



# Effectiveness of Intra- and Interpersonal Peace-Based Intervention on Psychological and Emotional Well-Being of Male Aggressive Adolescents

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## ABSTRACT

**Aims** Peace psychology is defined as a field which is in search of developing theories and operations whose goals are prevention and reduction of direct and structured violence. The aim of the present study was to determine the effectiveness of intrapersonal and interpersonal peace-based intervention on emotional and psychological well-being of male aggressive adolescents.

**Materials & Methods** This quasi-experimental study with pretest-posttest design with the control group was conducted on 26 male aggressive adolescents selected via the randomized cluster sampling method in a male high school of Isfahan city in 2016. The students who got higher scores in Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ), were randomly assigned into control (N=13) and experimental (N=13) groups. Then the Keyes Mental Health Continuum-Long form (MHC-LF) was implemented as a pre-test on both groups. The experimental group received 8 sessions of intra and interpersonal peace-based intervention, while the control group did not receive any intervention. Then post-test was performed on both groups. After gathering the data, it was analyzed by SPSS 24 software using multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA).

**Findings** By controlling the effect of pretest, after intervention, the mean scores of psychological well-being and emotional well-being in the experimental group was significantly higher than the control group ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Conclusion** Intra and interpersonal peace-based intervention can improve psychological and emotional well-being of the male aggressive adolescents.

**Keywords** Relaxation; Empathy; Mental Health; Emotional Regulation; Aggression; Adolescents

## CITATION LINKS

[1] Peace psychology for a peaceful world [2] The effectiveness of intra and interpersonal peace-based training on the rate of violence, stress and psychological well-being among aggressive adolescents [3] Reducing direct and structural violence: The human needs theory [4] Peace psychology in today's era [5] Personality, antisocial behavior, and aggression: a meta-analytic review [6] Contributions of positive psychology to peace: toward global well-being and resilience [7] Culture of peace: Sociostructural dimensions, cultural values, and emotional climate [8] Subjective well-being and peace [9] Relationship between wisdom and psychological well-being and academic buoyancy of students [10] Social intelligence-empathy= aggression? Aggress Violent Behav [11] Some contributions of psychology to policies promoting cultures of peace [12] The effect of peace-based education on students' life quality with a case report in quantitative electroencephalography: a cross-sectional study [13] Forgiveness in psychotherapy: the key to healing [14] The psychology of peace: an introduction [15] Association of different forms of bullying victimization with adolescents' psychological distress and reduced emotional well-being [16] The study of relation between the dimensions of aggression with psychological well-being and social adaptability in the adolescents of Khorramabad [17] Aggression and violence in adolescence [18] The measurement and utility of adult subjective well-being [19] Study of relation between demographic characteristics with psychological well-being and happiness among the population of Tehran [20] The aggression questionnaire [21] Preliminary analysis of psychometric indices of Buss-Perry aggression questionnaire [22] Anger expression, coping styles, and well-being [23] The influence of self-compassion on emotional well-being among early and older adolescent males and females [24] The effectiveness of pilot self-compassion program on well-being components [25] Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging evidence, practice: a summary report

## Introduction

Terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, developing paucity of natural resources, disparities in health and wealth, violations of human rights, and continuance in use of force to advance state interests are all complicated problems for human security with psychological dimensions<sup>[1]</sup>. The relatively new field of Peace Psychology refers to making peace (personal peacemaking via attitudes in the context of cultural violence), peacekeeping (via behaviors in the context of physical violence) and making collective peace (via training and solving conflicts in the context of structural violence). It also pays significant attentions to direct and structured study of violence<sup>[2]</sup>. Peace psychology is defined as a field which is in search of developing theories and operations whose goals are prevention and reduction of direct and structured violence<sup>[3]</sup>. According to a definition, peace psychology is the study of mental processes and behavior that lead to violence, facilitate non-violence, prevent violence and promote justice, respect and dignity for people with the purpose of making violence less occurrence and helping to cure its psychological effects<sup>[4]</sup>.

One of the basic concepts in peace psychology is peacefulness which, as a personality trait, is effective in shaping individuals emotions, thoughts and behaviors. Since personality refers to behaviors, psychological states and individually stable attitudes, peacefulness also as a personality trait refers to peaceful behaviors, moods and attitudes. This personality trait contains intrapersonal peace (desire for self-acceptance, self-compassion, lack of anger at self, coordination between different dimensions of self, tendency to emotional supportive states of peacefulness), interpersonal peace (attitudes and behaviors without violence to others, attitudes and behaviors which make and maintain relationships with others, which have a direct relationship with agreeableness in the Big 5 personality traits) and the peaceful attitude toward nations and groups<sup>[5]</sup>. Generally speaking, based on existing research literature, it can be said that peacekeeping is related to traits such as patience, empathy, forgiveness, kindness, hope, self-control, spirituality, gratitude, happiness, optimism, sensitivity to similarities with others<sup>[2]</sup>, positive emotions, meaning, engagement and resilience. As a result, this branch of psychology has a direct relationship with positive psychology and is influenced by it<sup>[6]</sup>.

A summary of the literature of the determinant elements in the strength and weakness of the peacefulness feature is shown in Figure 1. According to this figure, components affecting interpersonal peace include: forgiveness and empathy as the main characters in the peace-oriented personality, conflict resolution methods and correction of interpersonal maladaptive schemas, and about the intrapersonal

peace feature, components such as self-esteem, emotional intelligence, positive emotions, anger management, and self-acceptance are influential<sup>[2]</sup>.

Any personality trait has effects and consequences related to health issues and related concepts such as psychological well-being. In peace psychology, peacefulness is also known as a personality trait; therefore, it is reasonable that the strength and weakness of this personality trait lead directly or indirectly to psychological health and well-being. Also some researches indicated this relationship<sup>[7, 8]</sup>. Psychological well-being is a state of satisfaction that results from close interpersonal relationships in important job and social situations and includes the general feeling of emotional health such as self-esteem, positive relationships with others, and lower levels of anxiety, depression and avoidance behaviors<sup>[9]</sup>.

Regarding the importance of the concept of anger and aggression in peace psychology and the direct effect of empathy as one of the main components of the peace-oriented personality for reducing aggression<sup>[10]</sup>, interventions aimed at improving the ability of anger management including the distinguishing between conflict and violence, delegitimizing the use of violence in society, promoting non-violent social action to recompense unfairness, promoting equality between women and men, and emphasizing the prevention of violence before intervention<sup>[11]</sup>, are one of the main areas of peace psychology. So the management of aggression is one of the main components of interpersonal peace<sup>[12]</sup>, and psychological well-being can be improved through forgiveness therapy by making feelings of peacefulness<sup>[13]</sup>. In fact, as health providers study disease and prevention, realizing of the causes of violent behavior and prevention are the foundations for people including peace psychologists who are working towards a healthy society<sup>[14]</sup>.

Studies show that aggressive behaviors have a negative relationship with psychological well-being especially in adolescents<sup>[15, 16]</sup>. According to the fact that aggression in adolescence is in context of normal development<sup>[17]</sup>, consequently if improving psychological well-being and emotional well-being based on the promotion of peaceful personality traits is considered, it can directly or indirectly affect adolescents' aggressive behaviors. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to determine the effectiveness of intrapersonal and interpersonal peace-based intervention on emotional and psychological well-being of male aggressive adolescents.

## Materials and Methods

This research is a pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design with the control group that was conducted in 2016. The sample consisted of 30 male

aggressive adolescents selected as participants via the randomized cluster sampling method this way that an area (Area 3) of education areas of Isfahan city was selected. Then, a male high school (Be'sat High school) was randomly selected from the high schools available in that area. After that, screening aggressiveness was conducted via the Buss-Perry

Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ). As a result, 30 aggressive adolescents with the highest scores were selected as participants and then they were randomly divided into two control and experimental groups. Due to sample shedding, the students in the experimental group and the control group decreased to 13 in each group.

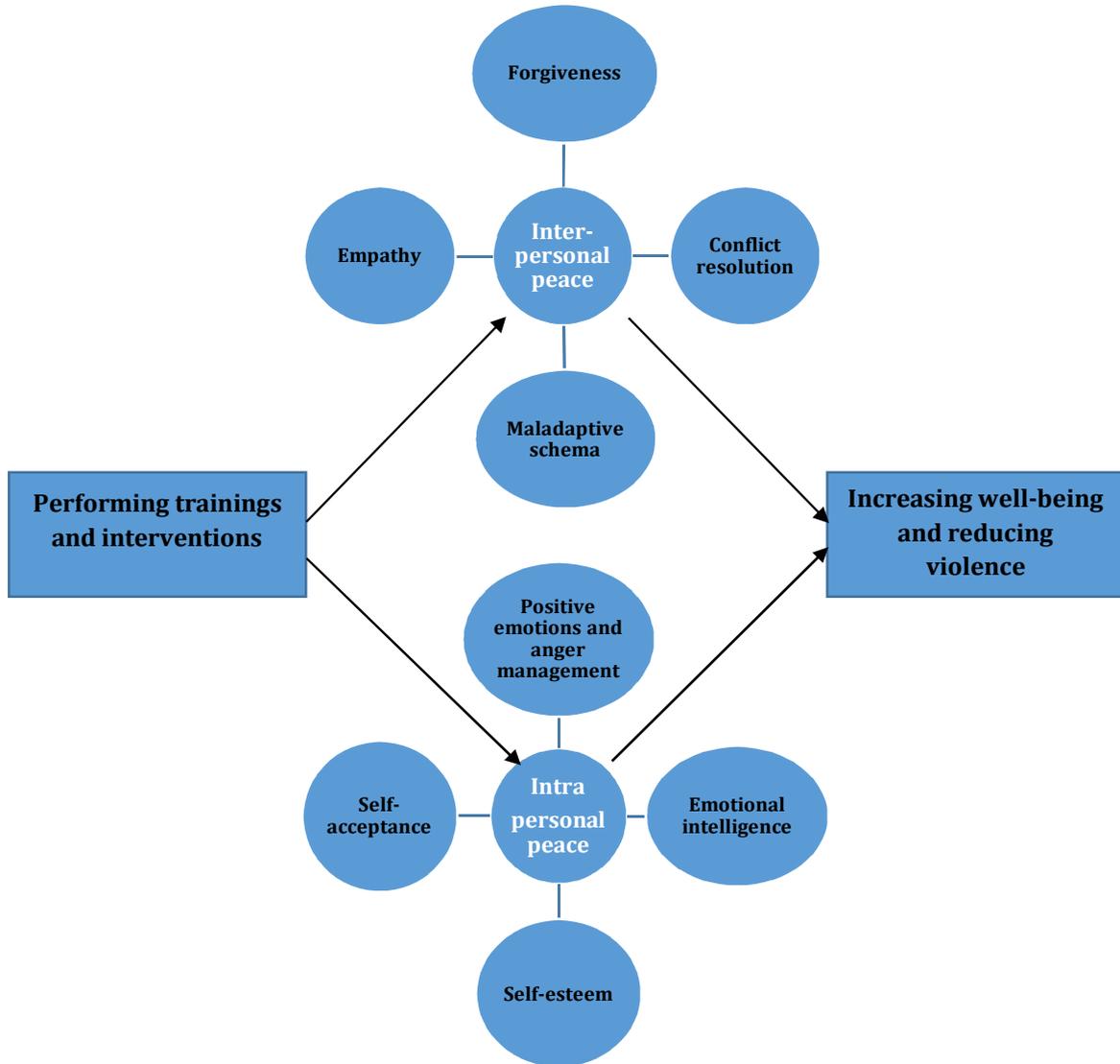


Figure 1) Summary of research

The inclusion criteria were highest aggression scores in the Buss & Perry questionnaire, person's willingness to participate in research, family satisfaction, lack of serious physical and psychological problems that prevent the presence of research. The sample group had not received any psychiatric or psychological intervention for aggression so far.

The research variables included psychological and emotional well-being of aggressive adolescents as the dependent variable and the intra and interpersonal peace-based intervention was the independent variable.

The following tools were used to conduct the study:  
**1- The Keyes Mental Health Continuum-Long form (MHC-LF):** This questionnaire was developed by Keyes and Figueira in 2003 including three dimensions of emotional well-being (12 items), psychological well-being (18 items), and social well-being (15 items)<sup>[18]</sup>. This questionnaire was conducted and validated on 57 subjects in Iran. As a result, the correlation coefficient of the subjective well-being questionnaire was obtained as 0.78 and the correlation coefficients of its subscales including emotional, psychological, and social well-being were obtained as 0.76, 0.64, and 0.76 respectively. The

internal consistency coefficient of the questionnaire was obtained via Cronbach's alpha coefficient as 0.80, and it was obtained as 0.86, 0.80, and 0.61 for its subscales<sup>[19]</sup>.

**2- The Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ):** This scale, as a behavioral scale, is used for assessment of aggressive behaviors. It assesses four types of aggressive behaviors (bodily aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and violence) via the five-point Likert scale for age groups of adolescents and youth<sup>[20]</sup>. In the study of Buss and Perry, the results of test-retest coefficient for the four subscales (with an interval of 9 weeks) was obtained as 0.72 to 0.80 and the correlation coefficients among the four scales was obtained as 0.38 to 0.49. To assess the internal consistency of the scale, Cronbach's alpha was used. The results indicated that the internal consistency coefficient for bodily aggression was 0.82, for verbal aggression was 0.81, for anger was 0.83, and for violence was 0.80. In the study in Iran, the internal consistency coefficients of the subscales were obtained as 0.79 for bodily aggression, 0.74 for verbal aggression, 0.71 for anger, and 0.82 for violence. The total internal consistency coefficient was obtained as 0.89. The test-retest reliability of the subscales with an interval of 5 weeks was obtained as 0.74 for bodily aggression, 0.68 for verbal aggression, 0.61 for anger, 0.71 for violence, and 0.78 for the total scale<sup>[21]</sup>.

After the selection of the sample via screening using Buss-Perry Scale and dividing them randomly in the experimental and control groups, Keyes's mental health continuum was administered as a pretest on both groups. Eight sessions of intervention based on the promotion of intrapersonal and interpersonal peace were implemented on the experimental group. In the peace-based intervention, 8 sessions of 90 minutes training were held each week. The topics of the sessions were: 1. Self-esteem 2. Positive emotions and anger management 3. Self-acceptance 4. Forgiveness 5. Empathy 6. Conflict resolution 7. Emotional intelligence 8. Maladaptive schema. While the control group did not receive any training. After the end of the intervention, Keyes's mental health continuum was administered again as a post-test on both groups. It is noteworthy that intra and interpersonal peace-based intervention for the control group was implemented by the end of the posttest phase.

Data were analyzed by SPSS 24 software using multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA). At first, the assumptions of using the MANCOVA were investigated. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the distribution of data in the variables is normal. Levene's test also showed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances in the psychological well-being, and emotional well-being is observed. By examining the M-box test, homogeneity assumption of the variance-covariance

matrix was observed. Thus, the use of parametric tests for the analysis of research data was possible.

## Findings

In posttest stage, the mean scores of psychological well-being and emotional well-being in the experimental group was higher than the control group (Table 1).

**Table 1)** The mean scores of psychological and emotional well-being of male aggressive adolescents in both groups before and after intervention

Variables	Experimental group	Control group
<b>Psychological well-being</b>		
Pretest	87.27±8.19	85.50±11.38
Posttest	94.93±5.67	84.93±12.70
<b>Emotional well-being</b>		
Pretest	19.07±6.35	18.64±6.12
Posttest	23.47±5.08	17.43±3.87

By controlling the effect of pretest, there was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups at least in one of the dependent variables ( $F=16.92$ ;  $p<0.001$ ).

In complementary analysis, it was indicated that the mean scores of psychological well-being ( $F=48.52$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) and emotional well-being ( $F=19.18$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) were statistically different between the two groups. Also in variables of psychological and emotional well-being, 66% and 43% of the variations were due to the intervention respectively.

## Discussion

Making efforts to reduce violence and implementing direct or indirect prevention programs are among the topics and activities pursued in peace psychology. Prevention programs can both reduce the underlying causes of violence and develop the context for targeting peace-seeking and anti-violence behaviors.

Regarding the importance and value of preventive activities in today's psychology, peace psychology has proposed peace-based interventions as a tool to prevent aggression and violence. One of the components that lies in the midst of peace-based interventions is anger management training and the promotion of emotional intelligence that these skills have had a positive relationship with psychological well-being in previous studies, including this study that reported there is a significant correlation between low levels of expression of anger and psychological well-being<sup>[22]</sup>. On the other hand, in peace-based intervention, self-compassion and self-acceptance are considered as the main factors of Intrapersonal peace, whose effectiveness has been shown on emotional well-being<sup>[23]</sup> and psychological well-being<sup>[24]</sup>.

The research has attempted to answer this question as to whether a peace-based intervention effects the

violence and the aggressiveness of individual, specifically adolescents. To this end, a peace-based intervention package was implemented on a number of adolescents with aggression experiences. The results of this study indicated that peace-based intervention have improved the psychological and emotional well-being of aggressive adolescents participating in the research. The results of this study are consistent with the results reported by previous researches.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that peace-based intervention has been positively effective on the psychological and emotional well-being of aggressive adolescents by improving the skills of anger management and conflict resolution; promoting self-compassion, empathy, self-esteem and self-acceptance. Regarding the negative relationship between psychological well-being and aggression level, improving psychological well-being can serve as an introduction to reducing the aggression of adolescents participating in this research.

Improvement and enhancement observed in the emotional well-being area is also a positive prognosis for adaptive behaviors and effective communication with the external environment. The World Health Organization has defined the emotional well-being as a state of well-being that individuals can fulfill their abilities, cope with every day pressures, work satisfactorily and effectively, and be able to effect the community around them<sup>[25]</sup>. The effectiveness of peace-based intervention on the improvement of adolescents' emotional well-being can be considered as a source of tendency toward adaptive behaviors and peace rather than tendency toward violence and violent behaviors.

A better understanding of the effectiveness of peace-based interventions and the promotion of these interventions requires the conduction of more controlled researches on the dimensions and processes governing the effectiveness of such interventions, in order that direct and indirect effects of such interventions can be clear. These interventions should be adjusted to according to age, gender, cultural and ethnic needs.

The limitations of this study were considering the samples from just the boys (it must be cautious to generalize the results to the girls), small sample size of the study and the locality (Isfahan Province, Iran) that make the generalizability difficult. It is suggested that the study to be implemented in female society and other provinces and with larger samples. Also, to study and control mediator variables such as characteristics of family and school as well as family life style.

## Conclusion

Psychological and emotional well-being of the male aggressive adolescents can be improved by peace-based intervention and reduce their aggression.

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