

Risk Factors of Adolescent Aggression

Sandra Sunitha Lobo^{1*}, Dr. S.V. Surya Rekha²

ABSTRACT

Adolescence as a transitional stage implies several changes and challenges demanding psychosocial adjustment that could be beyond one's coping for some adolescents who end up developing dysfunctional adaptive behaviour such as aggression. The present study aimed at investigating the risk factors of adolescent aggression. A total of 297 respondents constituted the sample of the study. Among them, 63 (21.21%) adolescents were male and 234 (78.78%) were female. A survey design was used. The descriptive statistics used for analysis of demographic variables were frequency and percentage. Chi Square test and Fishers exact test were used to find the risk factors of Aggression. The findings of the present study show a statistical significant association between gender and socio-economic status on adolescent aggression.

Keywords: *Adolescent Aggression, Socio-Economic Status, Gender.*

There are major developmental changes and challenges associated with the period of adolescence, as youth acquire and consolidate the competencies, attitudes and values necessary to make a successful transition into adulthood. Late adolescence and the period following it, often referred to as emerging adulthood, have been noted as particularly important for setting the stage for continued development through the life span as individuals begin to make choices and engage in a variety of activities that influence rest of their lives.

Bronfenbrenner (2001) in his ecological theory of developmental processes provides a valuable lens for examining developmental changes in adolescent aggression. The family and school environments have regularly been linked to psycho-social and behavioural adjustment problems in the adolescent period. The quality of adolescent-parent, adolescent-peer and adolescent-teacher interactions influence and may determine the way adolescents perceive themselves in relation to others, their attitudes and their behaviours. In addition to the family processes, peer contexts in adolescence have implications for adolescent aggression.

¹ Research Scholar, Research and Development Centre, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, India

² Professor, Montfort College, Bangalore, India

*Responding Author

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Gender is a factor that plays a role in human aggression. Men are historically believed to be generally more physically aggressive than women (Coie & Dodge 1997, Maccoby & Jacklin 1974). This is one of the most robust and reliable behavioural sex differences and has been found across many different age groups and cultures. Rahman and Huq (2005) studied to explore aggression in adolescent boys and girls as related to socio-economic status (SES) and residential background in Bangladesh. They investigated 240 respondents and found that respondents with high SES expressed more aggression than those with middle and low SES. Respondents with middle SES expressed more aggression than the low SES and girls expressed more aggression than boys.

Family is the most important part of a child's environment (Adams, 1966). An individual's experiences in early life at home with his/her family in general and parents in particular are major determinants of a person's adjustment process during adolescence and in later life (Jayanagaraja, 1985). Children of physically punitive parents tend to use similar aggression when relating to others. Their parents often disciplined them by screaming, slapping, and beating - thus modeling aggression as a method of dealing with problems (Patterson, Chamberlain & Reid, 1982). There exists a relationship between intra familial communication and aggressive behaviours. Van Londen et al (2013), through a cross-sectional study, examined a model in which parenting, child social information processing and self-perception were simultaneously tested as risk factors associated with aggression. Most studies assessing the link between parental discipline and child aggression have focused primarily on discipline as a cause and aggression as an outcome.

Only a paucity of research has examined risk factors for community violence exposure across domains relevant to adolescents. Sharma, Grover and Chaturvedi (2008) conducted a Cross-sectional study in South Delhi, India, to assess risk behaviour related to interpersonal violence and its epidemiological correlates among 550 adolescents of various schools and colleges aged 14–19 years. The study identified a significant relationship with age ($p = .007$) and gender ($p \leq .001$) of the adolescents. The logistic regression analysis of the study showed significant correlation of interpersonal violence with male gender, lower age, and number of close friends, having seen role models who smoke/drink, and reside in resettlement colonies, slums or villages.

Using data from 184 adolescents and their homeroom teacher, analyses with structural equation modelling, Bradshaw, Goldweber, Garbarino and James (2013) revealed a significant relation between relatively mild levels of social - environmental risk and aggression. This association was partially mediated by negatively biased social - cognitive factors (i.e., general knowledge structures and social information processing). Findings suggest that even relatively low levels of social rejection and community violence exposure characterizing suburban youth put them at an increased risk of problems with aggression.

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Several longitudinal studies and meta-analytic reviews have demonstrated that exposure to violent media is linked to aggression over time. Coyne and Archer (2004) studied 347 British adolescents and revealed that indirectly aggressive girls viewed more indirect aggression on television than non-aggressive girls did. It could be that after viewing rewarded gossiping, backbiting and rumour spreading, these girls are particularly likely to use this form of aggression in their own lives.

Thus, the genetic disposition of the individual, the disciplinary styles adopted by the parents, the school set-up and the environment in which the learners are situated could enhance their aggression. Through observational experiences an adolescent can develop into an aggressor via media influences.

Objectives

1. Prevalence of aggression among the respondents.
2. Risk factors of aggression.

Hypothesis

- o Males are more aggressive than females.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The purpose of this study is to determine the risk factors related to aggressive behaviour among late adolescents. To this end, a quantitative approach has been used. The selected design is a survey design. The Universe of the study comprises the Autonomous colleges offering undergraduate degree course in Mangaluru city. Purposive sampling technique is used to select the respondents possessing high aggression. All the first year degree students, both male and female adolescents aged between 17 and 19 years who volunteered for the study from the three Colleges, scoring high on the Aggression Scale (score 205 and above) have been included in the study. The required data has been elicited by administering the Aggression Scale developed by Mathur and Bhatnagar (2004).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Prevalence of aggression among the respondents

	High Aggression	Low to Average Aggression	Total	Chi square Test
Males	41 (65.1%)	22 (34.9%)	63	X ² = 24.094
Females	73 (31.19%)	161 (68.8%)	234	<i>p</i> value 0.000
	114 (38.38%)	183 (61.61%)	297	<0.00 HS

High aggression is seen among 65.1% of males and 31.3% of females. The results show a statistical significant association between gender and aggression with X²= 24.094. Thus, there is

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a highly significant relation between the two groups. The hypothesis is proved. Males are found to be more aggressive than females as per the findings of Ghosh (2013) and Biswas (1989).

Table 2 Comparison between aggression and other variables

	Chi square Test				Fishers Exact Test	
	X2	df	p value		p value	
Sex and Aggression	24.094	1	.000	HS	.	.
Religion and Aggression	2.068	2	.356	NS		
Living Condition and Aggression	0.436	1	.509	NS		
Socio-Economic Status and Aggression	.				.004	HS
Presence of Parental Figures and Aggression	0.195	2	.907	NS		
Discipline and Aggression	.				.659	NS
Family Environment and Aggression	2.048	2	.359	NS		
Peers and Aggression	.				.718	NS
Peers Fights and Aggression	.				.595	NS
Teachers and Aggression	.				.892	NS
Community and Aggression	.				.238	NS
Engage in aggressive TV programmes and Aggression	0.721	2	.697	NS		
Engage in bullying classmates and neighbours and Aggression	2.291	2	.318	NS		

The results in Table 2 clearly show that there is a statistical significant association between sex and aggression ($X^2=24.094$). According to the theories of aggression by Parke and Slaby (1983), gender role and learning play a key role for anger and aggressive behaviour among males. Males are exposed to parenting practices that promote rough-and-tumble, anger and aggressive behaviours whereas females are exposed to parenting practices that promote caring and close interpersonal relationships. These differential socialization practices appear to foster adolescents' anger to a greater extent in males than in females. Also, there is a high significance between the socio - economic status of the respondents and aggression. One probable explanation of this finding might be related to the domain-specific theory of self-esteem (Baumeister, 1998; Kirkpatrick, Waugh, Valencia & Webster, 2002) which states that functionally distinct domains of self-esteem would predict aggression differentially.

Adolescents with high socio - economic status perceive superiority. Individuals with low socio - economic status, however, perceive social exclusion. Thus, social superiority and social exclusion emerge as reliable and positive predictors of aggression (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). The findings of the present study may be approached from the view-point of these

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theoretical perspectives. However, there is no significance between aggression and the other demographic variables.

Table 3 Demographic details of the respondents

		Aggression					
		High Aggression		Average/Low		Total	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Sex	Male	41	65	22	34	63	100
	Female	73	31	161	68	234	100
Total		114		183		297	
Religion	Hindus	36	35.0	67	65.0	103	100
	Muslims	31	45.6	37	54.4	68	100
	Christians	47	37.3	79	62.7	126	100
Total		114		183		297	
Living Conditions	At Home	66	36.9	113	63.1	179	100
	In The Hostel/PG	48	40.7	70	59.3	118	100
Total		114		183		297	
Socio - Economic Conditions	Upper Middle Class	36	54.5	30	45.5	66	100
	Middle Class	77	34.4	147	65.6	224	100
	Lower Middle Class	1	14.3	6	85.7	7	100
Total		114		183		297	
At Home	Both Parents Living Together	81	37.7	134	62.3	215	100
	Single Parent	23	39.7	35	60.3	58	100
	With Relatives and Grandparents	10	41.7	14	58.3	24	100
TOTAL		114		183		297	

Majority of the adolescents (179) are day scholars pursuing their collegiate education. As reported by them, 224 adolescents report belonging to the middle socio - economic strata of society. A majority of 215 adolescents hail from families where both the parents live together.

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Table 4 Risk factors of aggression

		Aggression					
		High Aggression		Average/Low		TOTAL	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Discipline	Unreasonably strict	7	43.8	9	56.3	16	100
	Strict but reasonable	103	37.7	170	62.3	273	100
	Uninvolved	4	50.0	4	50.0	8	100
TOTAL		114		183		297	
Family Environment	Excellent	32	35.6	58	64.4	90	100
	Good	71	38.2	115	61.8	186	100
	Average	11	52.4	10	47.6	21	100
TOTAL		114		183		297	
Peers	Loving/Caring	77	37.4	129	62.6	206	100
	Aggressive/Violent	4	50.0	4	50.0	8	100
	Ordinary/Neutral	33	39.8	50	60.2	83	100
TOTAL		114		183		297	
Peers Fights	Always	2	66.7	1	33.3	3	100
	Sometimes	39	36.1	69	63.9	108	100
	Never	73	39.2	113	60.8	186	100
TOTAL		114		183		297	
Teachers	Loving	79	40.1	118	59.9	197	100
	Unreasonably Strict	3	33.3	6	66.7	9	100
	Reasonable Strict	31	35.2	57	64.8	88	100
	Aggressive/Violent	1	33.3	2	66.7	3	100
TOTAL		114		183		297	
Community	Loving/Caring	62	34.6	117	65.4	179	100
	Aggressive/Violent	3	42.9	4	57.1	7	100
	Ordinary/Neutral	49	44.1	62	55.9	111	100
TOTAL		114		183		297	
Engage Aggressive Programmes In T.V	Always	11	45.8	13	54.2	24	100
	Sometimes	77	38.3	124	61.7	201	100
	Never	26	36.1	46	63.9	72	100
TOTAL		114		183		297	
Engage in Bullying and Classmates and Neighbours	Always	2	22.2	7	77.8	9	100
	Sometimes	54	42.5	73	57.5	127	100
	Never	58	36.0	103	64.0	161	100
TOTAL		114		183		297	

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Table 4 shows 43.8% of highly aggressive adolescents and 56.3% of average/low aggressive adolescents report unreasonably strict parental discipline. 64.4% of average/low aggressive adolescents consider their family environment to be excellent whereas only 35.6% of highly aggressive adolescents feel the same about their families. A large majority of the (52.4%) highly aggressive adolescents consider their family environment to be average compared to the average/low aggressive adolescents (47.6%). 62.6% of the average/low aggressive adolescents consider their peers to be loving and caring whereas only 37.4% of the highly aggressive adolescents feel the same about their peers. 66.7% of the highly aggressive adolescents expressed that their peers always fought with them and only 33.3% of the average/low aggressive adolescents expressed so. A larger majority of the average/low aggressive adolescents (59.9%) considered their teachers to be loving compared to the highly aggressive adolescents (40.1%). Compared to their counterparts, 66.7%, 64.8% and 66.7% of the average/low aggressive adolescents considered their teachers to be more unreasonably strict, more reasonably strict and more aggressive, respectively. 57.1% of the average/low aggressive adolescents considered their community to be more aggressive and violent compared to the highly aggressive adolescents (42.9%). A higher majority of the average/low aggressive adolescents (54.2%) always engaged in aggressive TV programmes than the highly aggressive adolescents (45.8%). Surprisingly, the average/low aggressive adolescents always engaged in bullying behaviour more (77.8%) than the highly aggressive adolescents (22.2%).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study on the risk factors of adolescent aggression revealed the presence of differences in gender and socio - economic status among aggressive late adolescents. As reported by them, many adolescents belong to the middle socio-economic strata of the society. During the period of adolescence, there are experiences of peer rejection, academic failure and lowered self-esteem. One continues to be persistently aggressive in interactions with both peers and adults and is at risk of social rejection. Arguments with parents and siblings may increase and the adolescent may develop other significant behaviour problems. To be healthy and safe, adolescents need to be equipped with skills that allow them to cope with anger in a productive manner. The nature of changes and challenges that occur simultaneously during adolescence require the development of effective coping strategies for adaptive functioning.

CONCLUSIONS

In today's society, adolescents face daily situations that contribute to their anger. A major contribution of the current study is the exploration of the association of adolescent's anger with sex and SES of a few adolescents of Mangaluru city. But the sample size was relatively small and the study was administered in Autonomous colleges only. Future research can be carried out on a large-scale sample covering different other colleges like government, private aided and private colleges. Further studies are needed to measure and investigate the components (instrumental anger, reactive anger and anger control) of anger. However, identifying and

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understanding protective factors are equally important as researching risk factors. Future studies may also wish to explore aspects of anger coping and its relationship with SES, gender and other demographic factors. It would be imperative to study and analyse the hidden causal factors of aggression, impulsivity, problems faced personally, at home or in academics as these problems would precipitate and prevent the experience of psychological well-being. Thus identification of causal factors would facilitate developing early preventive/curative interventions by mental health professionals which would ensure better mental health among the adolescent population.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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