

# STUDY OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE IMPACT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL RISK FACTORS FOR SELF-INJURY

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**Introduction.** Adolescence is a period of significant changes in the psychosocial and cognitive structures of personality, making it particularly vulnerable to negative environmental factors. Self-injury among adolescents has become one of the pressing public health issues, especially among girls, where it is more prevalent [1]. Identifying gender differences in the level of exposure to such risk factors as emotional difficulties, family conflicts, and social problems will allow for more effective development of individualized support programs. Knowing

which factors have the greatest impact on each gender group will enable the creation of targeted prevention programs that can help protect the future generation from emotional and physical harm [2].

**Objective.** To assess the extent to which boys and girls differ in their exposure to key psychological and social risk factors for self-injury.

**Materials and Methods.** Data were collected from 29 students (11 boys and 18 girls) aged 15–16. The risk factors assessed included family difficulties, peer relationships, emotional problems, low self-esteem, and intensive use of social media. The following tools were used for analysis: the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II) to assess the level of depression, the Spielberg Anxiety Scale, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Revised) to analyze self-esteem levels in adolescents, the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) to assess the quality of relationships with parents and peers, and the Problematic Internet Use and Social Media Scale (PIUQ).

**Results.** The analysis revealed significant differences in the level of exposure to risk factors between boys and girls. Girls were more often affected by internal problems such as low self-esteem, emotional difficulties, and social media dependency. For example, 29.8 % of girls reported low self-esteem compared to 12.1 % of boys. Emotional problems were also more pronounced in girls (17.8 %) than in boys (10.7 %). Additionally, girls were significantly more likely to use social media intensively (62.4 % vs 39 %).

Boys, on the other hand, were more likely to experience behavioral problems and hyperactivity. Specifically, 31.1 % of boys reported hyperactivity, while this figure was 19.6 % among girls. These findings suggest that boys primarily exhibit external behavioral problems, while girls are more affected by emotional and internal issues.

**Conclusion.** The data indicated that girls are more prone to internal problems such as low self-esteem, emotional difficulties, and excessive use of social media, whereas boys are more likely to experience external behavioral issues such as hyperactivity and aggression. These differences highlight the need for a gender-specific approach when working with adolescents.

For parents and caregivers, understanding that girls are more susceptible to internal difficulties and boys to external ones will help them focus more on the emotional well-being of their children. For professionals working with children, this data can be used to identify students at risk of self-injury at an early stage. Clinicians will be better equipped to diagnose emotional and behavioral problems by considering gender differences and applying appropriate preventive measures. Schools can design psychological support programs that cater to the gender-specific needs of adolescents. For example, girls may benefit from programs focused on improving self-esteem and emotional regulation, while boys may be offered programs aimed at reducing aggression and teaching social skills.

### **References:**

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