

Self-Attitude and Socialised Aggressive Conduct Disorder Among Adolescents

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Abstract - Children with conduct disorder (CD) comprise a considerable proportion of the work of mental health professionals due to the significant disrupts caused by these behaviours at school and home. CD in childhood is associated with long term negative consequences including development of antisocial and criminal behaviours in later life. Among the multiple categorisations of CD, Socialised Aggressive Conduct Disorders (SACD) is frequently reported among adolescents and particularly troubling area for parents and teachers. With the development of autonomy and identity with advanced cognitive abilities, significant self-conceptions become more complex, differentiated and structured during adolescence. Nevertheless self-attitude forms the cognitive foundation for constructing the identity of an individual, it is reported that the most significant changes and a more accurate expression of self-concept occur in adolescence. It is imperative to note that different individual mechanisms also place a child at risk and affect the normative course of development, of which significant observations underscored the influence of adolescent self-attitude on the onset and prevalence of maladaptive emotional and behavioural problem behaviours. Through the present study the researcher examined the adolescent attitude towards self and Socialised Aggressive Conduct Disorders. The present study conducted on a sample of 380 adolescents, established the relationship between adolescent's attitude towards self and SACD. The theoretical and practical implications of the findings substantiate the practical/empirical knowledge to parents and educators about the necessity of ensuring an environment that could mould and enhance adolescent's attitude towards self in a more positive manner.

Keywords: Self-attitude, Self-esteem, Socialised Aggressive Conduct Disorder, Adolescents

I. INTRODUCTION

Young people constitute one of the precious resources of any country. India is home to about 243 million adolescents and occupies 22% of Indian population, which means about one fifth of India's population is in the adolescent age group of 10 -19 years. According to UNICEF, there are more adolescents in India than in any other country (UNICEF, 2012). As they form an important segment, there is call for focused attention with regard to health and social well-being. With the growing realization that investing in adolescents yield more intellectual and economic dividends for the country, Government of India has launched several comprehensive programs aiming to enable the adolescents to make informed and responsible decisions related to their

health and well-being. Similarly a global reflection also observed in acknowledging the contributions of this group. For the first time, adolescents were added to the core of United Nation's Global Strategy for the period of 2016-2030. This report illustrates not only the unique health challenges faced by young people, but also their critical role as key drivers of change in the post -2015 era.

Despite, adolescents continue to face a number of vulnerabilities and challenges that the same India has the poorest records in this population's health and education (Report Condition of Adolescents in India, 2011). The morbidity and mortality among adolescents have increased considerably in recent years. The prevalence of overall psychiatric morbidity (depression, conduct disorder, social anxiety, and panic disorder) among adolescents has varied from 12 to 16.5 per cent (Anita, Gaur, Vohra, Subash & Khurana, 2008). These reveal the gap between planning and implementation of youth development programs at various phases as well as its effectiveness. However, acknowledging the significance of this group and considering the prevailing critical situations, researchers and behaviourists in India are engaged extensively in conducting researches in child and adolescent psychiatry.

Adolescence is supposed to be one of the best years of one's life and considered to be a crucial phase in an individual's life span. Being a period of transition, adolescence is marked with tremendous physiological, emotional and psychological changes. It is during this phase that adolescents strive for individuation and experiences 'identity crisis' (Erickson, 1959). Subsequently such cognitive gains and transformations tend to have a significant impact on development of 'self' during adolescence (Miyamoto *et al.*, 2000). Furthermore, adolescents engage in complex, abstract and psychological self-categorization during this phase and self-concept plays an important role in critical adolescent years (Bharathi & Sreedevi, 2016). While attending the adolescent's problems of self-identity, researchers investigating the developmental dynamics of self-concept of adolescents argued that an individual's conception of self in relation to others is a variable of psychological importance, influencing both the present behaviour and decisions about future (Ishak, Jamaluddin & Chew, 2010). Development and changes in self-conceptualization is thus, commented by their family

members, relatives, peers, and teachers who in turn shape their thinking about their own self either positively or negatively (Pathan, 2010).

A considerable body of researches has implied the necessity of studying influence of adolescent self and its concomitants so as to further our understanding about the problems of adolescents in a better way. However, disagreements over theoretical and practical conceptualization of 'self' still remain among the researchers (Craven & Marsh, 2008; O'Mara, Marsh, Craven, & Debus, 2006; Rosenberg, 1964). The fundamental challenge to study the real nature of 'self' of individuals across the globe with respect to socio-cultural conditioning, is the multidimensional composition of socio-cultural fabric of society that shapes individual self and social consciousness. The pluralistic nature of Indian society has never been so easy to be comprehended by sociologists and psychologists. The social consciousness of Indian terrain demands social conformity to the conventional behaviour pattern constructed through social interactions. Every collectivist society, India in particular, is characterised by the greater acceptance to non-deviant behaviour, delineated in the social consciousness and individual self in the form of cultural norms.

However, wide consensuses subsist among researchers over the consequences of self-conception, both positive and negative, on the individual's emotional and behavioural outcomes. Of which researchers largely emphasized upon the adolescent negative conception and its consequences. The early classic studies of Kaplan (1975, 1976, 1978), who proposed the 'esteem-enhancement model', extensively analysed the dynamic relationship between self-attitude and delinquency, demonstrated empirically that negative self-attitude motivate adolescents to adopt deviant behaviour and that their self-attitudes are improved as a result. A sizable number of studies specifically analysed and substantiated the link between negative self-conception and particular patterns of deviant responses among adolescents including cheating (Blachnio & Weremko, 2011); dishonesty (Mazar, Amir & Ariely, 2011); alcoholism (Maney, 1990); depression and suicidal tendencies (Harter, 1993), and impulsivity and aggression towards peers (Garaigordobil, Pérez, & Mozaz, 2008) whereas several other researchers generated a wide variety of explanations to contradict the link of poor self-regard with deviance (e.g., Rudman, 2004; Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2003; Wells & Rankin, 1983). Thus self-conception and deviance remain implicit and ambiguous in most accounts. However these reports cannot be generalised or accepted as adequate support for the relationship owing to differences in culture, social norms, values of the respective societies in which the person belongs to. More studies are required in this regard with a wider perspective so as to address and deal effectively with adolescent problem behaviours.

The present paper aims to understand the relationship between self-attitude and socialized aggressive conduct disorder among adolescents. Socialized aggressive conduct

disorder is a narrow-band dimension of externalising behaviours identified and classified by Quay (1986). Major characteristics of Socialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder (SACD) include "bad" companions, truancy from home and school, gang membership, steals at home (with others), lies and cheats, stays out late at night and loyalty to delinquent friends. Unlike several deviant behaviours explored in the literature so far, SACD is unique for its essential feature of engaging in such acts as a way of maintaining social acceptance within a deviant or antisocial peer group. Though there a number of studies found on adolescent deviant responses of different types, hardly any reports on the link between adolescent socialized aggressive conduct disorder and self-conception.

II. METHOD

A. Sample and Procedure

Participants of the study consisted of randomly selected 380 adolescents from Central Kerala, India. The study adopted a mixed approach including both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect required data. Standardised questionnaires were used to obtain data on self-attitude and socialised aggressive conduct disorder in general and later interviews were conducted with some participants.

B. Instruments and Measures

Externalising Behaviour Inventory (EBI): EBI is a 40 item scale developed by Lima and Sylaja (2018). Socialised aggressive conduct disorder was assessed using the measures obtained from the subscale (items 29 to 40) of externalising behaviour inventory. Statements like *I wander in restricted areas, I engage in petty thefts, I am associated with deviant peers* etc. were included in the inventory. It is a standardised tool anchored on a 5 point scale (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often and Always) with high validity and reliability.

Mental Health Scale (MHS): MHS is a 72 item scale developed by Gireesan and Sam Sananda Raj (1988). Self-attitude was assessed using the measures obtained from the subscale (items 1 to 12) of mental health Scale. Statements like *I have difficulty completing an activity, I lack self-control, I am an unstable person* etc. were included in the inventory. It is a standardised tool anchored on a 5 point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree) with high validity and reliability.

Method: Semi structured interviews were also conducted with participants in order to get an in-depth understanding of the study variables.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With the development of autonomy and individuation with advanced cognitive abilities, significant self-conceptions become more complex, differentiated and structured during

the transition phase of adolescents. Significant observations underscored the influence of adolescent self-attitude with the onset and prevalence of maladaptive emotional and behavioural problems. In the present study, in order to find out the relationship between self-attitude and socialised aggressive conduct disorder, Pearson's correlation analysis was performed. The results are demonstrated in Table I.

TABLE I THE COEFFICIENT OF CORRELATION OBTAINED BETWEEN SELF-ATTITUDE AND SOCIALISED AGGRESSIVE CONDUCT DISORDER (N=380)

		Self-attitude	SACD
Self-attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	-.709**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	380	380
SACD	Pearson Correlation	-.709**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	380	380

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table I shows that high substantial correlation ($r = -0.71$) exists between self-attitude and socialised aggressive conduct disorder among adolescents. Besides that, the negative sign indicates the direction of the mutual relationship between variables, indicating that as self-attitude decreases socialised aggressive conduct disorder increases and vice versa. In other words, negative self-attitude significantly increases the probability of deviant responses. The findings of the present study support the early classic studies conducted on self and deviance (Blachnio & Weremko, 2011; Mazar, *et al.*, 2011; Garaigordobil *et al.*, 2008; Maney, 1990; Harter, 1993; Kaplan, 1975, 1976, 1978). Attitude towards self is a significant determinant of a person's success in his/her personal, family, professional and social life. Self-attitude, either positive or negative, influences the emotional and behavioural outcomes of a person and self-concept plays a significant role especially during the critical adolescent period (Bharathi & Sreedevi, 2016).

Individuals with positive self-attitude possess high confidence, self-reliant, optimistic, patient and humble. They have remarkably high expectations of themselves and others whereas a person acting from negative state of mind may behave in unfair ways and fail in all spheres of life. Negative self-attitude is detrimental to an individual's psychological and emotional well-being (Kaplan, 1978). Those adolescents having high negative self-attitude more likely to engage in a variety of deviant responses such as truancy from home and school, gang membership, loyalty to delinquent friends etc. All these behaviours adversely affect the social and psychological well-being and crucial in the onset and development of several psychological disorders as well. The significant association found between self-attitude and Socialised aggressive conduct disorder suggests the necessity of ensuring an environment that nurture positive self-regard among adolescents.

Self-concept may be considered as a central element in shaping the personality of an individual. Thus the development of a normal personality is anchored to the development, and maintenance of a high positive attitude towards self. After establishing and understanding the nature of relationship between self-attitude and socialised aggressive conduct disorder, the investigator decided to explore more about the causal schema of the relationship by conducting interviews participants. It was widely observed that participants expressed their self-evaluation mainly in terms of one's sense of self-esteem. Participants either perceive themselves as having high self-esteem or low self-esteem.

However majority of the participants wish to think well about themselves and avoid negative self-conceptions. This makes them to perceive and react to situations in a way as to maintain positive evaluations of their self. Adolescents tend to adopt different ways to confront the feelings of low self-regard. In this context, low self-esteem acts as a 'drive mechanism' that motivates the individual to engage in deviant activities with the desire to enhance their self-regard. The present findings are consistent with the "Esteem enhancement" model of Kaplan (1975), which explains the self-esteem-delinquency causal paradigm. The study further revealed the function of family, teachers and significant others, as sources which serves as opportunities for maintaining self-esteem. However, those adolescents who are deprived of such conventional social events found to be less motivated to adhere and follow accepted values and activities which are normally expected. Besides that, adolescents reported about engaging in aggressive activities as a means of showing their disagreements and conflicts with concerned others.

For instance, deviant patterns of behaviours such as truancy, purposefully associating with bad companions, stealing, and late night hang outs are committed with the intention to express their resentment and conflicts towards significant others. As noted earlier, the behavioural problems comprising SACD are exhibited as a way of maintaining social acceptance within a deviant or antisocial peer group. Social acceptance is a basic human need and it becomes highly significant, especially during adolescence.

Acceptance in social and peer groups are considered so valuable, as it provides a sense of worth and significance in them. Adolescents who find themselves deprived of social acceptance and denial from significant others tend to feel more empathetic and genuine towards those peers who belong to the gangs actively engaged in deviant and unconventional behaviours. They enjoy the gang membership in all possible ways; identify themselves with the gang members; and feel more loyalty to delinquent friends for accepting them as they are. Thus in order to enhance the self-regard and meet the desire to get accepted in peer groups of their choice, adolescents tend to engage in deviant behaviours of various kinds.

IV. CONCLUSION

Theories in psychology and sociology depicted 'self' as a key intervening event which conditions and lead the individual to engage in deviant activities. The present study established close association between self-attitude and socialised aggressive conduct disorder among adolescents and found that negative self-regard predispose adolescents to seek alternate ways such as criminal, unconventional and deviant behaviours, as a source of positive self-evaluation. The study demonstrated empirically that negative self-attitude motivates adolescents to adopt deviant behaviour and that subsequently their self-attitudes are improved. The practical implications of the findings cover all significant domains of adolescent social interaction. The findings underscore the importance of providing conducive family environment that ensures positive self-conception in their children. The study also provides insight to teachers and educationalists about their influential role in shaping adolescent's attitude towards self. It also highlights the necessity of providing regular workshops and training sessions on self and personality development for children at schools along with their regular academic endeavours. The findings also help psychologists and therapists while designing intervention programmes for children with conduct disorders. Therefore, building positive self-attitude and confidence among adolescents is one of the most important tasks of parents, teachers and significant others not only for academic as well as personal competence but also to lessen the likelihood of various maladaptive behavioural and emotional problems of adolescents.

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