**ASSOCIATIONS OF AGGRESSION WITH ANXIETY, SOCIAL PROBLEMS, AGE, AND COGNITIVE LEVEL IN YOUTH WITH AUTISM**

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**Objectives:** Youth with autism often experience co-occurring mental health or behavioural difficulties and may (or may not) also have intellectual disability (ID). In particular, many children and youth with autism engage in aggressive behaviour (Esteves et al., 2021), probably for a variety of reasons.Our primary goal was to understand what factors are associated with aggression in youth with autism from both parents’ and teachers’ perspectives. Based on the literature and clinical experience, we predicted that aggression would be associated with: lower cognitive level, younger age, higher anxiety, and more autism-related social difficulties. Potential differences between parents and teacher observations were also investigated.

**Methods:** The sample was obtained from the Simons Foundation Autism Research Initiative Simons Simplex Collection database. We examined data from 1,179 youth, all with the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, who ranged in age from 4 to 18 years (*M* = 12.00, *SD* = 3.48). In terms of cognitive level, about half the sample did not meet an IQ-based definition of ID, 18% were in the borderline range, 20% were in the mild/moderate range, and 13% were in the severe/profound range. The Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS) was used to assess autism-related social problems. The Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) for parents or corresponding Teacher Report Form (TRF) were used to measure anxiety and aggression. We observed the degree of anxious, aggressive, and social symptoms experienced by the sample and compared the levels of symptoms observed by parents and teachers with *t*-tests. One-way analyses of variance were conducted to compare aggression levels in subgroups based on sex, age, cognitive level, anxiety level, and social problems

**Results:** Comparisons of parent- and teacher-reports showed that there were no differences between levels of reported aggression or anxiety. Parents reported higher levels of social impairment than teachers. One-way analyses of variance indicated that IQ and age were not associated with parent-reported aggression while parent-reported anxiety and parent-rated social problems were. However, when analyses were conducted using teacher-reported aggression it was found that participants in adolescence and late-childhood had higher levels of aggression than those in middle-childhood. Teacher-rated aggressive problems also differed across cognitive level, as children in the severe/profound group had significantly more aggressive behaviour problems than all other groups, while those in the mild/moderate group were reported to display significantly more aggression than those in the borderline and no ID groups. Teacher-rated aggression also differed as a function of teacher-rated social problems and teacher-rated anxiety such that higher aggression increased with levels of anxiety and social problems.

**Discussion:** These findings indicate that some factors related to autism and ID are associated with aggression and that the relationships between aggression and other variables are observed to be different as perceived by parents and teachers. This information can be used to further our understanding of which groups of youth with autism are at higher risk for aggressive behaviour problems and inform treatments that aim to address them.

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