

Physical, verbal and relational aggression among adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The present study on physical, verbal and relational aggression among adolescents was undertaken with the specific objectives *viz.*, to study the extent of adolescents physical, verbal and relational aggression and to analyze the factors affecting adolescents' aggression. The data was collected from Hisar district. A total sample of 250 (125 rural and 125 urban) adolescents' in the age group of 13-15 years was randomly selected. Aggression Scale was used to study the nature of adolescent aggressive behaviour. The collected data were tabulated, processed and analyzed by employing statistical technique *i.e.* frequencies, z test and correlation. The results of study indicated that in rural area of Haryana adolescents had more physical and relational aggression while relational aggression was higher in adolescents of urban area. Age, caste, parental education, paternal occupation and family income had negative but significant correlation with aggression whereas number of siblings, ordinal position and maternal education was found to be positively correlated with aggression.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is termed as the transition period between childhood and adulthood. Immense changes in the psychological, physical and social domains are experienced by the adolescents that have led to aggression which is a common phenomenon occurring in this phase of life. The experiences that individual has in early life at home with his family in general and his parents in particular are major determinants of a person's adjustment process during adolescence. Aggression has been defined as a category of behavior that causes or threatens physical harm to others. Aggression becomes a way of releasing or showing emotions. Generally people view aggression as a physical attack only but various forms of aggression have been identified in the literature, including relational aggression (e.g. spreading rumours and social isolation),

verbal aggression (arguing and name calling), and physical aggression (e.g. physical attacks) (Sharma, 2012).

The adolescent period is also marked by increased involvement in risk behaviours that may predispose young people to poor long-term outcomes. Many of these risk behaviours are relatively transitory in nature and are resolved by the beginning of adulthood. However, there is increasing evidence of the significant level of emotional and behavioural difficulties such as depression, anxiety, conduct disorder, substance misuse and suicidal thoughts (Sawyer *et al.*, 2001). Highly aggressive behaviour often occurs along and may be predictive of poor academic performance and increased risk of dropping out of school (Rubin *et al.*, 1998). Different thinkers take varying perspectives on the causation of aggression. Factors like instinctual, biological, and social learning *i.e.*, cultural norms, frustration, school environment, mass media, role

of the community etc. can be influential in the development of early aggression. Keeping this in view the present study was conducted with the following specific objectives.

- To study the extent of adolescents' physical, verbal and relational aggression.
- To analyse the factors affecting adolescents' aggressive behaviour.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in the schools of Hisar district of Haryana. 250 adolescents each in the age group of 13-15 years from school of Hisar district was purposively selected for the present study. The dependent variable in the present study was aggression and the independent variables were age, gender, caste of respondent and educational and occupation status of parents, type of area and family, ordinal position and family income. Standardized scale of Aggression by Mathur and Bhatnagar (2012) was used to collect data on adolescents' aggression. In this scale, statements were in two forms *i.e.* positive and negative. 30 statements were in positive form and 25 were in negative forms. Higher scores show higher aggression level and lower scores show lower aggression level. Frequencies, percentages, z test and correlation were used to draw meaningful inferences.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Aggression is a disorganizing emotional response. It is due to frustration based on emotional disturbance and hostility. Environment is a cogent factor in arousing aggression. The latter, once aroused, may lead to hostile and destructive behaviour. It is, in a sense, manifestation

of a self-assertive disposition and use of some kind of force. If the aggressor's responses are evoked by stimuli in the situation quite often, he would show impulsive or expressive acts of behaviour. The results of the area wise comparison of adolescents' aggression have been displayed in Table 1 and 2.

Area wise extent of adolescents' physical, verbal and relational aggression :

Table 1 clearly envisages area wise extent of adolescents' physical, verbal and relational aggression. A cursory look on overall data pin points that in rural area of Haryana most of the male (41.09%) and female (50.00%) adolescents had an average level of physical aggression while in urban area 41.38 per cent male adolescents had an average level of physical aggression and 62.28 per cent female adolescents' had low level of physical aggression. Overall, data showed that most of the adolescents in Haryana state had an average level of physical aggression. Similar findings were reported by Jaffe *et al.* (2009) in his study which revealed that boys consistently perpetrated more physical aggression than girls. Lansford *et al.* (2012) also found that boys showed more physically aggressive behaviour than girls. Further, Table indicates that majority of male and female adolescents in rural area of Haryana had high (54.79% and 46.15%, respectively) level of verbal aggression while in urban area male adolescents had high (43.10%) verbal aggression and female adolescents had an average (49.26%) level of verbal aggression. This result is supported by Onukwufor (2013) that prevalence of verbal aggression was higher among males than females. The result also corroborates Atkin *et al.* (2002) who found

Sr. No.	Aggression		Haryana				Total (n=250)
			Rural (n=125)		Urban (n=125)		
			Male (73)	Female (52)	Male (58)	Female (67)	
1.	Physical aggression	Low	18 (24.66)	17 (32.69)	19 (32.75)	42 (62.68)	96 (38.40)
		Average	30 (41.09)	26 (50.00)	24 (41.38)	21 (31.35)	101 (40.40)
		High	25 (34.25)	9 (17.30)	15 (25.87)	4 (5.97)	53 (21.20)
2.	Verbal aggression	Low	12 (16.44)	8 (15.39)	10 (17.24)	7 (10.45)	37 (14.80)
		Average	21 (28.76)	20 (38.46)	23 (39.66)	33 (49.26)	97 (38.80)
		High	40 (54.79)	24 (46.15)	25 (43.10)	27 (40.29)	116 (46.40)
3.	Relational aggression	Low	29 (39.73)	3 (5.77)	16 (27.58)	5 (7.46)	53 (21.20)
		Average	36 (49.32)	27 (51.93)	24 (41.38)	28 (41.79)	115 (46.00)
		High	8 (10.95)	22 (42.30)	18 (31.04)	34 (50.75)	82 (32.80)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

that verbal aggression is widespread. The result is also in agreement with a study conducted in Spain, by Ramirez (1993) who found that boys justified verbal aggression more than girls. Findings of a study by Rivers and Smith (1994) have shown that while verbal aggression occurs with similar frequency in both sexes, direct physical aggression is more common among boys and indirect aggression is more common among girls.

On an overall basis, it was found that 46.40 per cent adolescents had high level of verbal aggression. Data in Table 1 also pertaining to relational aggression in adolescents of Haryana state highlighted that in rural area majority of male (49.32%) and female (51.93%) adolescents had an average level of relational aggression. But in urban area most of the male adolescents (41.38%) had an average level of relational aggression as compared to female (50.75%) adolescents having high level of relational aggression. Out of the total adolescents, it was observed that most of the adolescents had an average level of relational aggression. In another study by Baldry (1998) it was found that boys are more likely to engage in bullying behaviours such as threats, physical harm, rejection, and name-calling, while girls are most likely to use name-calling, teasing, rumors, rejection, and taking personal belongings.

Comparison of physical, verbal and relational aggression among adolescents :

Comparative analysis of adolescents’ physical, verbal and relational aggression on the basis of residential area in Haryana state is displayed in Table 2. Results divulged

significant differences in physical ($z= 2.38$), verbal ($z= 3.70$) and relational aggression ($z= 2.37$) in both rural and urban area of Haryana. In addition, mean scores comparison of Haryana state unveiled that adolescents belonging to rural area had high physical ($M= 46.04$) and verbal aggression ($M= 54.13$) while adolescents residing in urban area had more relational aggression ($M= 143.59$).

Relationship of aggression of adolescents with socio-personal variables :

The data under Table 3 establishes the correlation of aggression with socio-personal variables of adolescents in Haryana. Pearson correlation analysis in both the states showed that number of siblings ($r= 0.39$) and ordinal position ($r= 0.38$) had positive and significant correlation with aggression, suggests that with increase in number of children in the family aggression shows an increase. Positive and significant correlation was found between aggression and maternal occupation ($r= 0.23$) in Haryana state. Further, results showed negative but significant correlation of aggression with age ($r= -0.18$), paternal education ($r= -0.42$), maternal education ($r= -0.47$), caste ($r= -0.25$), paternal occupation ($r= -0.51$) and family income ($r= -0.35$). Therefore it can be concluded that with less income of father who is mostly the only earning member in the family, adolescents may not be able to enjoy the luxury of doing certain things what they see other adolescents doing in the same age group with father having higher income. With less income in the family adolescents may be displeased at time and there can also be a feeling of inferiority to others. These factors can

Table 2 : Physical, verbal and relational aggression in adolescents as per residential area

Sr. No.	Aggression	Haryana (250)		Z-calculated
		Rural (Mean±S.D.) (n=125)	Urban (Mean±S.D.) (n=125)	
1.	Physical aggression	46.04±8.21	43.46±8.93	2.38*
2.	Verbal aggression	54.13±4.59	51.68±5.79	3.70*
3.	Relational aggression	141.64±11.86	143.59±10.50	2.37*

* indicates significance of value at P=0.05

Table 3 : Relationship of aggression of adolescents with socio-economic variables

Sr. No.	Socio-personal variables	Haryana	Sr. No.	Socio-personal Variables	Haryana
1.	Age	-0.18*	6.	Caste	-0.25*
2.	Number of siblings	0.39*	7.	Paternal occupation	-0.51*
3.	Ordinal position	0.38*	8.	Maternal occupation	0.23*
4.	Paternal education	-0.42*	9.	Family income (monthly)	-0.35*
5.	Maternal education	-0.47*			

* indicates significance of value at P=0.05

lead to emotionally getting charged and aggressive at time. Baillargeon *et al.* (2002) supports the present findings. Rahman *et al.* (2014) reported that gender and socio-economic status have significant effect on adolescents' anger. With low SES adolescents expressed more anger than the middle and high SES. Also respondents with middle SES expressed more anger than the high SES. Rahman and Huq (2005) investigated that respondents with middle SES expressed more aggression than the low SES and girls expressed more aggression than the boys. Taylor (2006) found that Lower and middle class respondents report feeling more anger than their upper class counterparts. Gallo and Matthews (2003) studied socio-economic class-based patterns in emotion and found lower-class individuals experience more negative emotions, such as anxiety, sadness, and anger, than upper class individuals. Yu *et al.* (2006) showed that maternal education, paternal occupation, family type, parental child-rearing attitude and patterns, students' interpersonal relationship were significantly associated with the children's and adolescents' aggression. Kaur and Verma (2010) showed that abuse among adolescents has been found to be associated with their birth order, family income, family type, mothers' education and occupation.

Conclusion :

On the basis of the results of the present study it can be concluded that this study provides us with the evidence that family environment do play a vital role in moulding aggression in adolescence; Socio-economic variables also play a part in structuring the aggressive behaviour within adolescents. Poor family and socio economic variables can lead to behavioural problems among adolescents which consequences in aggressive behaviour. But better coping skills can also do wonder in improving aggression. This compiled data can help parents to figure out how socio-economic factors affect aggression. Aggression and emotional stress that develops in the earliest years of life is clearly linked to delinquent and criminal behaviour and other emotional problems in later life. Preventative interventions during the early years of life for effected or at risk families and adolescents will certainly reduce the prevalence and the seriousness of such behaviour problems.

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