

# HUMILIATION IN ADOLESCENCE: IS THERE A RELATIONSHIP WITH EARLY NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES, AGGRESSIVENESS, REVENGE AND PARANOIA?

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## INTRODUCTION

The humiliation experience can be considered a significant source of relational disconnection, frequently associated to adverse early experiences, and aggressive behaviour or negative emotional states (Hartling & Luchetta, 1999). In adolescents, the humiliation phenomenon has harmful consequences in the development of their identity, and can have a detrimental impact throughout their life, in several areas (e.g., individual, family, social).

## OBJECTIVES

Assess the relationship between humiliation, negative early life experiences, paranoia traits and aggressiveness and explore gender differences and the effect of age. Analyse the set of variables that best predicts humiliation in adolescence.

## METHOD

### Participants

The sample included 268 adolescents (134 boys and 134 girls) with ages between 12 and 18 years old ( $M = 14.28$ ;  $SD = 1.76$ ). The schooling years varied between 7 and 12 years ( $M = 9.74$  and  $SD = 1.56$ ).

### Instruments

Participants completed the Humiliation Inventory (HI; Hartling & Luchetta, 1999), the Early Life Experiences Scale (ELES; Gilbert, Cheung, Granfield, Campey & Irons, 2003), the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ; Buss & Perry, 1992), and the General Paranoia Scale (GPS; Fenigstein & Venable, 1992).

## RESULTS

**Table 1.** Correlations between humiliation, early life experiences, aggression and paranoia traits.

	HI Total	ELES Total	ELES Sub	ELES Thre.	ELES Unva	AQ Phy.	AQ Verbal	AQ Ang.	AQ Host
HI Total	1								
ELES Total	0,442*	1							
Submissiveness	0,517**	,872**	1						
Threat	0,319**	,881**	,655**	1					
Unvalued	0,186**	,618**	,356**	,345**	1				
AQ Total	-,428**	-,513**	-,505**	-,426**	-,271**	1			
Physical	-,146*	-,452**	-,358**	-,449**	-,250**	,804*	1		
Verbal	-,233**	-,232**	-,239**	-,155*	-,167**	,673*	,392**	1	
Anger	-,394**	-,396**	-,417**	-,318**	-,186**	,861*	,570**	,539**	1
Hostility	-,580**	-,470**	-,532**	-,336**	-,230**	,822*	,436**	,478**	,659**
GPS	,548**	,587**	,595**	,465**	,319**	-,651**	-,398**	-,417**	-,500**

Note. HU = Humiliation Inventory; ELES = Early Life Experiences Scale; AQ = Aggression Questionnaire; GPS = General Paranoia Scale.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

→ Age and school grade did not show a significant association with the study variables.

→ Girls showed more humiliation feelings ( $t = 5.52$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ ), more subordination feelings ( $t = 2.61$ ,  $p = .010$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ ), more paranoid traits ( $t = 3.93$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ ) and more feelings of global aggressiveness ( $t = 3.13$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ), verbal aggression ( $t = 2.53$ ,  $p = .012$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ ) and anger ( $t = 5.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ ) or hostility ( $t = 5.70$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ ) when compared to boys. On the other hand, boys revealed significantly more physical aggression ( $t = 2.15$ ,  $p = .032$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ ), comparatively to girls.

→ The Hierarchical multiple regression model was significant [ $r^2 = .45$ ;  $F(10, 267) = 20.87$ ;  $p < .001$ ], explaining 45% of the humiliation variance. Aggression feelings - hostility emerged as the best global predictor ( $\beta = -.33$ ;  $p < .001$ ), followed by experiences of subordination during childhood ( $\beta = .24$ ;  $p = .001$ ), paranoid traits ( $\beta = .19$ ;  $p = .016$ ) and, lastly, physical aggression ( $\beta = .17$ ;  $p = .016$ ).

## DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

- ✓ Due to the research scarcity about humiliation feelings in adolescence, the present study contributed to a better understanding of this particular experience, through examination of its relation with other variables and possible gender differences.
- ✓ Adolescents presenting more humiliation experiences seem to exhibit more hostility feelings, more negative memories of subordination in relation to parents during childhood, more beliefs about mistrust and insecurity about others, and less physically aggressive behaviour.
- ✓ Furthermore, the role of the different aggressive behaviour/feelings (e.g., physical aggression, verbal, anger and hostility) may have implications for assessment and early intervention.
- ✓ An early assessment and intervention, based on the development of emotion regulation skills (e.g., to deal with anger, hostility, and distrust in a more adaptive way) and compassion focused approaches could be recommended for adolescents.

## REFERENCES

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