



Relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Regulation, Communication Skills, Self-efficacy, and Parents' Performance with Mediating Role of Avoidance Insecure Attachment Style for Presenting the Aggression Model in Teenagers

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Aggressive behavior is considered one of the fundamental social problems in any society that is specifically noted due to its importance in childhood and adolescence period. The current research was performed to present the aggression model in teenagers to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, communicative skills, self-efficacy, and parents' performance with the mediating role of avoidance insecure attachment style.

Materials and Methods: The present correlational study was conducted using structural equation modeling. The population of the research consisted of all female high school students of Tehran city, Iran, in the academic year of 2019-20. The samples were selected using a cluster random sampling method (n=384). The instruments used in this research to collect the required data included the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire, Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory, Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, Communicative Skills Questionnaire, General Self-Efficacy Scale, Adult Attachment Scale, and Family Assessment Device. The data analysis was carried out in LISREL 8.80 software using Pearson correlation coefficient and structural equation modeling.

Results: The results showed that emotional intelligence ($\beta=-0.42$, $P<0.001$), emotion regulation ($\beta=-0.39$, $P<0.001$), communication skills ($\beta=-0.37$, $P<0.001$), self-efficacy ($\beta=0.43$, $P<0.001$), and avoidance insecure attachment style ($\beta=-0.45$, $P<0.001$) had a negative and inverse effect on aggression.

Conclusions: Based on the findings of the study, emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, communicative skills, self-efficacy, and parents' performance with the mediating role of avoidance insecure attachment style could be an appropriate model for aggression in teenagers.

Keywords: Adolescent, Aggression, Emotional intelligence, Emotional regulation, Self-efficacy

Background

Aggressive behavior is considered one of the important and fundamental social problems in any society that is specifically noted due to its importance during the childhood and adolescence period [1, 2]. Aggression is referred to as behaviors through which individuals may hurt themselves, others, and things in different forms. This behavior contains numerous physical, mental, and social side effects [3]. Aggressive behaviors in adolescence leave destructive consequences (e.g., failure in educational performance and incompatibility at school), psychological problems (e.g., depression, anxiety [4]), delinquency, and problems with social skills and communicating with others. This issue may be considered a great barrier to promoting and

developing individuals. On the other hand, the results of investigating the research review are indicative of a growing increase and high prevalence of aggressive behaviors among students [5]. According to the results of a study by Turshizi et al., the aggressive prevalence rates have been reported at 54% and 52% in males and females, respectively. So it is highly important to identify the effective factors of this behavior, which as a return, would help us to design a comprehensive plan to reduce this behavioral problem [4-8].

Emotional intelligence is regarded as an individual's ability that can influence aggression. Emotional intelligence consists of two sections of the appropriate use of knowledge and the

appropriate use of emotions [4, 9]. The findings of a study carried out by Garcia Sancho et al. showed that emotional intelligence and aggression had a reverse relationship [4], meaning that individuals with higher emotional intelligence had lower aggression. Similar results were obtained in the studies performed by Ahmadi and Nowruzi and Saeedi et al. [10, 11]. Emotional regulation is one of the other variables that can play a role in aggression. Emotional intelligence, which is defined as an individual's ability to reshape emotions or create coping mechanisms to control emotions, plays a key role in controlling anger and reducing aggression at the primary stages of development [12].

Behavioral characteristics, including communicative skills, may contribute to the emergence of aggressive behaviors. Individuals with appropriate communicative skills properly communicate with others and are rarely involved with tension and aggression [13]. The results of the research by Ashrafi and Monjezi have revealed that training students with communicative skills can reduce aggression [14]. Self-efficacy is another individual variable that can play a role in aggression. Self-efficacy is related to the foundation of one's understanding of his/her ability in doing an activity, creating the consequence, and coping with and controlling a situation [15]. The results of studies carried out by Allameh et al. and Mirab et al. confirmed the role of self-efficacy in reducing aggression and have shown the inverse correlation between these two variables [16, 17].

The performance of family and parents is one of the other variables that can affect aggression. Several studies have demonstrated the role of parents and family in adolescent aggression [18, 19]. As mentioned, according to the theoretical and investigative literature review, the above-mentioned factors play roles in manifesting adolescent aggression; however, another variable that may be the root of various problems in childhood and can affect most of the behaviors and characteristics of a person is attachment style. Attachment style is one of the effective factors in interpersonal interactions; therefore, it can affect one's confrontation manner with stressful situations [20]. Attachment means an emotional bond that develops by the interaction between the child and caretaker in childhood and it affects the child's social growth and feeling in whole life [21]. In the secure attachment style, more desirable behavioral consequences are observed, while in the avoidance insecure attachment style and ambivalent insecure attachment style, the behavioral consequences might be unpleasant [22].

Considering the growing prevalence of aggression in children and adolescents and the lack of a comprehensive model of effective factors in the formation and occurrence of this behavior, the necessity of identifying these factors to design preventive and therapeutic programs in this area is evidently felt, and the research background suggests that no comprehensive research has been conducted in this area. In this regard, the present study sought to provide a model based on theoretical and research backgrounds that could identify more effective factors and be used for the prevention and reduction of aggression programs and provide more effective interventions in this field.

Objectives

This study aimed to provide an aggression model based on emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, communication skills, self-efficacy, and parental performance by the mediating role of avoidance insecure attachment style in female adolescents in secondary school.

Materials and Methods

The present correlational study was conducted using structural equation modeling. The statistical population of the study consisted of all female students of secondary school (grades 10, 11, and 12) in Tehran, Iran, in the academic year of 2019-20, among whom 150,880 students were selected using the cluster sampling method. First, out of 22 districts of Tehran, 4 districts of 2, 5, 7, and 9 were selected, and from each district, one school was chosen and three classes (from each grade) were selected as the statistical sample; accordingly, 392 samples were entered into the study. After reviewing the questionnaires and removing the distorted questionnaires, 384 questionnaires were examined. Inclusion criteria were being in the age range of 15-17 years old, lacking mental problems and physical defects, living with parents, and having parents' satisfaction. On the other hand, the individuals who were unwilling to attend the research were excluded from the study.

Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire

This 29-item instrument, developed by Buss and Perry [23], assesses four dimensions of aggression, namely physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. The replies are scored on a 5-point Likert scale from one to five. The total score of items represents the rate of total aggression, and the scores of subscales show various manifestations of aggression. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire of aggression possess internal

consistency. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for subscales of physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility are estimated at 0.85, 0.72, 0.83, and 0.77, respectively [22]. The reliability coefficient of this questionnaire was 0.78 obtained by Samani using retesting method [24].

Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory

This 117-item questionnaire, designed by Bar-On (1980), consists of 15 subscales: 1) the component of intrapersonal intelligence (emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-esteem, self-actualization, and independence), 2) the component of interpersonal intelligence (sympathy, social responsibility, and interpersonal relationships), 3) the component of adaptability (reality testing, flexibility, and problem-solving), 4) the component of stress control (tolerate stress and impulse control), and 5) the component of the general mood factor (happiness and optimism). The responses to this questionnaire are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=to some extent, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree). Higher scores in each subscale reflect one's tendency at that subscale. The coefficient of retesting was reported at 0.85 after one month by Bar-On. In Iran, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this tool was estimated at 0.89 by Eslamian [25].

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire

This 10-item questionnaire, developed made by Gross and John [26], consists of two subscales, including suppression and reevaluation. The replies to this questionnaire are rated on a 7-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". In a study conducted by Spann, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of these two subscales were calculated at 0.73 and 0.79, respectively, and the result of the retesting of this scale was obtained at 0.69 after 9 months. In a study by Badayat et al. [27], the coefficients of the subscales were reported at 0.83 and 0.90, respectively [27].

Communication Skills Questionnaire

This 19-item questionnaire is scored on a Likert scale from "very low" to "very good". The total score of this scale ranges from 19 to 95, and higher scores reflect higher communicative skills and vice versa [28]. The concurrent validity of this questionnaire with the questionnaire of the aptitude for effective communication was attained with the rate of 0.698, and consequently, its concurrent validity was confirmed. Moreover, the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated at 0.73 using

Cronbach's alpha coefficient method [29].

General Self-Efficacy Scale

This 17-item scale, developed by Sherer et al. (1982), is rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) [30]. The total score is changeable, and the reliability of this tool has been reported at 0.86 by Sherer et al. using Cronbach's alpha coefficient method. In Iran, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale has been obtained at 0.91 in the population of students [31].

Adult Attachment Scale

This 15-item scale was designed by Hazen and Shaver (1987) and assesses three styles of insecure, avoidant, and ambivalent attachment (5 items each). The responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 0=never to 4=nearly always) [32]. Hazen and Shaver calculated the reliability retesting of the whole questionnaire at 0.81 and the reliability of Cronbach's alpha at 0.87. In a study by Rahimiyan Buger et al., the reliability values of this instrument using Cronbach's alpha coefficient method for the whole scale, ambivalent attachment, avoidant attachment, and secure attachment were obtained at 0.75, 0.83, 0.81, and 0.77, respectively, which reflected the desirable reliability of this instrument [33].

Family Assessment Device

This 53-item questionnaire has been compiled for evaluating the family performance following the model of Macmaster and is consisted of the subscales of problem-solving, connection, functions, emotional accompaniment, emotional bond, controlling the behavior, and the whole family performance that are scored on a 4-point Likert scale (from 1 to 4) [34]. The concurrent validity of the questionnaire has been carried out by 60 items of the questionnaire of family performance. The reliability of this tool has been reported at higher than 0.86 using Cronbach's alpha coefficient method [1].

The suggested fit model has been evaluated by means of the Chi-square indexes, comparative fit index, goodness fit index, adjusted goodness fit index, and the root of the mean squares of error approximation. The data analysis was carried out in LISREL 8.80 software using Pearson correlation coefficient and structural equation modeling.

Results

The descriptive statistics of research variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of research variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Intrapersonal intelligence	3.11	0.43	-0.38	-0.13
Interpersonal intelligence	2.96	0.45	0.67	0.48
Adaptability	3.09	0.52	0.39	0.0
Stress control	2.99	0.48	-0.18	0.3
General mood factor	3.17	0.5	-0.35	-0.13
Emotional intelligence	3.06	0.45	-0.38	-0.02
Emotional inhibition	1.03	0.62	0.49	0.02
Emotional recovery	1.08	0.55	0.32	-0.11
Emotional regulation	2.33	0.51	0.22	-0.1
Communicative skills	3.33	0.86	-0.24	0.49
Self-efficacy	3.93	0.55	-0.22	0.9
Problem solving	2.7	0.74	0.63	0.02
Connection	2.73	0.64	0.33	-0.21
Functions	2.54	0.57	0.37	-0.21
Empathy	2.58	0.57	0.37	-0.24
Emotional bond	2.69	0.53	0.08	-0.12
Behavioral control	2.77	0.41	-0.23	-0.71
General performance of family	2.64	0.38	-0.47	-0.51
Performance of parents	2.66	0.45	0.26	0.39
Secure attachment	2.77	0.53	0.29	-0.44
Ambivalent insecure attachment	2.73	0.53	-0.26	0.01
Avoidance insecure attachment	2.69	0.5	-0.11	-0.35
Attachment	2.73	0.48	-0.22	0.07
Physical aggression	2.86	0.57	-0.33	-0.15
Verbal aggression	2.81	0.59	-0.44	-0.25
Aggression anger	2.93	0.52	-0.39	0.06
Aggression hostility	2.75	0.54	-0.19	-0.43
Aggression		0.51	-0.35	-0.27

Following the results of Table 1, it was observed that self-efficacy had the highest mean, and the variable of communicative skills had the highest variance.

The correlation coefficients of the components of the variables of emotional regulation, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, the performance of parents, avoidance attachment, and aggression are summarized in table 2.

The ultimate model of the structural equation was used to assess the relationship between emotional

intelligence, emotional regulation, communicative skills, self-efficacy, and the performance of parents by the mediator role of avoidance insecure attachment within aggression. This model was drawn by deriving from the outcome of LISREL software (figures 1 and 2). Since the index of the root of the mean squares of error approximation, which was 0.17, benefited good fitness, other goodness fit indexes were placed in the acceptable interval, which is presented in table 3.

Table 2. Correlation coefficients of the components of the variables of emotional regulation, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, the performance of parents, avoidance attachment, and aggression

Variable	Avoidance insecure attachment	Aggression
Intrapersonal intelligence	-0.35	-0.34
Interpersonal intelligence	-0.38	-0.41
Adaptability	-0.37	-0.46
Stress control	-0.31	-0.39
General mood factor	-0.31	-0.41
Emotional intelligence	-0.32	-0.43
Emotional inhibition	-0.41	-0.36
Emotional recovery	0.37	-0.32
Emotional regulation	-0.36	-0.39
Communicative skills	-0.41	-0.38
Self-efficacy	-0.31	-0.44
Problem solving	-0.36	-0.41
Connection	0.49	-0.31
Functions	-0.32	-0.39
Empathy	0.41	-0.57
Emotional bond	-0.31	-0.38
Behavioral control	0.41	-0.58
General performance of family	-0.36	-0.56
Performance of parents	-0.32	-0.46

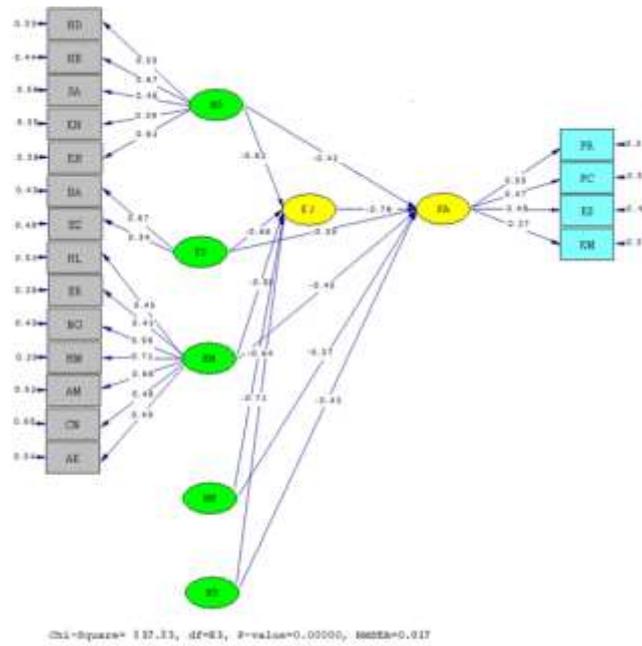


Figure 1. Results of confirming the model of the structural equation of research variables

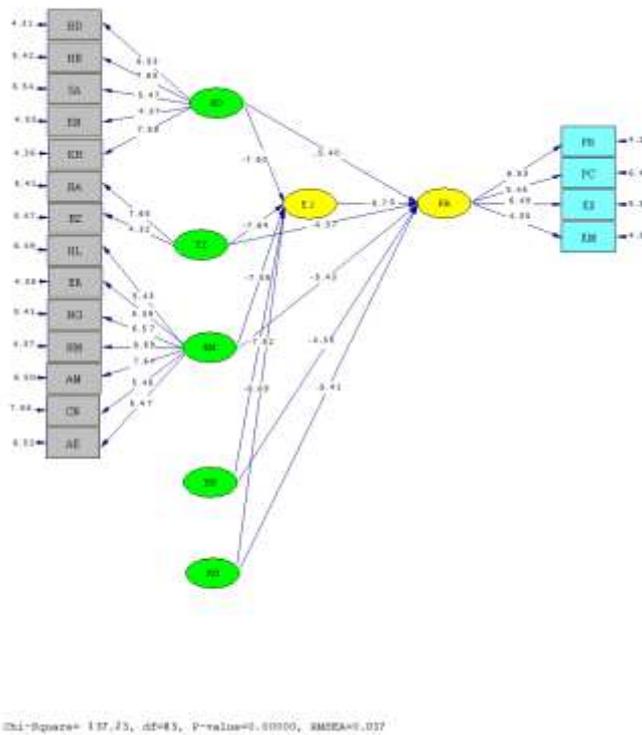


Figure 2. T-value statistics, the results of structural equation model validation of insecure-avoidant attachment style

Table 3. Goodness fit indexes of the structural model

Fit indexes	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	NFI	NNFI	IFI
Acceptable values	<0.1	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	0-1
Calculated values	0.017	0.95	0.93	0.98	0.96	0.94

Discussion

The results showed that in investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, communicative skills, self-efficacy, and the performance of parents within

aggression, the effect of direct way was less than the effect of indirect way, and therefore, the existence of the mediator variable of avoidance insecure attachment style raised the effect. Accordingly, the mediator role of avoidance insecure attachment

style was confirmed in the research hypothesis. In the examination of the presented model, the results indicated that the presented model of aggression possessed sufficient fitness based on the relationship between emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, communicative skills, self-efficacy, and the performance of parents within the mediator role of avoidance insecure attachment style. It was also found that emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, communicative skills, self-efficacy, and the parents' performance with the mediator role of avoidance insecure attachment style could predict the aggressive behavior of an adolescent.

In explaining the results, it can be mentioned that attachment style is one of the most important effective factors in interpersonal interactions that is shaped in one's childhood and continues to form to later ages following the environment in which one is developing. Such individuals do not invest emotionally so much in communicating with others and if others approach them, they will apply neutral strategies to regulate their anxiety. These strategies operate by deviating attention from attachment needs. They avoid getting close to people; therefore, they lack these kinds of responses during life [21]. In other words, these people do not have proper emotional regulation. This may lead to uncontrolled emotional reactions, including aggression. The results of a study by Mohammadi and Foulad Chang confirmed the existence of a relationship between avoidant attachment styles and emotion regulation. Accordingly, one's tendency to control emotions was related to emotional intelligence. They avoid getting close to attached figures to prevent encountering such responses in their lifetime; after a while, they get upset and feel that others want to be friends with them, even if such communication is necessary for their survival and growth. According to Bowlby's approach, attachment insecurity leads to anger toward caregivers and significant others in life. Therefore, avoidance of insecure attachment can increase aggression. In other words, aggression can be predicted by insecure attachment avoidance [36]. The avoidance insecure attachment style is shaped from childhood and develops in the child following behavioral patterns and the performance of parents. If parents do not respond to the child appropriately, the avoidance insecure attachment is formed in the child. Inappropriate performance of parents results in the emergence of inappropriate emotional reactions, such as aggression, among the family members.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, communicative

skills, self-efficacy, and parents' performance with the mediating role of avoidance insecure attachment style could be an appropriate model for aggression in teenagers.

Compliance with ethical guidelines

All ethical principles were considered in this research. The participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the research. Informed consent was obtained from the subjects. They were also assured of the confidentiality of their information. Moreover, the subjects were informed of the possibility of study withdrawal at any research stage. They were also informed that they would be provided with the results of the research.

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Authors' contributions

Conceptualization [Reyhaneh Sigarchi]; Methodology [Shahnam Abolghasemi]; Investigation [Taher Tizdast]; Writing- Original Draft [Mohammad Ali Rahmani]; Writing- Review and Editing, Author names [all authors]; Funding Acquisition [all authors]; Resources [all authors]; Supervision [Shahnam Abolghasemi].

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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