


Relational Aggression of Elementary School Students Based on Gender

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<p>Submitted: 2024-08-19</p> <p>Published: 2024-10-19</p> <p>Keywords: Elementary School Students, Gender, Global, Relational Aggression</p> <p>Copyright holder: © Author/s (2024)</p> <p>This article is under: </p> <p>How to cite: Firmansyah, A., & Erwinda, L. (2024). Relational Aggression of Elementary School Students Based on Gender. <i>Bulletin of Counseling and Psychotherapy</i>, 6(3). https://doi.org/10.51214/002024061073000</p> <p>Published by: Kuras Institute</p> <p>E-ISSN: 2656-1050</p>	<p>ABSTRACT: Identifying gender differences in relational aggression (RA) is critical, given its profound impact on students' social dynamics and psychological well-being, as well as the need to develop more focused and effective prevention and intervention strategies in educational settings. This study aims to analyze the patterns and characteristics of relational aggression among 11-year-old elementary school students, with a focus on identifying any significant differences or trends based on gender. The type of research used is comparative research. The sample in this study was 457 respondents consisting of 19.3% male and 80.7% female. The Relational Aggression Scale was used to collect data on the relational aggression of elementary school students in various elementary schools in Banten province. The data collection process was facilitated by the teachers in each participating school. The analysis technique used was descriptive and a different test with the Welch test. The results showed that there was a significant difference in the relational aggression of boys and girls, with an average score difference of -0.37 logit between boys and girls.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Examining relational aggression among elementary school students based on gender is increasingly urgent due to its potential effects on children's social development and mental health. Early patterns of relational aggression can shape how boys and girls interact with peers, influencing their ability to form healthy relationships. Recognizing gender-specific trends in this behavior is essential for creating tailored educational strategies and interventions that promote positive social behavior and reduce the risk of long-term psychological consequences. By addressing these issues early, educators and counselors can better support the social and emotional well-being of students. In middle childhood, there is a rise in relational aggression, which progressively replaces direct physical violence as the most prevalent form, alongside verbal aggression. This shift in aggression types has been supported by studies conducted by (Michiels et al. (2008) and Nelson et al. (2014). Relational aggression refers to the intentional manipulation or harm inflicted on others via damaging their peer connections (Crick, 1996). Yoon et al. (2004) suggest that relational violence throughout middle childhood and adolescence may become more noticeable due to changes in the quality and structure of interpersonal relationships over development. During middle childhood, children's preoccupation with gaining acceptability within their peer group increases significantly. One strategy they employ to enhance their social standing is through the use of relational violence, such as gossiping (Rubin et al., 2015). Multiple research projects have demonstrated that relational aggression has detrimental and enduring consequences, not only for those who are targeted but also for those who engage in these behaviours (Atherton et al., 2017). Previous research indicates that

relational aggression (RA) relates to adjustment issues in aggressors, including increased loneliness, lower self-esteem (Duru et al., 2019), and life satisfaction, along with lower moral development (Kokkinos et al., 2016). RA is also tied to reduced popularity and more social integration problems in classrooms (Gangel et al., 2017).

Boys generally exhibit higher levels of physical aggression compared to girls. However, when it comes to relational aggression, which is also known as social or indirect aggression, girls and boys tend to use similar rates of relational aggression. This information is supported by various studies conducted by (Card et al., 2008; Lee, 2009; Pakaslahti & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2000; Willoughby et al., 2001). Nevertheless, research indicates that girls tend to employ a greater amount of relational violence compared to physical aggressiveness, as supported by studies conducted by Heilbron and Prinstein (2008). 1 Due to these observed patterns of relative usage, theoretical explanations of aggression suggest that physical aggression is considered more socially acceptable for boys than girls, while relational aggression is considered more socially acceptable for girls (Heilbron & Prinstein, 2008; Nelson et al., 2010). Gender differences in aggression have been extensively studied, but the approach typically involves categorising gender into male and female and comparing the average differences between the two groups. This research has been conducted by various authors (Card et al., 2008; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Heilbron & Prinstein, 2008; Henington et al., 1998).

The evaluation of gender disparities in these relationships was the concluding aspect of this investigation. However, empirical research on relationally combative behaviours has yielded inconsistent results regarding gender differences (Merrell et al., 2006). Archer (2004) revealed in a recent meta-analysis that the size of the effect size for gender differences in studies of social, indirect, and relational aggression frequently varied based on the age of participants and the method employed. Although gender disparities in the quantity of relational aggression may continue to be a topic of debate in the near future, preschool studies have indicated that girls employ relational aggression at a higher proportion than physical aggression, while boys may engage in both subtypes at comparable rates (Nelson et al., 2005). Variables may differ by gender, as evidenced by prior research. Therefore, analyses will be conducted for the entire sample and separately for males and females.

Based on the existing literature, although there has been much research on the differences in types of aggression between gender, the existing research gap is the lack of in-depth understanding regarding the specific differences in the manifestation and impact of relational aggression in elementary school students according to gender, and how this affects their social development and mental health in the context of everyday interactions at school. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze elementary school students' relational aggression based on gender.

METHODS

Design

The research methodology employed in this study is comparative research. Comparative study is a form of investigation that involves comparing and analysing events or variables in many distinct groups. Comparative study may be employed in this particular situation to assess and contrast the degrees of relational aggressiveness exhibited by persons of varying genders. The variables remain consistent with the independent variables used in the research. However, the sample consists of several groups or two separate sample groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Participants

For the purpose of this investigation, a random sample approach was put into practice. In this study, the sample consisted of 457 kids, all aged 11, with 19.3% of them being boy and 80.7% being Girl. These students were distributed throughout three elementary schools (SD), which were SDN 02 Serang City, SDN Drangong Serang City, and SD Negeri Sindanglaut 1.

Measures

For this study, individuals who were identified through online advertisements, emails, blogs, social media, and online groups of the Majelis Guru Mata Pelajaran (MGMP; Subject Teachers' Association) in Serang City were chosen to assist in distributing the Relational Aggression Questionnaire to elementary school students in the area. The Indonesian version of the Relational Aggression Scale (RAS; Syahputra & Afdal, 2022) was adapted by (Murray-Close et al., 2010) according to the theory of relational aggression, which involves three components: proactive (5 items), reactive (6 items), and romantic (2 items). The RAS is a 13-item scale that is answered in a five-point response format, with the options being: always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never. Items such as "I permitted my friend's chat or message" are examples. This scale exhibits good validity, with a Raw variance explained by measures of 43.8%, and an acceptable reliability (Cronbach's of 0.79; item reliability at a rasch of 0.99) (Center, 2020; Fisher et al., 2014; Levinson et al., 2019; National Institute of Mental Health, 2017).

Data Analysis

Using the Winsteps software (version 5.1.5) and its instruction manual (Linacre, 2021), this study compared the descriptive and difference types of the Welch test (Delacre et al., 2017; Rasch et al., 2011) and the item response theory (IRT) approach with the Rasch Model (Boone et al., 2014), this approach provides a robust framework for examining the properties of test items and participant responses. This study used Welch's test because the number of samples in the two groups was different, namely 88 male students and 369 female students. Welch's t-test was chosen because it does not assume that the variance between groups must be the same (Sakai, 2016). This test is used when there is a difference in variance between two groups (heterogeneity of variance), so it is more appropriate for the conditions of this study. Examining the following will help accomplish the research goals: 1) a descriptive test of relational aggression; 2) gender differences in relational aggression test scores; 3) disparities in students' capacity to answer scales measuring relational aggression based on gender; and 4) a global trend in relational aggression according to gender.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this research regarding the condition of relational aggression in boy and Girl will be thoroughly examined in the context of the discussion. A variety of aspects that surface from the findings of this research will be addressed. This will enable us to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of relational antagonism in the context of boy and Girl individuals and to identify potential areas for additional research in this field.

Relational aggression is a type of bad behaviour that involves manipulating others and breaking up social connections. It is getting more and more attention in academic study. Researchers have gone beyond just recognising that relationship anger exists and are now carefully breaking down the different ways that men and women feel and show it. In addition, Table 2 shows the outcomes of the descriptive study of relationship aggression between men and women.

Table 1. Relational Aggression Descriptive Viewed from Gender

Person Count	Mean	SE	Median	SD	Model Separation	RMSE	Code
457	-2.38	.06	-2.28	1.23	.93	.90	*
88	-2.08	.12	-2.01	1.16	1.10	.78	L
369	-2.45	.06	-2.28	1.24	.88	.93	P

Information: * = Total; L = Boy; P = Girl

The data presented in table 1 indicates that boys (M = -2.08 logit) have a greater mean value compared to Girls (M = -2.45 logit). The mean standard error values for boys and Girls indicate favourable circumstances, since they have a low value of 0.12 for boys and 0.06 for Girls. The average value of the data distribution for boys is greater than that for Girls. Specifically, the mean value for boys who completed the relational aggression survey is -2.08 out of a total of 88 participants, while the mean value for Girls is -2.45. The table above, Table 2, displays a significant relationship aggressiveness with a sig value of 0.009. This suggests a p-value less than 0.05, indicating a noteworthy distinction in boy and Girl relational aggression.

Table 2. The results of the Welch Test of Relational Aggression in terms of Gender

Mean Measure	SE	t	df	p
0.37	0.14	2.63	138	0.009

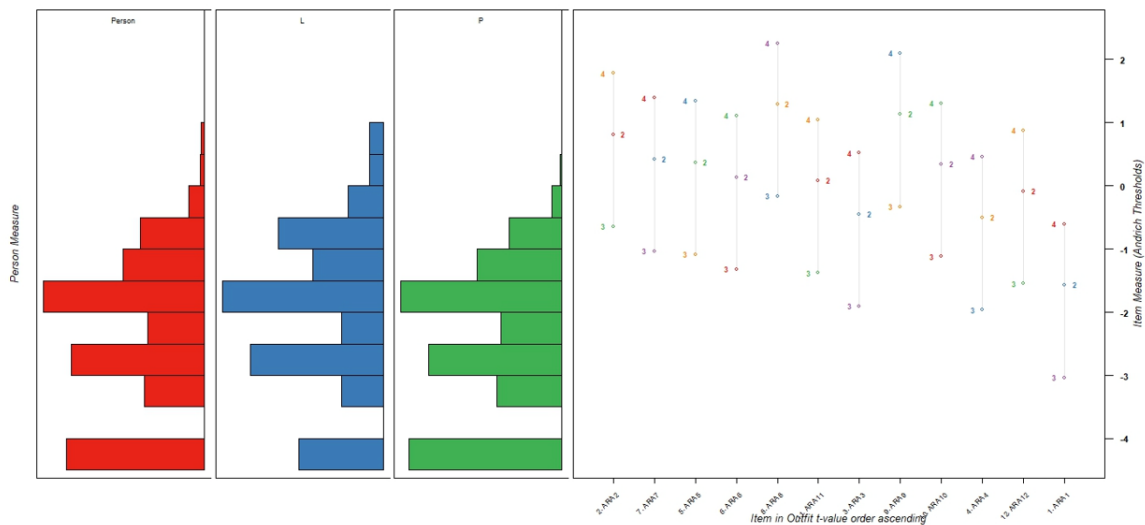


Figure 1. Analyzing Gender Differences in Relational Aggression
Correlation of instrument responses between male and Girl; Gender, L = Boy, and P = Girl

Figure 1 shows the results of the Rasch analysis depicting the distribution of respondent sizes and item thresholds on the logit scale. The left panel shows the distribution of respondent sizes, where more respondents are at different ability levels, represented by red, blue, and green histograms. The right panel shows the item thresholds, with each vertical line representing an item and the numbers along the line indicating the thresholds between response categories. While the right panel shows the difference in histogram levels of boys and girls. This condition explains that boys are higher in relational aggression scores compared to girls. In addition, based on the theory of relational aggression by (Murray-Close et al., 2010), found that Girl students tend to be more relationally aggressive in romantic and reactive contexts. This means that relational aggression among Girl students is not only limited to everyday social interactions, but also significantly influences the dynamics of their romantic relationships. This form of aggression is often reactive, meaning it occurs in response to conflict or stress in the relationship. Meanwhile, from the proactive aspect, both genders have the same ability to respond to the relational aggression scale.

Discussion

This investigation determined that there were substantial disparities in relational aggression between boys and girls. The phenomenon in Indonesia, where males are more frequently involved in acts of relational aggression, can be attributed to a complex combination of social, cultural, and psychological factors. Nevertheless, when viewed from the perspective of relational romantic

antagonism between lovers, it is in direct opposition to the findings of this study. Several previous studies have examined peer relational aggression in children and adolescents (Rasmussen et al., 2018; Reardon et al., 2020), indicating that these gender disparities may persist into adulthood and extend to romantic relationships later in life (Coyne et al., 2017). This result is in accordance with the research conducted by (Goldstein, 2016), which also noted a substantially higher prevalence of relational aggression among women in the romantic relationships of young adults than among men. This pattern may be the result of gender-related disparities in the reporting of romantic relational aggression, which could suggest that males may be less inclined to disclose their involvement in relational aggressive behaviours than women. Conversely, it is feasible that males may demonstrate alternative forms of aggression, including verbal or physical aggression (Karneli et al., 2023; Orkibi & Ronen, 2019). Norms of masculinity that occasionally encourage dominance, competition, or displays of power may motivate certain boys to employ exclusion as a means of preserving their position or authority within a group (Baird, 2012). Furthermore, the tendency of men to participate in acts of exclusion can be influenced by social pressure to demonstrate dominance, the conviction that certain groups are superior, or the desire to assert group identity (Workman-Stark, 2015).

Several influential factors contribute to the explanation of aggression, such as social reputation (Juvonen et al., 2013), family dynamics and communication (Estévez et al., 2016; Withers et al., 2016), attitudes towards authority (Carrascosa et al., 2015), psychological distress (Fung et al., 2015), and suicidal thoughts (Espelage & Holt, 2013). Within the realm of social connections, researchers have noted that when teenagers strive for social recognition by engaging in behaviours that go against societal norms, their probability of participating in violent activities rises (Estévez et al., 2014). Using relational aggression (RA) can assist individuals who are aggressive in maintaining or increasing their social standing among their peers (Kawabata et al., 2014). Although the examination of institutional authority has been thoroughly conducted in OA studies (Cava et al., 2013), it has not yet been investigated in research specifically focused on RA. Furthermore, while the importance of family functioning and communication in aggression research has been acknowledged (Estévez et al., 2016), there has been a lack of focus on the role of RA. The prevalence of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) varies between genders and is a subject of debate. Several studies have shown varying rates of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) across different genders. Ettekal & Ladd (2015) indicated that RA rates are higher among girls, whereas (Carrascosa et al., 2015) indicate a greater prevalence among boys. On the other hand, (Goldstein, 2016) found no significant gender variations in RA rates.

The findings from the analysis of 20 research on relational aggression, with a focus on gender, reveal that 17 of these studies demonstrate statistically significant variations in relational aggression ratings across different global areas. One interesting thing about Indonesia is that its relational violence scores don't vary based on gender in three countries: the African American region (Henington et al., 1998), the United States (Skara et al., 2008), and Mexico (Romero-Abrio et al., 2019). There are eight studies conducted in different nations, including the United States in 1995, 2005, 2012, and 2016; England in 2001, India in 2008; Russia in 2014; and Spain in 2023. In addition, the statistics that demonstrate the significant interest that scholars in the United States have towards the study of relational violence may really be analysed from a number of different points of view. Relational aggression becomes more crucial in the US, where interpersonal connections, communication, and social engagement are vital. Heightened recognition of the consequences of relational violence in many environments, such as schools and workplaces, may inspire American academics to further investigate this topic (Czar, 2012; Simmons, 2018; Skara et al., 2008). Figure 3 shows how sex has affected relationship aggressiveness in several nations in recent years. The findings indicate that there is variability in the level of relational aggressiveness between boys and girls, although these variations are likely to be statistically inconsequential in most situations between nations.

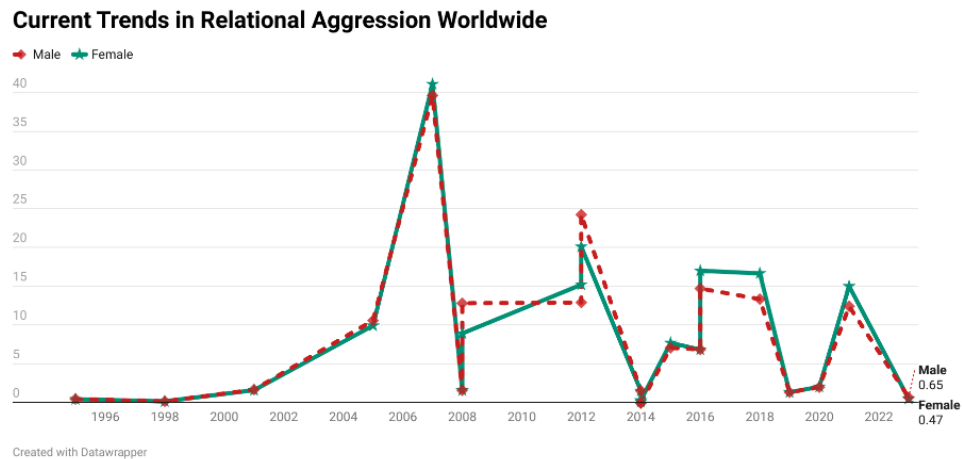


Figure 3. Trends in Relational Aggression Worldwide

Some nations, including the US, have annual relational aggressiveness swings. This literature also shows continuous disparities in relationship violence amongst nations including the US, China, Australia, and others (Czar, 2012; Gomez-Garibello & Talwar, 2015; Kawabata et al., 2020). The data in figure 3 may be affected by research methods, social and cultural dynamics, and temporal and social contexts like significant events in specific years. Different sample features between nations and years, as well as individual factors like social skills and internal conflicts (Mcquade et al., 2014), may potentially explain this data's relational aggressiveness variability. Data variations are typical in human behaviour study, and successful interpretation needs a thorough understanding of the causes. A limitation of this study is that the sample does not represent the entire population of elementary school students, both in terms of geographic location and socio-economic background, which may limit the generalizability of the results. The implications of these findings emphasize the importance of considering gender factors in designing effective prevention and intervention programs to address relational aggression (Syahputra, 2024). Future research is recommended to explore more deeply the factors that influence relational aggression and develop intervention strategies that are appropriate to gender characteristics.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that there are notable distinctions between the levels of relational aggressiveness exhibited by boys and girls. Due to the fact that dominance, competitiveness, or shows of power may lead some guys to use acts of exclusion as a strategy to preserve position or authority in a group, boys have a tendency to participate in relational violence more frequently than girls do. This research is an initial step before developing multimedia edu games to prevent relational aggression in elementary school students, it is important to conduct pre-research that considers the results of research that shows significant differences in relational aggression between male and female students. This pre-research should focus on a deeper understanding of the differences in types and intensity of relational aggression based on gender. This data will help in designing edu games that are responsive to the needs of each gender, as well as in creating effective strategies to reduce relational aggression specifically according to the characteristics and preferences of male and female students.

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