

# [Introduction captures how people feel about themselves generally](https://assignbuster.com/introduction-captures-how-people-feel-about-themselves-generally/)

[Psychology](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/psychology/), [Behaviorism](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/psychology/behaviorism/)

Introduction What contributes toaggressive behavior? Have the students who are bullying classmates in school ahigh or a low self-esteem? Perform hooligans vandalism as a result of a highself-esteem or is the opposite the case? Former research found contrasting relations between self-esteem and aggression. Somefindings related high self-esteem to aggressive behavior while other findingsattributed aggressive behavior to individuals with low self-esteem.

To furtherinvestigate this, it is necessary to understand the concepts of aggression andself-esteem. Aggression can have manyexpressions- child abuse, intimate partner violence, bullying, hooliganism, gangviolence, terrorism, physical attacks. It is considered as any form of behaviorintended to harm or injure another living being who is motivated to avoid suchtreatment (Hewstonee1 et al.

, YEAR). Aggression is characterized by its underlying motivation (to harm or injureanother person/group), not by its consequences. This implicates that the actor mustunderstand that his behavior has the potential to cause harm and consciouslydecides to do so (Hewstone et al. YEAR. Aggression is defined as the overallevaluation that we have of ourselves along a positive-negative dimension (Hewstone et al., YEAR).

Self-esteem is a part of our self-concept, the cognitive representation of ourself-knowledge consisting of a sum of all beliefs we have about ourselves, giving coherence and meaning to our experience, including our relations (SOURCE). Self-esteem has a trait- and astate-dimension. Trait self-esteem captures how people feel about themselvesgenerally overall and typically most of the time, which basically stable in thecourse of a life (SOURCE) State self-esteem is avariable self-evaluation that changes in response to temporary experiences (SOURCE). Generally, over the course of a life a personhas an almost stable self-esteem, which is slightly fluctuating in response todifferent situations. It is contingent upon different domains, which determineits rise and fall. The more the self-worth of a person relies on internalreinforcers (such as autonomy) than on external reinforcers (such as the opinionof others or grades), the more an individual is likely to be equipped for “ mentalcrisis” and the self-esteem is more stable and higher.

In the following, the relationbetween aggression and high or low self-esteem will be investigated. High self-esteem predicts aggressivebehavior Many study findings relate highself- esteem to aggression. People with a high self-esteem see themselves morestrongly in positive terms and have fewer negative self-views, as they aregenerally more confident in succeeding their goals. It is likely that peoplewith a high self-esteem see themselves as likeable, competent or good-looking (Hewstone et al.).

All these attributes give anindividual power, for example in terms of independence. This power and feelingof superiority to others can be manifested in aggressive behavior (Baumeisteret al., 1996).

History delivers support to the highself-esteem –  aggression thesis. Thepropensity towards violence of black Americans increased after the 1960s, thetime where a lot of effort was put in enhancing the destroyed self-esteem of awhole group (Degen, 1996). Furthermore, people with a lowself-esteem are associated with traits and characteristics such as having an instableself- image, avoiding risk, being shy and modest, emotional instability, avoiding risk and lacking confidence (Baumeister et al., 2000). This seems to contradict the forms of aggressivebehavior- when someone is attacked (either physically or verbally), the personperforming the aggressive act is exposed to risk and uncertainty as it isunclear what the consequences of the aggressive behavior will be. This contradicts a low self-esteem person’s fear ofrisk, therefore it is not likely that a person with a low self-esteem performsaggressive behavior.

Additionally, aggression is frequently performed as anattempt to defend an opinion about oneself. As a person with low self-esteem isattributed to being confused of who he/she is, there is thus little support forengaging in an act of aggression that is considered as a response of athreatened/attacked self-image (Baumeister et al., 2000). Considering situations in which aperson’s self-esteem is fluctuating, proof can be found for the hypothesis thathigh self-esteem is positively related to aggressive behavior. For instance, peoplewith manic depressions are less likely to perform aggressive acts when they arein the depressive phase, which is associated with low self-esteem, than whenthey are in the manic phase, in which a manic-depressive experiences a boost ofself-esteem (Baumeister et al., 2000). Furthermore, research found out that thelikelihood of performing aggressive behavior increases when a person consumesalcohol.

Alcohol intoxication has been positively correlated to a momentarilyboosting self-esteem (Baumeister et al., 2000). Research conducted by Kernis, Granneman and Barclay investigated the connection between hostility andself-esteem. Their results show that people with a high self-esteem clusteraround the extremes of being “ hostile” and “ non-hostile”. It was found out thatparticipants having a high and stable self-esteem are least prone to hostility, while participants with a high but unstable self-esteem are scoring high onlevels of hostility (Kernis et al., 1989).

Accordingly, it can be stated thataggressive individuals are a subset of people with a high self-esteem. Baumeister and colleagues inferredfrom these results a connection to narcissism (Baumeister et al., 2000). Narcissismis defined as having grandiose views of personal superiority, an inflated senseof entitlement, low empathy towards others, fantasies of personal greatness, abelief that other people cannot understand one + BUCH (Milleret al., 2010, BUCH). Narcissism is linked to highbut unstable self-esteem (Baumeister et al., 2000).

Further research investingthe aggressiveness of people scoring high on narcissism showed that “ narcissismis associated with a wide variety of aggressive responses to criticism andother threats to self-esteem, ranging from disdain and contempt toargumentativeness, anger, and more or less controlled aggressive and violentbehavior” (Miller et al, 2010, p. 642; Ronningstam, 2005).  Thus, narcissism cannot be defined as a directcause of aggression, but as a risk factor that can contribute to an aggressiveor violent response to a provocation or threat of the narcist’s self-image(Baumeister et al., 2005). It is therefore a defending mechanism, whichimplicates that narcistic people do not engage in aggressive behavior whenthere is not threat to their self-image.  Low self-esteem predicts aggressivebehavior Even though there is strong evidencefor the hypothesis that high self-esteem predicts aggressive behavior, there isalso a lot of research proving that low self-esteem is related to aggressivebehavior.

People with low self-esteem are described to be shy, insecure, negativetowards themselves and their circumstances, depressed, unmotivated, having anegative self-image and lacking self- confidence (Guidon, 2002). Former research enabled theconclusion that low self-esteem predicts aggressive behavior. Rosenberg statedin 1965 that “ low self-esteem weakens the ties to society, which implicates adecrease in conformity to social norms and an increase in delinquency”(Rosenberg, 1965). Furthermore, the lack of unconditional positive self-regardis linked to psychological problems, which includes aggression (Rogers, 1961). There are even proven theories that low self-regard motivates aggression, because aggression is considered as an antisocial behavior, which is driven byfeelings of inferiority (Adler, 1956; Horney, 1950). Additionally, individualswith low self-esteem are inclined to real-world externalizing problems such asdelinquency and antisocial behavior, which can be considered as aggression(Fergusson et al., 2002). Related to Baumeister’s findings in2000, Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, and Caspi conducted a series ofthree studies proofing the opposite of Baumeister’s findings in 2005.

In thefirst study, they investigated the correlation between self-reports and teacherratings of self-esteem and self-reports of delinquency of 11 to 14 year oldstudents from two schools in northern Carolina with diverse ethnic backgrounds. Findings showed that high self-esteem and delinquency are negatively correlated(Donnellan et al., 2005). As study 1 did not include the correlation betweendelinquency and aggression, they analyzed in study 2 the relation betweenself-esteem and externalizing problems (this was assessed by teachers andparents). This study was conducted in New Zealand with students aged 11 at the firstmeasures and aged 13 at the second measures. It confirmed the results of thefirst study – high self-esteem is negatively correlated with externalizingproblems, participants with a low self-esteem were more likely to engage inantisocial behavior.

In a third study, Donnellan and colleagues investigatedBaumeister’s narcissism theory, by analyzing the relation betweenunrealistically high self-esteem, narcissism and aggressive behavior. Theirresults supported Baumeister’s assumption that narcistic individuals are proneto aggression, but low self-esteem does so as well. They concluded that lowself-esteem and narcissism contribute independently to aggressive thoughts, feelings and behaviors (Donnellan et al., 2005). Their findings let them doubtabout the correlation between high self-esteem and narcissism and they suggestto investigate that in further experiments (Donnellan et al., 2005). Discussion/ConclusionThe presented research findings showplausible importance for both hypothesis.

High self-esteem can contribute toaggressive behavior, as the power and feelings of superiority which areassociated with high self-esteem is likely to be manifested in aggressivebehavior(Baumeister et al., 1965) Aggressive behavior is often performed todefend the self-image, which people with high self-esteem are more likely toengage in (Baumeister et al., 1965). The historic example of violence of blackAmericans (Degen, 1996) as well as the self-esteem enhancing influence ofalcohol (Baumeister et al, 1996) strongly support this thesis. On the otherside, low self-esteem weakens the ties to society resulting in a decreasingconformity to social norms and an increase in delinquency (Rosenberg, 1965).

Additionally, Donnellan et al.’s studies strongly support the hypothesis thatlow self-esteem predicts aggression. Nevertheless, researcher from bothhypotheses found that narcissism can be seen as a predictor of prejudice(Baumeister et al., 2000; Donnellan et al, 2005).

As both hypotheses are backed upwith strong support, it may be the case that not either high self-esteem or lowself-esteem contributes to aggressive behavior. Aggression can be considered asa composition of many different sources and self-esteem is one of them, as wellas narcissism. But to fully explain why a person acts in an aggressive manner, it is necessary to also take factors such as childhood experiences or otherpersonality traits into consideration. Personally, the low self-esteemhypothesis seems to be more adequate. Aggression is a behavior that evokesattention and from the experiences I made, people who seek attention are oftenhiding dissatisfaction with themselves.

I consider aggressive behavior as ameans to show superiority, which can be in many cases seen as a cover-up ofinsecurity. Nevertheless, I find the findings for both hypothesis plausible.  e1Checkenob das die autoren des buchs geschriben haben oder jemand anderes zitiert wurde+ checken ob direktes zitat!