df)	p
Aggression	Low Self-esteem	157	6,73	4,181	3,909 <sup>[211]</sup>	.000
	Normal Self-esteem	56	19,39	4,876		

As seen in the above table, there is significant difference ( $t^{[211]} = 3,909$ ;  $p < 0,001$ ) in the means on the Aggression in the students with low Self-esteem ( $M = 16,73$ ,  $SD = 4,181$ ) and the students with normal Self-esteem ( $M = 19,39$ ;  $SD = 4,876$ ). The students with normal level of global self-esteem demonstrated higher level of aggressiveness then the students with low level of global self-esteem. The level of aggression in both groups is low (see the norms above).

### Conclusions

The results obtained confirmation of the assumption that the students with low global self-esteem will demonstrate lower level of aggressiveness, then the students with normal global self-esteem. The analysis carried out showed that the students with normal level of global self-esteem demonstrated higher level of aggressiveness then the students with low level of global self-esteem. The disadvantage of the study is that there are no students with a high level of global self-esteem.

Thus this present study investigates the role of self-esteem of students for their aggressiveness. This subject may be a part of Educational Psychology.

Exploring Greek and English bibliography, it gives some important conclusions in theory and in practice. Importantly, we should mention that life conditions and circumstances may boost or reduce aggression and self-esteem of a person. First, the family may be the first socialization group of the child, then this role is taken over by the school institution.

The role of self-esteem of a student is vital for his/her aggressiveness in school and, later in its life. Parents should learn to their children the importance of necessary boundaries in their behavioral mode. They should give motives to their children. For children' socialization, the participation to athletic, artistic and cultural activities may help to a balanced and creative way of life. Moreover, the boundaries of uses of ICT and Internet facilities from children should be followed-up for their own safety. Internet as a tool for teaching and learning process has been a very important source of information and knowledge. However, Internet may hide dangers and may become a catastrophic tool in a person's life.

Our results can serve as a scientific basis for school psychologists and school staff. Worrying are the results of psychological health and psychological disorders research. According to CDC (Centre of check and diseases Prevention), and statistical data (2006-2014), quite recently, more than 8,3 million people are suffering by serious disorders such as feelings of sorrow, anxiety and depression. Hunting happiness, sometimes, may be a dream. However, we should understand that happiness lies in austerity and self-sufficiency. Each child should consider its own power and rights. A child should be happy realizing that fighting for its rights, become more responsible for his life. No child should allow other to become their bullies. Asking for support and help is the most recommended action for the goodness of all.

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