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# ANXIETY AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR IN ADOLESCENTS

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## Abstract

*Background:* Aggressive behavior becomes a serious behavioral problem in adolescent recently time. Some cases are considered as an emergency for mental health behavior in adolescents. There are many factors suspected of being associated with aggressive behavior, one of which is anxiety. The study aimed to identify association between adolescents' anxiety and aggressive behavior.

*Methods:* The research used analytical correlation design with cross sectional approach. The research was conducted in Senior High School in Surakarta. Subjects were taken using convenience sampling that the total of 626 students filled out the online questionnaire while 32 students did not complete some items resulting in the total sample of 594 respondents. The research instruments used DASS 21 for anxiety and Buss Perry Questionare for aggressive behavior. The statistical analysis used pearson product moment test.

*Results:* The research showed that most of respondents were female (67,8%). The respondents had bullying victim history (44.8%), violence victim history (13.3%), and parental divorce history (10.3%). The statistical test showed a significant correlation between anxiety and aggressive behavior (p value 0,0001, r : 0,649, OR: 7.86, CI 95%).

*Conclusion:* The finding showed association between adolescents' anxiety and aggressive behavior. The community mental health nurses should organized partnership mental health program with the senior high school to manage anxiety and aggressive behavior in adolescents.

*Keywords:* adolescent; anxiety; aggressive behavior

## INTRODUCTION

Aggressive behavior becomes a serious behavioral problem in adolescents because some cases are referred to an emergency room (Guedj-Bourdiau et al., 2021). This behavior can be manifested in actions ruining objects or striking other people with intention and consciously. The bad impact of aggression are injury, harmful condition, strained interpersonal relationship, fear, isolation, and psychological development disturbance (Shao et al., 2014).

The survey on aggressive behavior showed high score of aggressive cases in adolescent. WHO survey indicate that there are 161,082 students who were involved in schools brawls (Liu, Jianghong; Lewis, Gary; Evans, 2013). The total of aggressive behavior in Indonesia is 952,397 in 2017 and further increased in 2022. The previous study showed that most of the teenagers aged fourteen to twenty years old had moderate level of aggressiveness (Afdal et al., 2020).

Aggressive behavior describes maladaptive reactions correlated with social, environmental, and some of individual factors (Guedj-Bourdiau et al., 2021). There are many factors suspected of being associated with aggressiveness, one of which is anxiety. Anxiety is indicated by disruption of mood, cognitive perception, behaviour, and some of physiological activities (Adwas et al., 2019). Anxiety is condition of worry because unsavory conditions (Videbeck, 2020).

Previous studies showed a correlation between anxiety and aggressive behavior. The study showed that higher risk of anxiety was correlated with aggressive behavior (Chung et al., 2019). Another study showed that in adult age, there was interaction between anxiety and aggression (Wehde, 2020). However, there was some limitations regarding the number of the research concerning this topic. Furthermore, there may be other factors impacting this correlation. Therefore, using a more appropriate concept of the relationship between adolescents' anxiety and aggressive behavior is importance especially with difference in measurements and research design.

The data obtained by some of interviews with counseling teachers showed that some aggressive students also experienced anxiety but some others did not experience anxiety. The aim of the research to analysis the association between adolescents' anxiety and aggressive behavior.

## **METHODS**

### **Research design**

The research used analytical correlation design with cross sectional approach.

### **Setting and samples**

The samples were taken using convenience sampling. Subjects were 626 senior high school students filled out the online questionnaire while 32 students did not complete some items resulting in the total sample of 594 respondents. The inclusion criteria is senior high school students in Surakarta while exclusion criteria is the students with psychiatric disorder.

### Measurement and data collection

The research conducted with online survey. The respondents were asked about the gender, bullying victim history, violence victim history, and parental divorce history. The measurement instruments of anxiety used DASS 21, while the measurement of aggressive behavior used Buss & Perry Questionnaire. The Buss & Perry Questionnaire has been valid and reliable tested, with 23 valid questions and a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.864 where Cronbach's alpha 0.6 means reliable (Abd Ghani & Che Rozubi, 2020). While DASS 21 has been valid and reliable tested, with Cronbach's alpha score 0.81 for depressive, 0.89 for anxiety and 0.78 for stress (Szabó, 2010).

### Data analysis

The research used microsoft excel and IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) v.23. The univariate analysis was served in distribution of frequency while bivariate analysis was served in tendency central. The statistical analysis used pearson product moment test.

### Ethical considerations

Informed consent was given to the respondents virtually. Adolescents were able to decide carefully without parental consent regarding their participation in the research. The research has ethical clearance from Ethics Committee of UKH Surakarta with number 034/UKH.L.02/EC/IX/2021.

## RESULTS

Most of the respondents were female (67,8%). Adolescents had some of aggressive risk factors such as bullying victim history (44.8%), violence victim history (13.3%), and parental divorce history (10.3%). The result was described in table 1.

Table 1  
Characteristics of adolescents ( n=594 respondents)

Variable	f	%	OR
Gender			
Female	403	67.8	1.30
Male	191	32.2	
Bullying victim history			
Yes	266	44.8	2.04
No	328	55.2	
Violence victim history			
Yes	79	13.3	3.18
No	515	86.7	
Parental divorce history			
Yes	61	10.3	2.21
No	533	89.7	

The students experienced anxiety with mean score 11,81; SD 7,12 and aggressive behavior with mean score 78,79; SD 14,68. There was association between anxiety and aggressive behavior with positive and strong correlation (p value 0,0001, CI 95%, r: 0,649, OR : 7,86). The result was described in table 2.

Table 2  
Anxiety and aggressive behavior in adolescents (n=594 respondents)

Variables	Mean ; SD	P value
Anxiety	11,81 ; 7,12	0,0001
Aggressive behavior	78,79 ; 14,68	

## DISCUSSIONS

### Characteristics of adolescent

The research indicated that the total of female students were dominate in the school. Gender is at risk of 1.3 times influencing aggressive behavior (OR: 1.3). Female shows more delicate psychological and EEG responses to threats than male. The previous study indicate that there was no significant differences between female and male in indirect aggressive behavior (Im et al., 2018). But it is contrary with the other result of the study that female is more aggressive indirectly or verbally than male, while male is more aggressive physically (Alizamar et al., 2018). High level of aggression experienced more in female than male (Nahida Shaban & Dr. Pardeep Kumar, 2016).

The research indicate 44.8% respondents as bullying victim with 2.04 times influence the aggressive behavior (OR : 2.04). Adolescent with bullying victim history has high risk on aggressive behavior. Bullying victimization triggered the person to have personality disturbance (Huseynova & Enikolopov, 2014). The adolescent who had bullied had high risk to have emotion dysregulation and tend to be antisocial and uncooperative. The bullied person perceived that some of their negative behavior manifestations affected from bullying as their self protection (Guedj-Bourdau et al., 2021).

A total of 13.3 % respondents had violence victim history. Other study showed the evidence that woman with psychological abuse has higher risk of aggressive behavior than woman without psychological abuse (Pereira et al., 2020). Victimization places adolescent in the higher risk of psychological and behavioral disturbances include aggressive behavior (Gaylord-Harden et al., 2015).

Other risk factors of aggression is family pattern. Negative engagement with family affects to aggressive behavior (Estévez Lópe et al., 2018). The research showed 10.3% respondents had parental divorce history. The parental divorce history is at risk 2.21 times influencing aggressive behavior. The other study explained that negative relationship and family conflict contribute to the aggressive behavior (Jiménez & Estévez, 2017)

Anxiety and aggressive behavior as adolescents' behavioral health problems  
Behavioral problems and some of mental health disruptions most occur in adolescent (Moes, 2021; Nebhinani & Jain, 2019). Behavioral problem is bad actions or some of behaviors which are undesirable by the community and at risk to have mental disorders (Hasan & Husain, 2016; McLafferty et al., 2017; Nebhinani & Jain, 2019). The research showed that 70,9% of adolescents experience anxiety, which is 37,8% in moderate level and 19,7% in extremely severe level. Extremely severe anxiety is a very bad state of anxiety and a high risk of developing panic disorder. Adolescents will experience decreased concentration, narrowing of the perceptual field, and very disturbing physical conditions (Anyan & Hjemdal, 2016). This extremely severe anxiety highly decreases the space of thinking or perception. Individuals only focus on detailed and specific issue. All behavior is only aimed to decreasing tensions. The individual has difficulty to focus on other issues (Videbeck, 2020). The mean score of anxiety is 11.81 (moderate level of anxiety). Moderate level of anxiety is a marker of poor adolescent mental health conditions. The moderate anxiety permits individuals to focus on important issues and rule out the others. This anxiety isolates the space of perception but not as bad as the extremely severe anxiety category.

Behavioral health problems such as aggressive behavior also occur in adolescents. Aggressive behavior is the behavior of a person who causes harm verbally or nonverbally to another person. Aggressive behavior is seen as behavior that disappoints, hinders, inhibits the others. Aggressive behavior contains the meaning of attacking, feeling angry, and hostile actions. The result of this research showed that 79,8% adolescents experienced aggressive, which is 43,7% in moderate level and 18,3% in severe level. The aggressive behavior occurs both verbally, physically, hostility, and anger. Female tend to do verbally aggression while male tend to do non-verbally or physical aggression. But some studies showed that female and male are equally aggressive when received some provocations or attacks from the peer group (Denson et al., 2018; Liu, Jianghong; Lewis, Gary; Evans, 2013)

The main finding of the research is there is relationship between anxiety and aggressive behavior. The research result showed that there's positive and strong relationship between anxiety and aggressive behavior statistically ( p

value 0,0001, CI 95%,  $r : 0,641$  and odd ratio 7.86). Anxiety is at risk 7.86 times influencing aggressive behavior. The result is consistent with previous studies. Previous studies showed a correlation between anxiety and aggression in adolescent. The study showed that higher risk of anxiety was associated with total aggression scores (Chung et al., 2019). Another study showed that there was positive relationship between anxiety and aggression in adult age (Wehde, 2020).

Anxiety had contribution to psychological disturbance and behavioral health problem such as aggressive behavior<sup>3</sup>. Anger and verbal aggression (indirect aggressive behavior) were more closely related with anxiety than physical aggression (Chung et al., 2019). Previous study explained that when adolescents had anxiety, they had attention to social threat that support to aggressive behavior (hostile aspects). Social threat and aversive attribution bias were mediators of anxiety toward aggressive behavior (Waite et al., 2015; Wehde, 2020).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

There was positive and strong association between adolescents' anxiety and aggressive behavior. Adolescents with higher anxiety will have higher aggressive behavior.



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