

## Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Aggressive Fantasies and Empathy Among Adults

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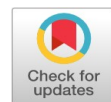
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**Abstract:** The study aimed to explore the influence of emotional intelligence on adolescents' tendencies towards aggressive fantasies and empathy. A sample of 300 individuals (147 males and 153 females) was selected for the study. Initially, a weak correlation was found between emotional intelligence and aggression, suggesting that higher emotional intelligence does not necessarily lead to reduced levels of aggression in adolescents. Conversely, a positive correlation was observed between emotional intelligence and empathy, indicating that adolescents with higher emotional intelligence tend to demonstrate greater empathy towards others. Furthermore, the research identified a causal relationship between emotional intelligence and aggressive fantasies. Gender differences were also observed in emotional intelligence, empathy, and tendencies towards aggressive fantasies.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Aggressive Fantasies, Empathy.

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### INTRODUCTION

Aggressive fantasies are intense mental scenarios that involve harming or dominating others, often accompanied by a sense of pleasure or gratification. Research has linked these fantasies to various psychological and behavioral outcomes. Individuals who experience aggressive fantasies may be more likely to engage in aggressive behaviors, such as physical or verbal assault. They may also experience intense anger or hostility towards others, and feel anxious or uneasy due to the intensity of their fantasies. Aggressive fantasies correlate with low agreeableness and high neuroticism, which aligns with traits such as anger, hostility, and antagonism towards others. These characteristics are often associated with darker personality traits like psychopathy and general antisocial behavior (Jones, Miller, & Lynam, 2011).

Such fantasies have been linked to actual violent behavior, impulsivity, and psychopathic tendencies. Adolescents who frequently involve in different types of aggression may fight with identifying and managing the negative emotions typically associated with aggression (Peled & Moretti, 2007). These emotional competencies come in the domain of emotional intelligence (EI). According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), EI consists of four main abilities: accurately perceiving, understanding, and expressing emotions; using emotions to facilitate thinking; comprehending emotional knowledge; and effectively regulating emotions to foster personal and intellectual growth.

During adolescence, empathy, defined as the ability to understand and share the cognitive and emotional aspects of others' negative experiences, can be effective in managing aggression. (Davis, 1983). The relationship between aggression and empathy is clearly evident, particularly among the youth (Escrivá, García, & Navarro, 2002; Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2007; Kaukiainen et al., 1999; Mehrabian, 1997; Miller & Eisenberg, 1988; Richardson, Hammock, Smith, & Gardner, 1994; Sanmartín, Carbonell, & Baños, 2011). Furthermore studies demonstrated the strong correlation between adolescent's empathy deficits and a range of negative outcomes suggesting that

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adolescents with lower empathy levels may be more likely to experience social isolation, emotional distress and mental health issues such as depression (Gleason, Jensen-Campbell, & Ickes, 2009). Therefore, empathy is a vital component in fostering healthy psychological and social development in young individuals contributing to their overall wellbeing and adaptability. Emotional intelligence in youth is linked to reduced occurrences of aggressive and disruptive behaviors promoting a more harmonious and constructive social environment (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004; Davis & Humphrey, 2012; Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012) and higher emotional intelligence is associated with increased empathy and more satisfying social connections leading to stronger sense of community and social support (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). Consequently, students who are more adept at perceiving, understanding, and managing their emotions are less likely to engage in aggressive behaviors. They exhibit greater emotional awareness, which can lead to a better understanding of their own and others' emotions, as well as the consequences of their actions. Considering these insights, EI likely plays a crucial role in mitigating aggression and fostering empathetic capacities. The skills involved in recognizing, comprehending, and managing both personal and others' emotions are essential for developing conflict resolution skills and nurturing positive social relationships (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011).

### Statement of the Problem

This research aims to explore the influence of emotional intelligence on aggressive fantasies and empathy among adolescents shedding light on the role of emotional regulation in mitigating violent thoughts and actions. It is essential to explore individuals' attitude towards aggressive fantasies, effected by emotional intelligence. To examine how individuals' attitudes toward aggressive fantasies and empathy differ and to determine the effects of emotional intelligence on aggressive fantasies and empathy among adolescents.

### Objectives of the Study

- To find out correlation between aggressive fantasies and emotional intelligence.
- To investigate interplay between aggressive fantasies and empathy significantly influence the psychological well-being of adolescents.
- To enquire relationship between gender differences and the presence of aggressive fantasies, emotional intelligence, and empathy.

### Research Hypotheses

**Ha<sub>1</sub>** = There is significant relation between aggressive fantasies and emotional intelligence.

**Ha<sub>2</sub>** = There is significant role of empathy and aggressive fantasies in regulating psychological wellbeing of adolescents.

**Ha<sub>3</sub>** = There is significant gender differences present regarding aggressive fantasies emotional intelligence and empathy.

## METHOD

### Sample

The population of interest for this study was adolescents, random sampling applied to choose the sample. All 300 male and female adolescence, age ranged 13 to 18(UNICEF, 2024). The sample of the study comprised by male (n = 149) and female (n = 151). Informed consent was taken from participants. Necessary instructions regarding the questionnaires were provided. For online data collection participants were provided a URL link directing them to a consent. Participants provided consent to participate then completed the study measures online beginning with the demographic questionnaire followed by the rest of the measures in random order.

### Instruments

**The Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test**, developed by Schutte et al. (1998), consists of a 33-item self-report questionnaire. Overall high reliability rating of 0.90 for the overall EI score. The test-retest reliability of the SSEIT is 0.78 (Schutte et al.,1998).

**The Perth Empathy Scale (PES)** is a 20-item self-report questionnaire, originally developed in English, reliability was tested in terms of internal consistency and test–retest reliability (Larionow, & Preece, 2023). All

PES subscales showed acceptable to good internal reliabilities in terms of  $\alpha$  and ( $\alpha = .92, \alpha = .95$ ).

**Aggressive fantasies scale** which measure the frequency and intensity of aggressive thoughts and daydreams is associated with certain personality traits (Jones, Miller, & Lynam, 2011). It was initially developed for elementary school children, the scale later adapted for use with adolescents (All items were either added or modified by Nadel, Spellmann, Alvarez-Canino, Lausell-Bryant & Landsberg, 1996). They are all scored using a 3-point scale: No = 1 A little = 2 A lot = 3 Point values for all items are added, with totals ranging from 0 to 14. Aggressive Fantasies: This 7-item measure assesses levels of internal aggressive fantasies, with an internal consistency of .69.

### Statistical Analysis

The collected data was analyzed in 27 version of SPSS. On the basis of entered data, the researcher investigated the study phenomenon by using correlation statistics, mean statistics and regression analysis. On the basis of conducted analysis, the hypotheses of current study were supported or refuted.

### RESULTS

The study included a total of 300 participants, consisting of 147 males (49%) and 153 females (51%). The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for Emotional intelligence was .85(>.70) which indicate high internal consistency. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for Aggressive fantasy scale was .67(<.70) which indicate moderate internal consistency. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for perth empathy scale was .80(=.80) which indicate high internal consistency. The percentage of demographic variable participating in this study. The sample of the study consisted of 300 participants, with a gender distribution of 49% male (n=147) and 51% female (n=153).

The results indicate that emotional intelligence shows a weak correlation with aggressive fantasies but is positively associated with empathy. Additionally, empathy is significantly positively correlated with aggressive fantasies. The correlation between study variables result indicate that emotional intelligence has weak correlation with aggressive fantasy ( $r=0.63$ ), and it is positively associated with empathy( $r=.378$ ). Whereas empathy is also significantly positively associated with aggressive fantasies( $r=.380$ ). The study also found significant mean differences in emotional intelligence, empathy, and aggressive fantasies between genders. Specifically, males scored higher on emotional intelligence and aggressive fantasies compared to females, who scored lower on emotional intelligence, aggressive fantasies, and empathy. The study revealed significant mean difference on emotional intelligence, empathy and aggressive fantasies with  $t(148)=3.56, p>.05$ .

Findings showed that male exhibited higher scores on emotional intelligence( $M=117.1, SD=14.4$ ), empathy( $M=60.1, SD=12.3$ ) and aggressive fantasies ( $M=12.7, SD=3.06$ ) compared from emotional intelligence of female ( $M=111.4, SD=15.7$ ), aggressive fantasies( $M=11.2, SD=2.98$ ) and empathy( $M=54.9, SD=10.8$ ) The value of Cohen's  $d$  was 15.0(>0.50)which indicate large effect size for emotional intelligence ,3.02(>0.50)which indicate large effect size for aggressive fantasy and 11.6(>0.50)which indicate large effect size for empathy. The impact of emotional intelligence on aggressive fantasy shows the  $R^2$  value of .39 revealed that the predictor variable explained .39% variance in the outcome variable  $F(30.7), p < 0.05$ . The finding revealed that emotional intelligence positively predicted aggressive fantasy ( $\beta=.094, p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, the study highlighted the influence of emotional intelligence on aggressive fantasies, revealing a positive predictive relationship ( $\beta=.094, p < 0.05$ ).

Table 1: Psychometric Properties for Scale (N=300)

Scale	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Emotional intelligence	114.3	15.3	61-144	0.85
Aggressive fantasy scale	3.11	3.11	20-Jul	0.67
Perth empathy scale	11.92	11.9	22-89	0.8

Table 2: Demographic Characteristic of the Sample

S.NO	Demographic variable	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender		
	Male	147	49%
	Female	153	51%

Table 3: Correlation statistics for study variable

S.no	Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1	Emotional intelligence	114.3	15.34	1	0.63	.378**
2	Aggressive fantasy scale	12.6	3.11	0.63	1	.380**
3	Perth empathy scale	57.59	11.9	.378**	.380**	1

Table 4: Mean Comparison of Male and Female on emotional intelligence, aggressive fantasies and empathy

Variable	Male		Female		t(344)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Emotional intelligence	117.1	14.4	111.4	15.7	3.56	0.101	15
Aggressive fantasy scale	12.7	3.06	11.2	2.98	4.72	0.267	3.02
Perth empathy scale	60.1	12.3	54.9	10.8	4.15	0.029	11.6

Table 5: Regression Coefficient of Emotional Intelligence on Aggressive Fantasy

Variable	B	$\beta$	SE
Constant	7.97		1.21
Emotional intelligence	-0.019	-0.094	0.011
R <sub>2</sub>	0.39		

## DISCUSSION

The study aimed to investigate how emotional intelligence and empathy influence the presence of aggressive fantasies in adolescents. Reliable standardized scales were utilized, with alpha coefficients exceeding thresholds for reliability. Table 1 shows Psychometric properties of the scales used in the present study show a Cronbach's value of .85 for Emotional Intelligence, indicating high internal consistency (greater than .70). The Cronbach's value for the Aggressive Fantasy scale was .67, indicating moderate internal consistency. The Perth Empathy Scale had a Cronbach's value of .80, indicating high internal consistency. Participants ranged in age from 10 to 24 years. Statistical analyses conducted in SPSS included correlation analyses to examine relationships between variables, linear regression to identify predictive factors, and t-tests to assess group differences. Several significant insights were revealed.

Firstly, from a table no 03 positive association was observed between emotional intelligence and aggressive fantasies, suggesting that adolescents with higher emotional intelligence may experience more frequent aggressive fantasies as studied earlier by (Gao, Tang, Yang, & Fu, 2023) that emotional intelligence is positively related to an aggressive fantasies. This correlation suggests that those proficient in understanding and managing emotions might be more aware of aggressive impulses, potentially increasing their engagement in such fantasies as according to the general aggression model (GAM) personal factors (e.g., EI, personality trait, gender) and situational factors ((i.e., affect, cognition, arousal) which then leads to aggressive behaviors.

Gender differences in aggressive fantasies were also notable from table no 04, consistent with previous findings indicating that male adolescents are more likely than females to be involved in violence (Begle et al., 2011; Vassallo et al., 2002), which can exacerbate aggressive thoughts.

Furthermore, the research uncovered a positive correlation between empathy and aggressive fantasies, suggesting that adolescents with greater empathic abilities may also have heightened levels of engagement in aggressive fantasies. This association raises intriguing questions about the complex interplay among empathy, emotional

regulation, and aggressive tendencies, warranting further investigation into underlying mechanisms as prior indicated by the research of (Batanova, & Loukas, 2014).

Table no 5 shows the impact of emotional intelligence on aggressive fantasy. The finding revealed that emotional intelligence positively predicted aggressive fantasy. Furthermore, the study highlighted the influence of emotional intelligence on aggressive fantasies, revealing a positive predictive relationship (Jones, Miller, & Lynam, 2011).

Overall, these findings underscore the multifaceted nature of adolescent psychological development, highlighting intricate relationships between emotional intelligence, empathy, and aggressive fantasies. By shedding light on these dynamics, the study offers insights into potential interventions aimed at fostering healthy emotional regulation and reducing aggressive ideation among adolescents. This experimental study focused exclusively on adolescents due to practical considerations related to access and cooperation, rather than involving multiple age groups and cultural backgrounds to gain deeper insights into the topic.

## **CONCLUSION**

The present study found a positive association between emotional intelligence and aggressive fantasies, indicating that adolescents with higher emotional intelligence may experience more frequent aggressive fantasies. Additionally, the study identified a causal relationship indicating that higher emotional intelligence levels could contribute to the development or intensification of aggressive fantasy tendencies in adolescents. Gender differences in aggressive fantasies were also notable which can exacerbate aggressive thoughts. Furthermore, the research uncovered a positive correlation between empathy and aggressive fantasies, suggesting that adolescents with greater empathic abilities may also have heightened levels of engagement in aggressive fantasies.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- This suggests that individuals with higher emotional intelligence are also likely to exhibit higher levels of empathy.
- Emotional intelligence allows people to recognize and understand the emotions of others, fostering empathetic responses towards them.
- Interestingly, this finding suggests that individuals with higher levels of empathy may also be more likely to engage in aggressive fantasies. This could indicate a complex relationship between understanding others' emotions and one's own aggressive tendencies in fantasy scenarios.
- This implies that emotional intelligence levels can be used to anticipate or forecast the likelihood of individuals having aggressive fantasies. Higher emotional intelligence might lead to more controlled and realistic scenarios in these fantasies, or it could indicate a deeper understanding of one's own emotional responses.
- This suggests that emotional intelligence may not only predict but also influence the occurrence of aggressive fantasies. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence might be better equipped to process and manage their emotions.

## **LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This experimental study is delimited to adolescents. Only adolescents were made part of this study due to the element of access and cooperation offered for conducting this experiment rather than involving multiple age groups and cultural groups to get more deep insight of the topic.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The present study concludes the following suggestions to improve the current study.

**Cultural Diversity:** Conducting the research across different cultural contexts could provide valuable insights into how emotional intelligence, empathy, and aggression manifest across 20 diverse societies.

**Studying factors other than emotional intelligence:** Future studies could delve deeper into other factors that may influence the relationship between emotional intelligence, empathy, and aggression. For example, investigating the role of personality traits, socialization experiences, or situational factors could provide a more comprehensive understanding of these phenomena.

**Examine different age groups:** By examining different age groups, researchers can gain a better understanding of how these relationships evolve over the lifespan. Comparing children, adolescents, and adults could reveal developmental trajectories and shed light on the stability or variability of these associations across different stages of life.

**Conducting longitudinal research:** Conducting longitudinal research could help in examining the causal relationships between emotional intelligence, empathy, and aggression over time. Tracking individuals' development and changes in these variables could provide valuable insights into the dynamics of these processes.

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