

# Is the Relationship between Social Appearance Anxiety and Relational Aggression Mediated Through Social Problem-Solving?

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## ABSTRACT

Relational aggression results in problems as severe as physical aggression, because relational aggression heightens the tendencies of both perpetrator and victim to various adaptation difficulties. In contrast, relational aggression may be misperceived as a personal preference of maintaining interpersonal relationships and accepted as normative. Moreover, these behaviors are conducted in more subtle ways and difficult to be noticed by individuals other than perpetrators. These characteristics impede prevention of these injurious behaviors, so negative effects rapidly increase, escalate into detrimental levels. Therefore, investigating the predictors of relational aggression has become more of an issue. It was aimed to examine the mediating role of social problem-solving between social appearance anxiety and relational aggression. Participants were 298 university students, 204 females and 94 males. Mediation analysis was carried out by means of PROCESS macro for SPSS. It was found that social problem solving fully mediated the relationship between social anxiety and relational aggression. Then bootstrap analysis indicated that indirect effect is significant. As social anxiety increases, problem-solving decreases. And the lower the problem-solving, the higher the relational aggression. This finding is thought to contribute to the understanding of relational aggression. Since it is not expected from individuals with social anxiety to display relationally aggressive behaviors due to their rejection sensitivity, the indirect effect through mediation provided evidence for how social anxiety is related with relational aggression. This finding was discussed in terms of relational aggression literature and some suggestions were made concerning the prevention of injurious relational aggression in the framework of implications.

**Keywords:** psychology; counseling; prevention; rejection sensitivity; fear of negative evaluation; exclusion