

# Characteristics of Self-Assessment in Children Prone to Aggression in School

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to estimate the level of self-esteem and aggression in Greek adolescents and examine whether the two constructs are related. A further purpose is to explore the role of family structure in adolescents' self-esteem and engagement in aggression and the impact of gender in aggressive behaviours. For the above scope, literature review is conducted on the topic of aggressiveness in school, as well as on the relation between self-esteem and aggression and regarding the instruments for measuring self-esteem and aggression in students. Empirically, a questionnaire survey takes place, in a sample of 124 high-school students living in Athens, in the capital of Greece. According to the results, Greek adolescents have satisfactory levels of self-esteem and present low levels of aggression. Adolescent boys are found to engage more in physical aggression, while girls are found to be engaged more in verbal aggression. Self-esteem and aggression are significantly and positively correlated. The present paper contributes to the literature of aggression and self-esteem and suggests focusing on adolescents' self-esteem, as a means of addressing aggression in schools.

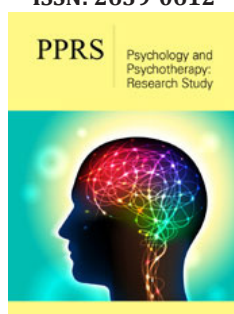
## Literature Review

Aggression can be described as an ensemble of mechanisms formed during the course of evolution in order to assert oneself, relatives or friends against others, to gain or to defend resources by harmful damaging means. These mechanisms are usually stimulated by feelings like stress, anger, frustration and fear or pleasure. Causes of aggression and aggressiveness can be biological, psychological and sociological [1]. Self-esteem is a significant psychological factor in everyday life. It can be defined as a pervasive force in human motivation that is generally adaptive and associated with a broad range of desirable outcomes. Self-esteem is characterized as a complex concept by various theories and a series of distinctions [2]. According to the researchers, the relation between self-esteem and aggression is controversial [3], as both low and high self-esteem have been associated with antisocial and aggressive behaviour [4]. Research shows the complexity of the relation between aggression and self-esteem and reflects the aforementioned theoretical controversies. In Greece, there is paucity of research on self-esteem and the relation between self-esteem and aggression, especially in adolescence. Papanis and Triantos [5] concluded that adolescent population was rather heterogeneous and that there were some differences in self-esteem with respect to age and gender. Boys were found to have higher self-esteem than girls, although it was also found that both boys' and girls' self-esteem was lower than adult's self-esteem.

## Methodology

The aim of the paper is to represent the characteristics of self-assessment in children who are prone to aggression in school and to examine if students with high self-esteem are more or less prone to aggression. An additional aim is to explore the role of family structure in adolescents' self-esteem and engagement in aggression and the impact of gender in aggressive behaviours. The sample of the study is consisted of 124 high-school students living in Athens, in the capital of Greece. For the collection of the data, a questionnaire comprising valid and reliable scales is used. Statistical analysis of the survey data is performed using the IBM SPSS Version 22 software for Windows. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis are performed. Pearson's  $r$  correlation coefficient [6] and the independent samples T-test [7] are used.

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## Result

According to the results of the study, Greek adolescents have satisfactory levels of self-esteem and present low levels of aggression. Moreover, adolescent boys are found to engage more in physical aggression, while girls are found to be engaged more in verbal aggression. Self-esteem and aggression are significantly and positively correlated. Family structure does not influence adolescent's aggression or victimization, while adolescents growing up in single-parent families have higher emotional self-efficacy levels than their peers who live with both parents.

## Discussion

According to the results of the study, the levels of aggression among high-school students in Greece are low and their self-esteem appeared to be satisfactory, rather than high. Considering that high self-esteem is associated with high levels of aggression, this finding is in agreement with previous literature, according to which the extremes types of self-esteem- either very low or very high- lead to increased aggression [8,9]. Regarding the role of gender in adolescents' aggression the results are in line with previous findings [10-18], according to which boys engage in physical aggression and girls engage in verbal violence. Further, it was found that aggression and self-esteem are correlated, to a significant degree, in a positive manner. This finding corroborates previous empirical findings [4,9,19,20], according to which the two constructs are positively related. However, there are some studies that found no relation between self-esteem and aggression, in that only narcissistic individuals behave aggressively in specific situations [21-23], and other studies ([5,9,19,24]), according to which low self-esteem is related to increased aggression. With respect to the family structure, it was not found to be related to low self-esteem or victimization. This finding is in convergence with the study of Ajaegbu et al. [25], in which parental care or parental separation was not found to have an impact on adolescents' aggressive behaviours.

## Contribution of the Research

The present study contributes to the literature of aggression and self-esteem and suggests focusing on adolescents' self-esteem, as a means of addressing aggression in schools.

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