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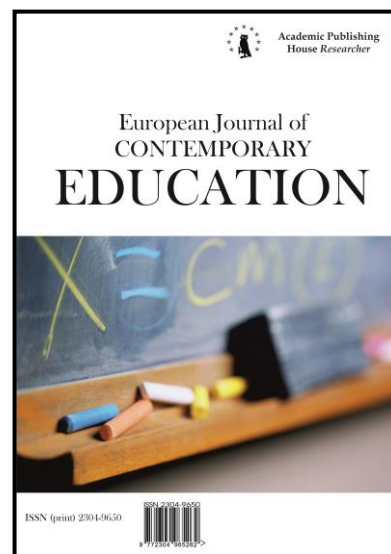
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Peculiarities of Perceived Aggressiveness among Youth School's Students

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Abstract

The aim of the current descriptive study was to examine perceived characteristics of aggressiveness of youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence and youth school's students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence. Youth schools provide learning opportunities for students who fail in conventional schools because they required specialized attention not available in the conventional school. The analysis covered 178 youth school's students, which were randomly selected from different youth schools in Kaunas region. The study used two surveys: Assinger's questionnaire and Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire. The data in the Assinger questionnaire were found to be different from the normal distribution. Statistical analysis of these data was performed using the chi-square test. The data of the Buss and Perry's Aggression Questionnaire were normally distributed, thus making it possible to use t-test for independent samples. Youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence had more positive attitudes toward aggression, i.e., they tend to justify the aggression partly or approve completely. Youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence were more verbally and physically aggressive than youth school's students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence. The findings of the present study point out new trends to a deeper understanding of the peculiarities of aggressiveness among youth school's students.

Keywords: aggressiveness; attitudes to aggression; punishment, youth school, students.

1. Introduction

Scientists investigated aggressiveness of students in various educational environments including primary education (Jain et al., 2018), secondary education (Bekiari, Spyropoulou, 2016), however, aggressiveness among students in youth schools have not received considerable attention. The authors of this study sought to facilitate an identification of peculiarities of aggressiveness in youth school's students. Topicality of investigation of perceived characteristics of aggressiveness in youth school's students is based on the argument that very little is actually known about what goes

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on within the precincts of youth schools (Kelly, 1993). Some researchers (Muñoz, 2004) reported that the alternative education particularly that related to youth at-risk often is based on uncomprehensive research.

Youth schools are destined to teach specialized students who have dropped out of typical schools (Malinauskas, 2019). The “youth school is usually part of the middle or high school program offered to secondary-aged students” (Dunning-Lozano, 2016: 434).

Youth schools provide learning opportunities for students who fail in conventional schools because they required specialized attention not available in the conventional school. Many students in youth schools have high rates of academic and behavioural problems (Foley, Pang, 2006). For such students could be characteristic attendance problems, underachievement problems and deficient in credits to graduate (Dunning-Lozano, 2016). Students, who were often suspended due to fights, or those who disrupted classes, could be sent to youth school so that they would not interfere with other students. Youth school’s students may have unique learning interests or disabilities; they can be potential perpetrators, violent people or convicted young people or participants of juvenile detention systems.

The lack of positive socialisation among youth school’s students can be interpreted as a precondition for aggressive behaviour (Gudžinskienė, Burvytė, 2017). Youth school’s students have lower social skills than students in high schools for the reason that youth schools are accomplished to implement specialized instruction to students that have behavioural complications, nonappearance, bad academic results (Malinauskas, 2019). Punishment in school is a typical replay to the violence that arises in youth schools. Disciplinary punishments for violence often involved short-term suspension, reprimand, and debarment from class (Ergün, 2014). Punished youth are more likely to drop out of school (Skiba, Rausch, 2006). Consequently, punished students do not view education as a viable process toward adult success (Noguera, 2003). Increased aggressive behavior, drug use, and violence often is as a result from school punishment and exclusion (Rios, 2010).

Objectives. The purpose of the present study was to examine perceived characteristics of aggressiveness among youth school’s students who received disciplinary punishment for violence and youth school’s students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence. It was hypothesized that perceived aggressiveness is more characteristic for youth school’s students who received disciplinary punishment for violence than that of youth school’s students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence. This hypothesis was based on earlier research (Noguera, 2003) showing that punished students are more likely to engage in aggressive and delinquency-like behavior as a result of school punishment and exclusion. Results of the previous studies suggest “the importance of assessing contextual risk factors (for instance, disciplinary punishment) in students attending youth schools to provide comprehensive intervention for students in these settings” (Rubens et al., 2019: 508).

2. Materials and methods

Cross-sectional design was chosen in this study because we wanted to investigate differences in perceived characteristics of aggressiveness among youth school’s students who received disciplinary punishment for violence and youth school’s students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence.

Youth school’s students were randomly chosen for inclusion in the sampling frame. The participants were randomly selected applying a two-stage sampling strategy: first, the youth school was selected from the list of the schools of district, and then 16-18-year-old youth school’s students in those schools were invited to participate. Names of participants were randomly drawn from official youth school’s 10th – 12th grades rosters. The analysis covered 178 youth school’s students. Group of youth school’s students who received disciplinary punishment for violence consisted of 82 adolescents and group of youth school’s students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence consisted of 96 adolescents. The mean age of the participants was 16.83 ± 1.14 years.

Instruments. The research conducted for this study included two surveys:

1. *Assinger’s Questionnaire* for the identification of the attitudes to aggression (Raigorodskij, 2000). This instrument consists of 20 items and the range of responses was 3-point scale. Questionnaire has been translated into Lithuanian and adaptation has been performed.

Respondents' answers were evaluated by points, where 35 points or less indicate the negative attitude to aggression, 36 to 44 points indicate the neutral attitude, and 45 or more points indicate the positive attitude. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed by Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha = .76$ (Malinauskas, Dumciene, 2014) and $\alpha = .77$ for the present sample).

2. *Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (AQ)*. This instrument consists of 29 items to assess self-reported forms of aggressiveness (Buss, Perry, 1992). The AQ consists of four subscales: hostility (eight items), anger (seven items), verbal aggression (five items) and physical aggression (nine items). Respondents are required to rate the items using a 5-point Likert scale. Internal consistency of the four subscales ranges from $\alpha = .63$ to $\alpha = .79$ (Malinauskas, Dumciene, 2014).

Data collection procedures. After parental consent was obtained researcher administered surveys in a paper-and-pencil format in classrooms during class time. Youth school's students filled out a consent form, provided information about age and about receiving/not-receiving disciplinary punishment for violence, and then completed the assessment questionnaire (consisting of the instruments detailed above).

Statistical analysis. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients were calculated to check normality. The data in the Assinger questionnaire were found to be different from the normal distribution. Statistical analysis of these data was performed using the chi-square test. The data of the *Buss and Perry's Aggression Questionnaire* were normally distributed. All variables distribution of the *Buss and Perry's Aggression Questionnaire* were checked for skewness and kurtosis and had acceptable distributions (skewness and kurtosis between -2 and $+2$ are considered acceptable to prove normal distribution (George, Mallery, 2010)), thus making it possible to use *t*-test for independent samples. Cohen's *d* was used as effect sizes indicator. Cohen's *d* effect sizes are generally defined as small ($d = .2$), medium ($d = .5$), and large ($d = .8$). Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24.0 was used to perform statistical analysis.

Ethical procedures. Approval from the Ethical Committee of the University was successfully received. Parental consent was obtained before evaluation of school's students for the reason that they were 16-18 years old. Confidentiality was ensured since questionnaires were handed out for completion in classrooms. The participants' names were not recorded in the assessment questionnaire and confidentiality was guaranteed.

3. Results

The attitudes in relation to aggression of youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence and youth school's students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Attitudes to aggression of youth school's students (percentages and frequencies)

	Attitudes to aggression, % (<i>frequency</i>)		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence*	21 (17)	35 (29)	44 (36)
Youth school's students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence	38 (36)	32 (31)	30 (29)

* $p < .05$

Statistical analysis showed that youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence and students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence differed significantly in the attitudes to aggression ($\chi^2 (2) = 6.57; p < .05$). It was established that positive attitudes in relation to aggression were characteristic for 44 % youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence and for 30 % youth school's students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence.

Data of self-reported forms of aggressiveness among youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence and youth school's students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence are given in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for aggression dimensions of youth school's students

	1		2		t value	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD		
Physical Aggression	3.04	.52	2.89	.45	2.04*	.31
Verbal Aggression	3.07	.49	2.93	.43	2.01*	.31
Anger	2.96	.52	2.81	.48	1.99*	.30
Hostility	2.89	.51	2.74	.50	1.97*	.30

* $p < .05$; $df = 176$.

1 – Youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence;

2 – Youth school's students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence.

Youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence were more verbally and physically aggressive than students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence. Statistical analysis showed that youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence reported higher physical aggression ($t(176) = 2.04$; $p < .05$). Youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence were more verbally aggressive than students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence ($t(176) = 2.01$; $p < .05$).

Mean-score differences between youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence and youth school's students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence were significant ($t(176) = 1.99$; $p < .05$) with respect to anger: students who received disciplinary punishment for violence reported higher anger. It was found that hostility indicators levels among students who received disciplinary punishment for violence were higher than those of students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence ($t(176) = 1.97$; $p < .05$).

4. Discussion

The purposes of the present study were to explore perceived characteristics of aggressiveness in youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence and students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence. Comparative analyses enabled us to identify univariate associations among status of receiving disciplinary punishment for violence, psychological attitudes towards aggression and levels of different forms of aggression.

More positive attitudes to aggression in youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence may be related with their more prominent seeking of recognition from peers (Garandeanu, Cillessen, 2006). It is in line with arguments that more positive attitudes to aggression are related with higher probabilities of involvement with aggressive actions (Reijntjes et al., 2010). It could be in line with arguments by Losel and Bender (2014) that aggressive actions that individuals make early in their lives influence their aggressiveness later, but there are no data on aggressive behavior in the family that may have been learned in the family or in the foster home.

Data of our present research revealed that youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence showed higher scores of the perceived characteristics of aggressiveness, although the effects were rather small (Cohen's d ranged from .30 to .31). It was confirmed that youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence were more verbally and physically aggressive than students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence. Students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence were less angry and less hostile than youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence.

The results of the present research could be explained by the studies which suggests that aggressive actions creates for students a sense of pleasure (Benenson et al., 2008), and aggressive actions that individuals make early in their lives influence their aggressiveness later (Losel, Bender, 2014).

It was also established that students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence were less angry and less hostile than youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence. We can suppose that, firstly, aggressiveness was provoked by the aggressive actions that individuals make early in their lives, and, secondly, aggressiveness was induced by the appreciation among peers. The results of present study can be explained by the links of attributes of aggressiveness of students with youth schools' peculiarities (youth schools' are as separate tracks for students at-risk, for some violent people or convicted young people) (Muñoz, 2004). Our results can be explained by the various processes that determine increase of aggressiveness among youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence and suggests that students more prone to engage in aggressive behavior are more likely to ally with potential perpetrators outside of school (Patterson, 1992) because the most available peers are often those who have previously chosen asocial behavior (Muñoz, 2004).

5. Limitations and areas for further study

The findings of this study, delimited to youth school's students, do not show differences between students of different types of schools. The present study does not distinguish aggressiveness related to students' conditions social environment for maturation. This research does not focus on the variables of the socio-economic status of the youth school's students but belonging to less or more affluent classes could influence perceived characteristics of aggressiveness. Consequently, future research is required to focus on the socio-economic status of the youth school's students. It cannot be ruled out that youth school's students who participated in the study only partially revealed the analyzed problem, therefore, in order to increase the quality of the study and the reliability of the results, it would be appropriate to interview not only students but also their teachers in the future. To sum up, the findings of the present study point out new trends to a deeper understanding of the peculiarities of aggressiveness among youth school's students.

6. Conclusion

Research analysis indicated that youth school's students who received disciplinary punishment for violence had more positive attitudes to aggression, i.e., they tend to justify the aggression partly or approve completely, and were more aggressive than students who not received disciplinary punishment for violence. These findings suggest the importance of education of youth school's teachers about punishment research on outcomes.

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