

## Emotional intelligence and aggression among adolescents in Tehran, Iran.

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between sub-components of emotional intelligence and the adolescent's aggression among Iranian high schools students in Tehran, Iran. Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is a set of abilities such as conception, emotion appraisal and expression, emotion management and regulation, and emotion utilization of emotion. The present study was carried out among Iranian students. Number of respondents in the present study includes 200 (50%) males and 200 (50%) females from 20 high schools in Tehran, Iran. Respondents were between the ages of 16 to 18 years. Pearson correlation between subscales of aggression and emotional intelligence was statistically significant.

[Homauni Masoumeh, Mariani Bte Mansor, Siti Nor Yacob, Mansor Abu Talib, Ghazizade Sara. **Emotional intelligence and aggression among adolescents in Tehran, Iran.** *Life Sci J* 2014;11(5):506-511] (ISSN: 1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 74

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Aggression, Adolescent, Tehran, Iran.

### 1. Introduction

The concept of adolescent aggression has undergone a great deal of study. It is a serious and visible problem in school systems and society. Aggression represents a significant societal problem. It creates problems for the victim and the perpetrator; it disrupts learning, and drains a significant proportion of mental health and family resources (Hawley, Johnson et al. 2007). Aggression and bullying are a serious problem in schools across the country, but it is difficult to detect the frequency of these behaviours. Prevalence rates appear to vary depending on the definition of bullying and methodology use by the researcher (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). According to Buss (1961) aggression is a response that delivers noxious stimuli to another organism. Violence is physical aggression at the extremely high end of the aggression continuum, such as murder and aggravated assault. However, Anderson & Huesman (2003) emphasize that much aggression is not violence but all violence is aggression. They believe that aggression is a behaviour that is intended to hurt another.

Adolescents who involve in aggression are typically at greater risk for criminal arrest (Huesmann et al., 2002), poor school performance (Serbin, 1991), school failure (Lacourse, Nagin, & Vitaro, 2006), and physical violence (Kokko, 2006). These adolescents regularly undergo difficult experiences from internalizing complexities, such as depression (Roland, 2002) anxiety (Salmon 1998), loneliness (Crick & Ladd, 1993), and thoughts of suicide (Roland, 2002).

Research of Liau *et al.*, 2003; Parker *et al.*, 2008 indicated that Problem behaviors among adolescents connected to a shortage in emotional

intelligence. Statistical analysis showed might use less emotions lead to higher levels of Problem behaviors such as aggression and depression. Emotional intelligence (EI) is a new theory based on the habit of multiple intelligences. Emotional intelligence (EI) has received much attention in the literature (e.g., Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007; Saklofske, Austin, & Minski, 2003; Smith, Ciarrochi, & Heaven, 2008). According to Perez, Petrides, and Furnham (2005), the general concept of EI is partly rooted in Thorndike's (1920) idea of "social intelligence and Gardner's (1983) theory on multiple intelligences (e.g., intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence). EI as a term appeared in the literature for a long time (Greenspan, 1989; Leuner, 1966). Salovey and Mayer (1990) put forward a theoretical model that focuses on emotional skills that can be developed through learning and experience, and posits four central abilities: perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. However, there is currently still an area of controversy as to what the most appropriate method of measuring EI is (Austin, 2009; Furnham et al., 2003; Saklofske et al., 2003). There is also evidence that trait EI is positively associated with the use of adaptive coping strategies and negatively associated with the use of maladaptive coping ones. Relationships between trait EI and problem behaviors are reported in recent studies.

There is also evidence that emotional intelligence is positively associated with the use of adaptive coping strategies and negatively associated with the use of maladaptive coping ones. Relationships between EI and problem behaviours are reported in recent studies. For example Mavroveli, *et al.*, (2007) found that adolescents who

perceive themselves as being able to regulate their own emotions tend to report less depression and lower levels of antisocial behaviour and delinquency. In Hong Kong, there is increasing acceptance of the emotional intelligence concept and its applications in educational practice (e.g., Chan, 2006). Common skills, including communication, self-understanding and self-management, have been included in the newly revised curriculum for primary to, secondary school children (Coyne *et al.*, 2008). Investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence and problem behaviour in Chinese adolescents may help educators identify specific areas in which this group of young people needs help to experience emotions adaptively and facilitate personal development. It is considered in this study to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression among adolescents in Tehran–Iran.

## 2. Materials and methods

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between sub-components of emotional intelligence and the adolescent's aggression among Iranian high schools students in Tehran, Iran. The schools were chosen based upon their location and programs of study. The population of research involved in this study consisted of all the Iranian students who enrolled in high schools of Tehran (400 students, academic year 2010-2011). Considering the questions and research hypotheses, the following statistical methods are used to analyse data: after normality test, correlation techniques enable researchers to describe the relationship between two sets of measures (Pearson  $r$ ). Pearson's Correlation and Regression for describing the relation between variables were conducted for analyses of this research hypotheses.

The 29-item aggression scale was developed by Buss and Perry (1992) and measures four domains of aggression, namely, physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility. The respondents were asked to use a 5-point scale to rate each item, and the total score of the four domains represents overall aggression. The scale exhibits a high level of internal consistency (Buss & Perry, 1992). Internal consistency was evaluated by Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient for both the overall scale ( $\alpha=0.87$ ) and each of the four subscales showed acceptable internal consistency. (Santisteban *et al.*, 2009).

Emotional intelligence was measured through Emotional Intelligence Scale by; Bar-on Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQi); The EQi is an objective self-report inventory that was designed to assess the construct of self-perceived emotional intelligence and the underlying factors that contribute to emotionally intelligent behavior. Participants

response to statements such as "it's hard for me to understand the way I feel" by endorsing one of the following five response options; "very seldom or not true of me", "seldom true of me", "sometimes true of me", "often true of me", and "very often true of me or true of me." The EQi provides several scores, including a general measure of perceived emotional intelligence or Total EQ (i.e., the perceived capacity to understand the emotions of oneself and others, to use that information to deal effectively with interpersonal relationships, and the ability to cope with stresses), and five composite scales assessing intrapersonal functioning (i.e., self-knowledge), interpersonal functioning (i.e., perceived ability to understand and relate to others), Adaptability (i.e., ability to assess problems and respond flexibly), Stress management (i.e., perceived ability to maintain calm and function well under pressure), and General mood (i.e., enjoyment of life and a healthy positive outlook). The EQ-I consist of 133 items and take approximately 30 minutes to complete. It gives an overall EQ score as well as scores for the following five composite scales and 15 subscales (Bar-on, 2006).

The study populations in this research were high schools in Tehran city. Tehran has 19 educational districts and consists of 231298 high school students (SCI, 2011), 110757(49%) of population were male and 120539(51%) of population were female. Considering the questions and research hypotheses, the following statistical methods are us to analyze data: after normality test, correlation techniques enable researchers to describe the relationship between two sets of measures (Pearson  $r$ ). Pearson's Correlation and Regression for describing the relation between variables (e.g., correlation between emotional intelligence and aggression, were conducted for analyses of this research hypotheses. The multi regression analysis was used to predict the variables.

## 3. Result and discussion

The adolescent characteristics comprised age, gender, educational grade and grade point average (GPA). As presented in Table 1 the number of respondents in the present study includes 200 (50%) males and 200 (50%) females from 20 high schools in Tehran, Iran. Respondents were between the ages of 16 to 18 years. This is divided into three groups, that is: 31.5%, 16 years old; 47.5 %, 17 years old and 21%, 18 years old. The mean age of the adolescents was 16.91 with the standard deviation of 0.77. Table 4.1 also reveals that the most of the respondents, 41% were in 2nd year of high school and the least of them, 20.3% studied in Pre

University, and 62.9% of respondents had GPA between 14 and 18 and also the mean GPA of the

adolescents was 15.76 with the standard deviation of 1.99.

**Table 1: Adolescent's Characteristics (N=400)**

	N	%
<b>Adolescent's Age</b>		
16 years old	126	31.5
17 years old	190	47.5
18 years old (Mean=16.91, SD=0.77)	84	21
<b>Adolescent's Gender</b>		
Male	200	50
Female	200	50
<b>Adolescent's Educational Grade</b>		
High school second	164	41
High school third	155	38.7
Pre University	81	20.3
<b>GPA (out of 20)</b>		
10-12	37	9.2
12.1-14	65	16.9
14.1-16	119	29.7
16.1-18	135	33.2
18.1-20 (Mean=15.76 SD=1.99)	44	11

**Table 2: Descriptive Information on Emotional Intelligence and Aggression**

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. D
<b>Total Emotional Intelligence</b>	191.00	414.00	294.97	41.06
EI_ Intra Personal Skills	62.00	144.00	103.48	17.24
EI_ Inter Personal Skills	26.00	90.00	61.80	15.26
EI_ Adaptation	24.00	80.00	54.78	9.71
EI_ Stress Management	12.00	57.00	32.32	9.15
EI_ General Mood	18.00	60.00	42.50	9.17
<b>Total Aggression</b>	35.00	84.00	62.88	7.99
Mean_ Aggression_ Anger	7.00	26.00	15.47	3.88
Mean_ Aggression_ physical Aggression	9.00	26.00	17.42	4.37
Mean_ Aggression_ Hostility	8.00	26.00	18.17	4.28
Mean_ Aggression_ Verbal Aggression	5.00	18.00	11.81	2.06

According Table 2, the overall mean score for Total emotional intelligence, is 294.97, with standard deviation of 41.06, intra personal skills (Mean=103.48, SD= 17.24), inter personal skills (Mean=61.8, SD=15.26), adaptation (Mean=54.78, SD=9.71), stress management (Mean=32.32, SD=9.15), and general mood (Mean=42.50, SD=9.17) consequently.

The subscales of adolescent aggression follow a ranking with anger (Mean=15.47, SD=3.88), physical aggression (Mean=17.42, SD=4.37),

hostility (Mean=18.17, SD=4.28), verbal aggression (Mean=11.81, SD=2.06). Table 3 presents the grand mean scores of the respondent's aggression. Based on these obtained grand mean scores, high, moderate and low categories of this variable were suggested. As can be seen in table 3, the overall mean score is 62.88 and standard deviation is 7.99 and consequently the level of adolescent aggression is moderate. Also, the table shows that 67.5% of respondents scored moderately. In contrast, 15.2% of respondents scored low while 17.3% of them achieved high scores.

**Table 3: Adolescents' Aggression**

aggression	Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD
			62.88	7.99
Low( $\leq 54$ )	64	15.2		
Moderate (54-69.2)	270	67.5		
High ( $\geq 69.2$ )	66	17.3		

In this research regression analysis was used for studying the relationship between several predictors 'independent variables and dependent variable. The main purpose is to find precisely which component of emotional intelligence predicts the dependent

variable. In this linear regression analysis, aggression was the dependent variable and components of emotional intelligence were the independent variables. The independent variables were entered simultaneously into the regression analysis.

**Table 4: Relationships between Emotional Intelligence and Its Components with Aggression**

Variables	r value	P
Emotional Intelligence(EI)	-0.458**	0.000
EI _ intra personal skills	-0.169**	0.001
EI _ inter personal skills	-0.619**	0.000
EI _ adaptation	-0.092	0.068
EI – stress management	-0.509**	0.000
EI _ general mood	-0.090	0.071

Table 4, presents the result of the Pearson correlation between emotional intelligence, and aggression. The correlation coefficient between the subscales of emotional intelligence and aggression except for some cases, was found to be statistically significant, sig=.000,  $p < 0.01$ . As reported above, relationship between subscales of emotional intelligence and aggression are significantly negative. It means adolescents with category of high factors of aggression displayed less factors of emotional intelligence. Moreover, the variables of aggression and emotional intelligence had significant negative relationship, identifying feelings which suggested that as, emotional intelligence decreased, aggression also tended to increase.

The result of this study was consensus with the findings in Parker et al. (2001) study which suggested that high emotional intelligence might be a protective factor for mental and physical health and low emotional intelligence, related to highly problem behaviour individuals. These findings conform to results obtained by Kimiaei *et al* (2011), who indicated there was negative significant correlation between emotional intelligence and aggression in adolescents of Mashhad-Iran ( $r = -0.562$ ). In the other study by Bregard *et al* (2006), there was a meaningful disagreement between teen's' emotional capacity and their problem behaviours, such as verbal and behavioural aggression. It seems that people struck with aggression are very weak in emotional intelligence.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the result for this study, it is proved that there was a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and aggression. In other words, when emotional intelligence is high, the tendency of aggression to happen is low. This result was in line with the previous finding from Petrides *et al.*, (2004) and Deshpande and Joseph (2005). Respondents with low EI were less likely to perceive such behaviours as gossiping the lecturer and made an obscene comment or gesture at a classmate as unethical. These results suggest that people with low EI relatively have lower moral standards (Harris & Ogbonna, 2002). The importance of emotional intelligence is recognized in many aspects of life. Ultimately, emotional intelligence has an effect on the quality of human interactions. People with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to achieve success because they know how to identify emotions, manage them, integrate them into thoughts and understand them (Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2002). This can lead to empathy, impulse control, self-awareness, stress management, optimism, and meaningful interpersonal relationships. It is related to productivity on the job, being a team player and getting along well with co-workers, being a great leader, and having fulfilling relationships with friends, family and spouse (Bar-On., 2004; Goleman, 1998; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee 2002). Because emotional intelligence in a variety of adjustments (familial, social, emotional, and physical) is essential and due to its importance in life situations, especially recommended for teenagers in middle schools and

high schools are teaching classes for emotional intelligence develops.

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