

Self- esteem and Assertiveness as Mediators of Difficulty in Emotion Regulation and Antisocial Behavior of Youth

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Abstract- The present study analysed the role of Self-esteem and Assertiveness as mediators of Difficulty in Emotion Regulation and Antisocial behavior of Youth. The sample comprised 821 young persons belonging to the age group of 18 to 30 years. Measures used for the study were Self-esteem inventory, Difficulty in Emotion Regulation Scale, Assertiveness Scale and Externalising Behavior Inventory. Mediational analysis revealed that in the combined effect of self-esteem and assertiveness, only assertiveness mediate the relation between Difficulty in Emotion Regulation and antisocial behavior. Assertiveness independently play the role of mediator in the relation between self-esteem and antisocial behavior.

Key words: Difficulty in Emotion Regulation, Self-esteem, Assertiveness

Consequences of Youth violence and related activities presently pose a major health problem for society. Antisocial behavior among youth persists as a significant threat to the wellbeing of society. Identifying the determinants of Antisocial behavior remains a priority. Antisocial behavior is defined as the behavior resulting from an individual's inability to respect the rights of others(Gaik, Abdullah & Uli,2020). These behaviors include assault, vandalism, setting fires, theft, crimes and other delinquent acts which conform to social norms. Empirical association between Difficulty in Emotion regulation and antisocial behavior has been revealed in many studies. Emotion regulation represents an important milestone in the development of youth. Kostiuk and Fouts(2002) suggests that poor emotion regulation affects the quality of life of individuals. Difficulty in emotion regulation occurs when the individual is unable to effectively use strategies to regulate intense or overwhelming emotions experienced and as a result has implications for mental health including prolonged mental illness.

Research findings indicate that 9-12% of adolescents suffer from emotional dysregulation

which affects daily functioning (Egger and Angold,2006). This aspect affects almost one fourth of the youth population(Sawyer et al.,2000; Egger and Angold,2006).Stable self-esteem reflects positive attitude towards self that are realistic, well anchored, and resistant to threat.

Studies have identified self-esteem as an important determinant of emotional wellbeing(Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs. 2003;Peterson & Steen,2002). Self-esteem serves as a protective factor, mediator, moderator for emotional wellbeing or difficulties.(Renata, Florenzo, Flaminia and Valentina, 2012;). Self-esteem is the attitude that a person has towards himself or herself.

Assertiveness also play a significant role in the antisocial behavior. Assertiveness involves acting in your best by expressing one's thoughts and feelings directly and honestly(Bower & Bower,2004; Alberti & Emmons, 2001). Rimm and Masters (1979) define assertive behavior as a socially appropriate interpersonal behavior involving honest and straight forward expression of thoughts and feelings. Alberti and Emmons suggest that assertive behavior foster high self-esteem, satisfactory interpersonal relationship and effective conflict management. Self-assertiveness equips people to have a real and honest behavior in dealing with the phenomena surrounding them. Various researchers have emphasized the effectiveness of assertive training in reducing the aggressive behavior of youth and preventing adolescents from abusing drugs.

There is growing need to incorporate assertiveness and self-esteem into prevention and intervention programs to reduce the antisocial behavior. The present study aims to analyse the role of assertiveness and self-esteem as mediators of difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior of youth.

METHOD

Participants of the study comprised of 821 young people from different parts of Kerala whose age

range from 18 to 30 years. Participants are selected through simple random sampling method.

TOOLS

Assertiveness Scale (AS)

Assertiveness scale is developed by Divya and Manikandan(2012). This scale measures the assertiveness of the participants. The scale consists of 14 items. Responses of the items were elicited in terms of five-point Likert Scale such as 'Strongly Agree', 'Agree', 'Neutral', 'Disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. The participants could mark responses for each item by putting a tick mark in corresponding space for each item. The reliability of the scale was established by calculating the Cronbach Alpha which is 0.77. The maximum and minimum scores of this scale is 70 and 14 respectively. This scale also has face validity.

Self-esteem Inventory (SE)

Self-esteem inventory developed by Sam Sananda Raj and Immanuel Thomas (1985) is a five-point interval scale consisting of 20 self-evaluative or descriptive statements (10 positive statements and 10 negative statements) from wide variety of behavioral domains including academic, social, physical and emotional aspects. Higher scores on this scale indicate high self-esteem and lower score denotes low self-esteem. Split-half reliability of this scale is 0.95 and test- retest reliability is 0.90 significant at .01 levels. The content validity correlation coefficient of this scale is 0.41 significant at 0.01 level. The maximum and minimum score obtained in this scale is 100 and 20 respectively.

Difficulty in Regulating Emotions Scale(DERS)

This scale is developed by Gratz and Roemer(2004). The difficulty in Regulating Emotions scale is a self-reported questionnaire that assesses clinically relevant difficulties in ER with a particular emphasis on negative emotions. This scale has six dimensions such as lack of awareness of emotional responses, lack of clarity of emotional responses, nonacceptance of emotional responses, limited access to emotion regulation strategies perceived as effective, difficulties in controlling impulses when experiencing negative emotions and difficulties engaging in goal directed behavior when experiencing negative emotions. This scale has found to be good test-retest reliability which is .88. Support for the construct and predictive validity have also been found.

Externalizing Behavior Inventory(EBI)

Externalizing Behavior Inventory is developed by Sinto and Jayan (2015). The inventory measures the externalizing behaviors through eight dimensions- Rule breaking, Anger, Aggression, Hyperactivity, Impulsivity, Substance abuse, Sexual risk behavior and Antisocial behavior. Here the investigator adopted the antisocial behavior subscale of Externalising Behavior Inventory for the present study. The subscale comprised 8 items which measure the antisocial behavior. The reliability and criterion related validity of the externalizing behavior inventory are 0.75 and 0.365 respectively.

Procedure

Participants of the study were given a brief introduction about the purpose of the study. Informed consent was taken and confidentiality was assured in the study. Self-esteem inventory, Assertiveness scale, DERS scale and Antisocial behavior subscale of the Externalising behavior inventory were printed in a booklet and given to the participants. The investigator asked the respondents to go through the booklet and clarified their doubts before filling these questionnaires. Response sheets collected were checked and incomplete ones were omitted.

Statistical Analysis

In order to find out the role of mediation effect, mediational analysis was done. A mediation model is one that seeks to identify and explicate the mechanisms or process that underlines an observed relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable via the inclusion of a third hypothetical variable, known as a mediator variable(also a mediating variable, intermediary variable, or intervening variable). Rather than a direct causal relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, a mediation model proposes that the independent variable influences the mediator variable, which in turn influences the dependent variable. Thus, the mediator variable serves to clarify the nature of the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In order to examine the role of assertiveness and self-esteem as mediators of difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior, mediational analysis was carried out. The study examined the mediator effects of assertiveness on antisocial behavior and also the mediator effects of self-esteem

on antisocial behavior. The study also analysed the combined effect of assertiveness and self-esteem on antisocial behavior.

The details of the result of the mediational analysis are explained below.

The mediator effect of assertiveness on difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior is

Table 1: Analysis of mediator effect of assertiveness on difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior.

DER-AS-ATS	Value	Se	T	P
a=bx	-0.1222	0.0140	-8.7280	0.0000
b=byx	-0.0485	0.0139	-3.4796	0.0005
c=byx	0.0274	0.0056	4.8793	0.0000
c'=byx.m	0.0215	0.0058	3.6836	0.0002
Indirect effect	0.0059	0.0018	3.2410	0.0003
Sobel test			3.2399	0.0012

From the table, it is revealed that the corresponding p values of all the coefficient values and the test statistic for the Sobel test(3.2399) fall below the established alpha level of .05. This suggests that the relation between Difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior is mediated by assertiveness. More over, the c' value is less than c value which also indicate that difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior is mediated by assertiveness. Even though the difficulty in emotion

examined through mediational analysis. The result of the analysis is given below. Table 1 indicates the analysis of mediator effect of assertiveness on difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior.

regulation leads to antisocial behavior as revealed by many research findings, the above findings support the idea that the presence of assertiveness reduces the strength of relation between difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior. Figure No: 1 depicts the path diagram showing the mediator effect of assertiveness on the relation between difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior.

Figure No-1: Path diagram showing the mediator effect of assertiveness on the relation between difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior.

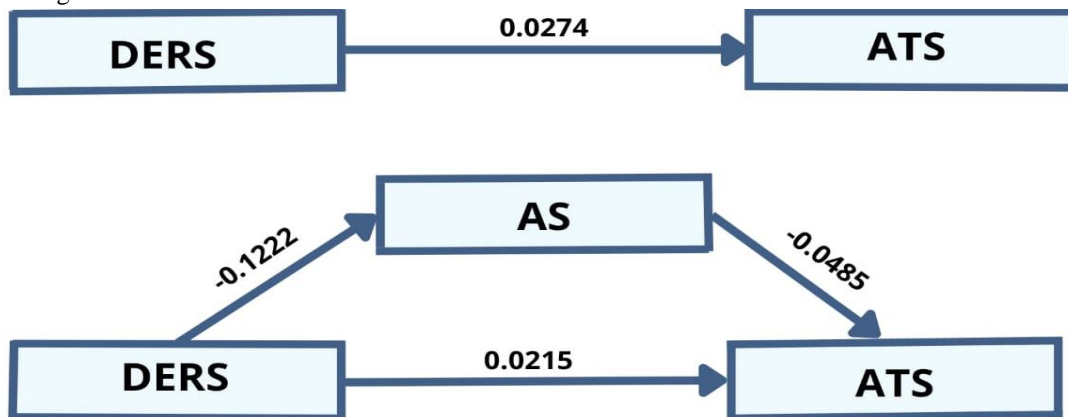


Table 2: Analysis of mediator effect of self-esteem on difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior

DER-SE-ATS	Value	Se	T	P
a=bx	-0.1810	0.0165	-10.9950	0.0000
b=byx	0.0211	0.0060	3.5204	0.0790
c=byx	0.0274	0.0056	4.8793	0.0000
c'=byx.m	0.0211	0.0060	3.5204	0.0005
Indirect effect	0.0063	0.0022	2.8324	0.0046
Sobel test			-3.3488	0.0008

Table 2 explains the analysis of mediator effect of self-esteem on difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior. Since the coefficient value of 'b' is not significant, we can say that self-esteem do not

mediate difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior.

In order to find out the combined effect of assertiveness and self-esteem on difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior,

mediational analysis is carried out. Here the independent variable is difficulty in emotion regulation and the dependent variable is antisocial behavior. Mediators are assertiveness and self-

esteem. Table 3 shows the analysis of mediator effect of assertiveness and self-esteem on difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior.

Table 3: Analysis of the mediator effect of assertiveness and self-esteem on difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior.

Path/ Relation	Variable	Coefficient value	se	t	P
IV to mediators)a path)	SE	-.1810	.0165	-10.9950	.0000
	AS	-.1222	.0140	-8.7280	.0000
Mediators to DV(b path)	SE	-.0169	.0144	-1.1714	.2418
	AS	-.0371	.0170	-2.1866	.0291
Total effect of IV on DV(c path)	DERS	.0274	.0056	4.8793	.0000
Direct effect of IV on DV(c' path)	DERS	.0198	.0060	3.3005	.0000

It is evident from the Table 3 that the relation of difficulty in emotion regulation to assertiveness and self-esteem are significant. While discussing the relation of mediators(Assertiveness and Self-esteem) on the dependent variable (antisocial behavior), it can be seen that the relation of self-esteem to antisocial behavior is not significant. But

the the relation of assertiveness to antisocial behavior is significant. The total effect of independent variable on the dependent variable is significant and the direct effect of independent variable on the dependent variable is also significant. Moreover, c' value is less than c value.

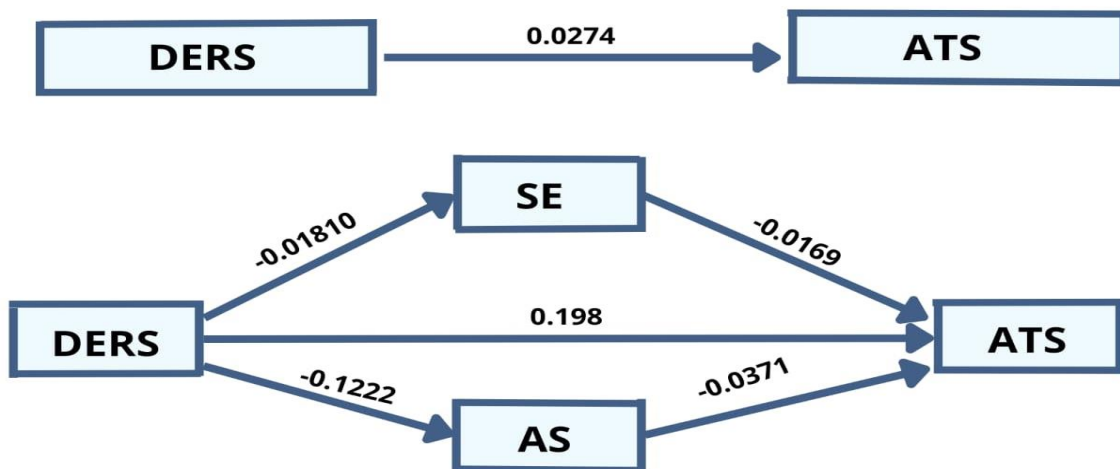
Table 4: Indirect effects of IV on DV through proposed mediators(ab path)

Variable	Effect	Se	t	P
Total	.0076	.0023	3.2600	.0011
SE	.0031	.0026	1.1669	.2433
AS	.0045	.0021	2.1248	.0336

Table 4 explains the indirect effects of independent variable(difficulty in emotion regulation) on dependent variable(antisocial behavior) through proposed mediators. While observing the combined effects of assertiveness and self-esteem on difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior, the indirect effect of self-esteem is not significant, whereas the indirect effect of assertiveness is

significant. It can be inferred from the above finding that, in the combined effect of assertiveness and self-esteem, only assertiveness mediates the relation between difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior. Figure No:2 depicts the path diagram showing the mediator effect of assertiveness and self-esteem on difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior.

Figure No-2: Path diagram showing the mediator effect of assertiveness and self-esteem on difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior.



Findings of the study indicate that even though the difficulty in emotion regulation leads to antisocial behavior, the influence of assertiveness can weaken

this relationship. That is , the presence of assertiveness as mediator significantly reduces the strength of relation between emotional

dysregulation and antisocial behavior. The possible role could be explained by the fact that the assertiveness mediate the maladaptive pattern by altering the individual's cognitive processes, such that individuals are able to reframe and reinterpret situations thereby lessening the relation between emotional dysregulation and antisocial behavior.

As revealed in the present study, the role of assertiveness in the antisocial behavior is consistent with many studies. Lazarus (2005) stated that behavioral practitioners can incorporate into their treatment plans any techniques that can be demonstrated to effectively change behavior. According to Lo, Loe and Cartledge (2002), one important way to intervene with children and youth who either are at risk to engage in antisocial acts or already have displayed such behaviors is to offer them structured social skills training. Lo, Loe and Cartledge found moderate reduction in antisocial behaviors during small group social skills instruction.

Aronson, Schames and Bernard(2001) pointed out that most violence reduction programs are conceptualized as social skills, aggression management and or conflict resolution. Bemak and Keys(2000) emphasized that teaching problem solving skills is one of the main determinants that assign the effectiveness of prevention programs. These programs are focused on training for multiple skills including problem solving, anger management, conflict resolution, verbal and nonverbal communications and assertiveness.

Sukhodolsky, Kassinove, and Gorman (2004) found that skills training and multicomponent treatment were effective in reducing violent behaviors and improving social interactions.

CONCLUSION

The study focused on analysing the role of self-esteem and assertiveness as mediators of difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior. Assertiveness is found to be playing the role of the mediator in the relationship between difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior. Self-esteem was not found to be a mediator in the relationship between difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior. It is also revealed that in the combined effect of self-esteem and assertiveness on the relationship between difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior, only assertiveness plays the mediator role.

The present research provides an insight to identify the importance of the mediating mechanisms that could explain the association between difficulty in emotion regulation and antisocial behavior.

LIMITATIONS

Self-report questionnaires were used for the present study which may be subjected to bias and its accuracy cannot be verified.

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