

## **SOCIAL UNDERMINING AND AGGRESSION OF ADOLESCENTS**

BIPLOB KUMAR DEY\*, ABDUR RAHMAN, MST. SABIHA SULTANA AND  
MD. REZUANUL HAQUE

Department of Psychology, University of Chittagong, Chittagong-4331, Bangladesh

### **ABSTRACT**

The importance of understanding adolescent to make a productive citizen who can contribute for his/her family, society, overall the country, has been recognized by psychologists. The present study focused on social undermining and aggression of adolescents according to the types of adolescents and levels of education. Among the 144 adolescents (student respondents) included in this study 72 were orphan and 72 were non-orphan adolescents (each group constituted 36 secondary students and 36 college students). Bangla version of the Social Undermining Scale (Ilyas and Hossain 2007) and Bangla version of the Measure of Aggressive Behavior (MAB) scale (Rahman 2003) were used to measure social undermining and aggressive behavior of adolescents, respectively. The social undermining score clearly indicated that orphan adolescents were significantly of more social undermining ( $t = 5.32, df = 142, p < .05$ ) over non-orphan adolescents. However there was no significant difference between secondary and college adolescents. On the other hand, orphan adolescents had significantly more aggression ( $t = 4.17, df = 142, p < .05$ ) over non-orphan adolescents and secondary adolescent students had significantly more aggression ( $t = 3.47, df = 142, p < .05$ ) than college adolescent students. Furtherore, the social undermining was positively correlated with aggression ( $r = .19, p < .05$ ).

**Key Words:** *Adolescent, Social Undermining, Aggression*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The idea of adolescence being a period of ‘storm and stress’, a perspective which was pioneer by Hall (1904) and supported by the psychoanalytic belief (Freud 1958). Erikson (1968) defined adolescence as a time of identity crisis, the well-liked definition for most of the 20th century. In this view, adolescence is characterized as an inevitably turbulent process accompanied by negative moods, a problematic relationship with parents and risky behavior, including delinquency. It can be a moment of turmoil where physiological changes by the pubertal

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\* Corresponding author: biplob\_psy@cu.ac.bd

activation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–gonadal (HPG) axis are accompanied with changes in social, cognitive and emotional behavior (Dekovic and Buist 2004; Goossens 2006). Adolescence is the period of life from late childhood and age 13-15 and 15-20 are being considered as early adolescence, late adolescence, respectively (Sarafino and Armstrong 1980). However, in accordance with WHO (2017) adolescence is the period of life from 10 to 19.

Adolescents are assets for a country. In developing countries like Bangladesh, orphan adolescents face many difficulties. The word orphan came from the Greek word *Orfanos*, meaning a child whose parents are dead or have abandoned them permanently; the orphans are those lost one or both parents, and are of <18 years of age and are residing in an institution. On the other hand, non-orphan adolescents are those under the caring and nurturing from the parents and family; non-orphan adolescents are those who are reared by their parents or other family member in own homes.

Adolescence is a period of turmoil in where different types of situations influence his/her behavior, mainly the social undermining and aggression. Social undermining is the expression of negative emotions directed towards a particular person or negative evaluations of the person as a way to prevent the person from achieving his/her goals. This behavior can often attribute to certain feelings, such as dislike or anger. The negative evaluation of the person may involve criticizing his/her actions, efforts or characteristics. According to Duffy, Ganster, and Pagon (2002) the definition of social undermining in a workplace is a behavior intended to hinder over time and not allowing a person to establish or maintain positive interpersonal relationships.

Aggression as psychological phenomenon stems from deliberate intention of harming another person. It is an action which is visible in overt behavior. It is therefore clear that aggression is constituted of three elements, the intention, action tendency and actual harm committed to another person (Berkowitz 1981). Aggression can take a variety of forms and can be physical or be communicated verbally or non-verbally. Aggressive behavior is central to most theories of human behavior. According to Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (1939) aggression is defined as any sequence of behavior which is directed towards a person to commit intentional injury.

To behavioral and emotional problems between institutionalized (orphan) and non institutionalized (non-orphan) adolescents indicated that most of the orphan adolescents are defensive, unwilling to making friends, sometimes telling lies, feeling undermining, crying, shouting, aggressive, screaming, stealing, sometimes biting or pinching others and throwing things at others (Elebiary, Sahar, Behilak,

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and Kabbash 2010). The study also revealed that orphan adolescents showed more hyperactivity, withdrawal, aggressiveness, and disobedience than non-orphan adolescents. A detail investigation on maltreatment experiences as predictors of social undermining and psychiatric morbidity among orphan adolescents (Devi, Sharma, and Shekhar 2015) showed high experiences of maltreatments were positively correlated with high levels of psychiatric morbidity and low social undermining among non-orphan adolescents compared to orphan adolescents. Male orphan adolescents were found to be high on physical abuse and neglected compared to female orphan adolescents. According to Vinokur and Ryn (1993) social supports and undermining were shown in longitudinal design even when prior levels of mental health and the contribution of another critical stressful factor. Social support and undermining had a dynamic pattern influence on mental health of male and female adolescents.

Nichols *et al.*, (2014) revealed that non-orphan adolescents experienced more physical and sexual abuse than orphan adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) which lead them towards poor self-concept, undermining and aggression. On the other hand, aggressive behavior of orphan children in child development centers in western province of Sri Lanka clearly indicated that the loneliness stimulates the development of aggression among most orphan children placed in orphanages (Pasqual 2013). In addition, institutionalized young children and adolescents were found vulnerable to several forms of abuse (Saboula, Hussien, and El-Refae 2015). Lack of quality of services provided in institutions was the main source of abuse. They also reported that orphan adolescents are exposed to physical and psychological abuse. A large number of researches have revealed a significant negative correlation between video game and academic achievement and a positive correlation between video game and aggression in children and adolescents. Those students who play violent video game, they are more aggressive and their academic achievements are poor. These phenomena are more among school students than college students (Harris and Wiliams 1985; Creasey and Myers 1986; Lieberman, Chaffee, and Roberts 1988; Roberts, Foehr, Rideout and Brodie 1999).

The mental health of adolescents is a worldwide disquiet. This population, especially orphan adolescent has been shown to be particularly prone to loneliness, dissociability and aggressive behavior due to factors that include academic pressures, obstacles towards their goal achievement and physical growth which may influence their life, and temper. To this end, they may become ill-tempered and desperate. Sometimes, orphan and non-orphan adolescents may

fall down from their mainstream because of aggression, social undermining, loneliness and lack of social support. It is threatening to their mental and social health, life style, self-esteem, self confidence, academic achievement and developmental period. Sometimes, adolescents engage with drug addiction or anti social activities which are not anticipated in our society.

Adolescents are the paramount resources of our country. It will be impossible to build a stunning nation without a healthy young generation. So, social undermining and aggression of orphan and non-orphan adolescents should be a priority from national and international human resource development viewpoints. Therefore, determination of social undermining and aggressive behavior of adolescents are indeed needed for the development of interventions for the wellbeing of adolescents and the nation. Unfortunately, very a few reports are available from Bangladesh perspective. In this study, we aimed at exploring the social undermining and aggression of adolescents as a functions of types of adolescents (orphan-non-orphan) and levels of education in Chittagong, Bangladesh.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### *Sample Collection:*

For the present study, two-stages sampling procedure was used. These were-

*Orphanage Home and Areas Selection:* Study areas, namely Hathazari College, Foteabad College, Hathazari High School, Fotepur High School, Jobra High School, Hathazari Yatimkhana, Al-Huda Mahila Yatimkhana, Modon Fokir Hefzokhana and Yatimkhana, Kodom Mubarak Muslim Yatimkhana etc. The residential areas included were Mirerhat, Hathazari, Foteabad, Fotepur, Jobra, Andorkilla etc. of district Chittagong, Bangladesh.

*Respondents Selection:* The present study included 44 adolescent respondents of age 10-18 years selected conveniently from the above mentioned study sites. Among them 72 were orphan and 72 were non-orphan adolescents (in both groups, 36 were secondary and 36 were college student respondents) where all 144 respondents were literate with different levels of education.

### *Measuring Instruments*

In the present research the following two questionnaires were used. These are:

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### *Social Undermining Scale*

The Bangla version (Ilyas and Hossain 2007) of the social undermining scale developed by Abbey, Abramis, and Caplan (1985) was used to measure social undermining behaviors. The social undermining items represent actions that directly undermine and diminish the sense of self-worth supportive behaviors reinforce. Undermine items require the respondent to rate the amount of undermining behavior that is directed toward them by their spouse, or if married, by a person they see at least once a week and feel closest to (the significant others). The scale consisted of 5 items, each item having 5 response alternatives ranged from 1 ('not at all') to 5 ('a great deal'). The sum of scores of all items was the total score of the scale for an individual, i.e, a scale ranges 5-25 with higher score indicates high social undermining. The Cronbach alpha coefficients for the English version social undermining items ranged from .84 to .86; convergent validity was .81 and criterion-related validity was .83 which was significant at  $p < .001$  (Vinokur and Ryn 1993). Items of the scale were translated into Bangla. Then both English and Bangla versions were given to six judges (expert in both English and Bangla) for examining whether corresponding items of both the versions convey the same meaning. Some changes in items of Bangla version were made according to suggestions of judges. Then the English and Bangla version of the questionnaire was administered to 20 participants with a gap of two weeks. Significant correlation ( $r_{18} = .87, p < .01$ ) between the scores of English and Bangla version questionnaires indicated translation reliability of the scale (Ilyas and Hossain 2007). Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha = .75$ ) of Bangla version scale indicated internal consistency of the scale (Ilyas and Hossain 2007).

### *Aggressive Behavior Scale*

Bangla version (Rahman 2003) of Aggressive Behavior (MAB) (Buss and Perry 1992) was used to measure aggression. It contains 25 items for data collection under five dimensions, including physical aggression (5 items), verbal aggression (9 items), hostile aggression (5 items), anger aggression (3 items) and indirect aggression (3 items). Hypothetical situations were constructed on each item. Each item was followed by 5 alternatives ranging from totally true to totally false, 'totally true', 'true', 'neutral', 'flase' and 'totally false; were given 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 points, respectively. The Highest Possible Score (HPS) was  $25 \times 5 = 125$  and the Lowest Possible Score (LPS) was  $25 \times 1 = 25$ . Aggressive Behavior Score (ABS) was worked out using the following formula-

$$\text{ABS} = \frac{\text{HPS-LPS}}{2} + \text{LPS} = \frac{125-25}{2} + 25 = 75$$

Hence, a score of  $\geq 75$  was regarded as Aggressive Behavior Score. The correlation coefficient for split-half reliability was found .37, which was found to increase to .54 when Spearman-Brown formula was used. The Measure of Aggressive Behavior was confirmed by validation at several stages. Items were constructed through open-end questionnaire. This indicated the content validity of MAB. Secondly, the scrutiny of each item was done by the judges. This procedure provided face validity for the Measure of Aggressive Behavior.

#### *Design*

A cross-sectional survey research design was followed for conducting the present study:

#### *Procedure*

For collecting relevant data from the participants, first the cosent of the orphanage homes and respondents were taken. Then, respondents were told and explained well about the purpose of the investigation (solely academic purpose) and their response would be kept confidential. Before administration of the questionnaire, necessary rapport was established with respondents. Finally, the social undermining and aggressive behavior questionnaires were administered to respondents and requested for a silent reading at the instructions provided with the scale before starting to answer. They were also requested not to omit any item in the scale and they were encouraged to answer all the items by telling that, there is no right or wrong answer to any item. All possible clarifications were made to the problems whenever faced by the respondents. There was no time limit for the respondents to answer all the items of the scale. After completing of their tasks the answered questionnaires were collected from them and they were given thanks for their sincere co-operation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The purpose of the present research is to see whether there is any relationship between social undermining and aggression between orphan and non-orphan adolescents. Social undermining scale (Ilyas and Hossain 2007) and aggression (Rahman 2003) was used to measure adolescent's social undermining and aggression. Obtained data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, *t*-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (Tables 1-5).

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**TABLE 1: THE SOCIAL UNDERMINING SCORE OF ORPHAN AND NON-ORPHAN ADOLESCENTS.**

Adolescent Types	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
Orphan	72	12.21	2.57	142	5.32*
Non-orphan	72	10.07	2.25		

\* $p < .01$ ; there was a significant difference ( $t = 5.32$ ,  $df = 142$ ,  $p < .05$ ) in social undermining of orphan and non-orphan adolescents.

**TABLE 2: THE SOCIAL UNDERMINING SCORE OF ADOLESCENTS WITH *t* VALUE ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF EDUCATION**

Level of education	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
Secondary Level (Six to Ten)	72	11.01	2.48	142	-.57
College Level (1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> Year)	72	11.26	2.79		

$P > .01$ ; the mean difference in social undermining score of adolescents in secondary and college levels was not found significant ( $t = -.57$ ) at .05 level.

**TABLE 3: THE AGGRESSION SCORE OF ORPHAN AND NON-ORPHAN ADOLESCENTS WITH *t* VALUE**

Adolescent Types	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
Orphan	72	89.26	11.72	142	4.17*
Non-orphan	72	80.97	12.12		

\* $p < .01$ ; there was a significant difference ( $t = 4.17$ ,  $df = 142$ ,  $p < .05$ ) in aggression between orphan and non-orphan adolescents.

**TABLE 4: THE AGGRESSION SCORE OF ADOLESCENTS WITH *t* VALUE ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF EDUCATION**

Level of education	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
Secondary Level (Six to Ten)	72	88.62	11.43	142	3.47*
College Level (1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> Year)	72	81.61	12.77		

\* $P < .01$ ; there was a significant difference ( $t = 3.47$ ,  $df = 142$ ,  $p < .05$ ) in aggression score between secondary and college student adolescents.

**TABLE 5: PEARSON'S CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL UNDERMINING AND AGGRESSION SCORE OF ADOLESCENTS**

Variable	<i>N</i>	Correlation ( <i>r</i> )	Coefficient
Social Undermining Aggression	144	.19*	

*\*Significant at the .05 level (two-tailed); a significant positive correlation ( $r = .19$ ) between social undermining and aggression of orphan and non-orphan of secondary and college adolescents indicated that aggression increases with the increasing social undermining.*

#### *The social undermining of adolescents*

Investigation of the social undermining of adolescents as a function of types of adolescents and level of education suggest that types of adolescent have significant effect on social undermining (Table 1-2). However, there were no significant effects of level of education on social undermining (Tables 2-3) and no significant interaction effect between types of adolescents and level of education. The undermining score orphan adolescents ( $12.21 \pm 2.57$ ) was higher than the score of non-orphan adolescents ( $10.07 \pm 2.25$ ), fully corroborated with previous reports (Elebiary, Sahar, Behilak and Kabbash 2010; Vinokur and Ryn 1993; Lakey 2002 and Devi, Sharma and Shekhar 2015). This is because, orphans are being reared by orphanages, and they are being deprived of love and affection from their parents or families. The major characteristics of orphanage homes are poor care giving and absence of a constant caregiver. The poor orphan who are not able to solve their own problems, the peer pressure, conflict with peers, opposition authority figures, often show insecure, avoidant, or ambivalent attachment to their primary adult caregivers. Due to school demands like administration of time for homework, demand of teachers for good grades, emotional rejection, failure in academic achievement and also due to the fact that because of daily routine was determined by strict rules and schedules by caregivers or supervisors facilitate stress and social undermine among orphans. In contrast, the non-orphan adolescents get more facilities than orphan adolescents. So, orphan adolescents have higher social undermining than non-orphan adolescents.

On the other hand, level of education had no significant effect on adolescents social undermining; both the secondary and college student adolescents have the same or very similar social undermining scores. The findings are contradictory



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with previous findings (Sakalli, Gumus, Oz, and Kirimoglu 2011) who found that adolescents social undermining varies according to education; high school students had more social undermining than college students.

### *The social aggression of adolescents*

The analysis of aggression in adolescents as a function of types of adolescents and level of education suggests that both the types of adolescent and level of education have significant effect on adolescent's aggression (Tables 4-5). However, there is no significant interaction effect between types of adolescents and level of education (Table 5). The orphan adolescent's aggression score ( $M = 89.26$ ,  $SD = 11.72$ ) was higher than the score of non-orphan adolescents ( $M = 80.97$ ,  $SD = 12.12$ ), inline with previous reports (Pasqual 2013; Elebiary, Sahar, Behilak, and Kabbash 2010; Brand, and Conner 2004; Judge 2004; and Saboula, Hussien, and El-refaee 2015) suggesting that institutional upbringing may be associated with increased rates of emotional disturbance including stress, aggression, and depression in childhood. Adolescents in institution care face many difficulties such as poverty, poor physical health, attachment disorder, inadequate social skills, and mental health difficulty. Therefore, institutionalized children are at increased risk for developing emotional and behavioral problems. Several reasons such as lack of quality of services, a threatening situation, and overcrowding place, exposure to physical and psychological abuse, neglect led to experiencing of institutionalized children emotional and behavioral problems internalizing (anxiety, depression) and externalizing (aggression, impulsivity) behavior problems (Brendgen 2002). Therefore, death of parents makes children vulnerable and predisposes them to physical and psychological risks (Gertler and Martinez 2003). The lack of affections from parents and families may led orphan adolescents aggressive in later phase with other conduct problems. Many institutionalized adolescents are insecurely attached with lack of sympathy, may seek behavior in negative ways, exhibit poor self-confidence, show discriminate affection toward adults. Therefore, they become prone to noncompliance, and more aggressive than their non institutionalized adolescents (Makame and Grantham 2002).

On the other hand, secondary students ( $M = 88.63$ ) show more aggression than college school adolescents ( $M = 81.61$ ), as observed and reported previously (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, and Caspi 2005). According to WHO, adolescence begins with age of 10 when most of adolescent enrolled in school, is the period of stress and strife (Rutter, Graham, Chadwick, and Yule 1976). It

creates problem of adjustment, shyness and isolation. At this early stage of life, a student needs to adapt with different situations (internal bodily change, coping with environment, trying to become an adult person) that he/she had not faced before and any failure to do adjustments with such situations may lead to stress and aggression. However college students can adjust better than school student because already they have adjusted with turmoil period.

*The relation between social undermining and aggression behavior*

A significant positive correlation between social undermining and aggressive behavior ( $r = .19, p < .05$ ; Table 5) clearly suggests that adolescents who were more socially undermined were more aggressive. Specially, orphan reared in foster care institutions may delay in social, emotional, and language development. Furthermore, lack of parental involvement and guidance, school pressure, problem in choosing friends, warmth or affection, lack of supervision, orphans suffer from different social conduct problems. The way in which they cope with aggression can have significant short and long-term consequences on their physical and emotional health such as chronic fear and anxiety, poor interpersonal relations, aggression and other social disorders.

The results clearly indicates that both the types and level of education of adolescents have significant impact on the development of social undermining and aggression behavior. Therefore, a systemic identification of groups of adolescents who are most vulnerable and in need of assistance in relation to social undermining and aggression is indeed needed. The research findings reveal the necessities of proper counseling and guidance service in order to make effective interventions against the social undermining and aggression problems. Adolescents who live in orphanage homes represent a special group with special environment, so they need special care. Therefore, community health providers are more likely to identify those who need special care in order to avoid developmental and psychological problems; findings are also helpful for teachers and authorities of orphan homes to identify what problems are faced by these bereaved adolescents. Considering the fact that psychosocial management is an important component of psychiatric care and called for a need to establish orphan developmental program; ensure that the government, through the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, protects the most vulnerable children and provide essential services.

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