

DEVELOPMENT OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR IN CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

The present study was taken up to study the physical and verbal aggression of urban and rural preschool children. Study was conducted in Hisar city for urban study and Block-II of Hisar district for rural study. From Block-II, Kaimari and Mangali villages were selected as per the demand of the study. Sixty aggressive children in the age-group of 4-6 years were selected from various preschools of Hisar city and sixty from the selected villages. Thus a total of 120 children were the sample size for present study. Mothers of these aggressive children were also the respondents of this study. Thus 120 children, 60 from urban 60 from rural in the age group of 4-6years constituted the sample. A checklist was prepared to observe the major forms of aggressive behaviour. Percentages were used to describe the results. The result showed that hundred per cent of boys and girls each in rural and urban areas always used force on others i.e. push/pull. Hundred percent girls and 97.23 percent urban boys always shouted/screamed at others. While in rural areas, 100 per cent of boys always used abusive language and hundred per cent of girls shouted/screamed at others.

Keywords: Childhood aggression, Physical and Verbal aggression

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INTRODUCTION

“Aggression is that behaviour that is intended to hurt or harm others”. According to Baron (1985), aggression is any form of behaviour directed towards the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment. According to Crick, Brigber and Howes (1996), anger and intent to harm have been two defining features of aggression. Shaw, Giliom & Giovannelli. (2000) described early aggressive behavior as an “act directed toward a specific other person or object with intent to hurt or frighten, for which there is a consensus about the aggressive intent of the act.”

Aggression manifests itself from early years. Children quarrel, bite or fight, kick or punch, threaten to hit and shoot and call names. Some amount of aggressive behaviour in children has been accepted by most psychologists as normal and universal. Lorton (1979) thought that preschoolers sometimes use aggressive types of behaviours to work out or display their emotions, because of their ego centric nature. Young children are quick to display pleasure or anger. As preschool children grow older, they tend to participate more frequently in group play, aggression and conflicts occur with increasing frequency as part of whole pattern of social participation. Aggression becomes a way of releasing or showing emotions.

Dunn (1988) had observed an increase in aggressive behaviours of child in second year of life. Preschooler with increase in development of vocabulary and physical strength indulge in physical as well as verbal forms of aggression. Carson and Butcher (1992) had labeled this as "Un-socialized aggressive reactions". Unsocialized aggressive children manifest such characteristic as covert or overt hostility, disobedience, physical and verbal aggressiveness, quarrelsomeness, revengefulness and destructiveness.

Gender is a factor that plays a role in human aggression. Males are generally more aggressive than females (Coie and Dodge, 1997). Not only this, aggression has been found to be more stable over time in boys than girls (Olweus 1979). There is evidence that males are quicker to aggression and more likely than females to express their aggression physically (Bjorkqvist *et al.*, 1994). However, some researchers have suggested that females are not

necessarily less aggressive, but that they tend to show their aggression in less overt, less physical ways (Hines and Saudino, 2003). For example, females may display more verbal and relational aggression, such as social rejection.

So, keeping the above facts in view the study on childhood aggression is taken into consideration with the objective to observe the major forms of aggressive behavior among urban and rural children.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The present study was conducted purposively in rural and urban areas of Hisar District of Haryana State. Urban study was conducted in Hisar city and rural study was conducted in block-II of Hisar District. From Hisar city, three schools were selected randomly. The schools were selected through purposive convenient sampling. These schools were private English medium, coeducational, medium fee charging and catering to middle socioeconomic strata. Finally a list of 60 children from Hisar city was prepared. Similarly from rural area, three preschools were selected from village Kaimari and three preschools were selected from village Mangali. These preschools were also coeducational and private English/Hindi medium. Finally a list of 60 children from rural area was prepared. Thus a total of 120 children was the sample size for present study. Mothers of these aggressive children were also the respondent for the study.

Tools for data collection

Observation checklist: A checklist was prepared to observe the major forms of aggressive behaviour manifestation and to identify the names of children who displayed aggressive behaviour frequently. The observation checklist consisted of 20 items out of which first 10 were meant for to observe physical aggression and another 10 were for verbal aggression.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Involvement of urban and rural children in activities leading to physical and verbal aggression in children was studied.

Table 1: Involvement of Urban Children in Activities Leading to Physical Aggression. n=60

Sr. No.	Statement	Boys n=36			Girls n=24		
		Always	Often	Never	Always	Often	Never
1	Use force on others i.e. push/pull	36 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	24 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
2	Throws toys/objects	36 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	21 (87.5)	0 (0.00)	3 (12.5)
3	Snatches toys/objects	36 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	16 (66.67)	0 (0.00)	8 (33.33)
4	Kicks, bites or hits other children	2 (5.56)	2 (5.56)	32 (88.89)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	24 (100.00)
5	Fights with other children	35 (97.22)	0 (0.00)	1 (2.78)	1 (4.17)	5 (20.83)	18 (75.00)
6	Trips the other one	10 (27.78)	25 (69.44)	1 (2.78)	7 (29.17)	6 (25.00)	11 (45.83)
7	Shoves the other one	28 (77.78)	8 (22.22)	0 (0.00)	4 (16.67)	2 (8.33)	18 (75.00)
8	Destroys own or other belongings	4 (11.1)	4 (11.1)	28 (77.78)	1 (4.17)	0 (0.00)	23 (95.83)
9	Squirmy fidgety child	16 (44.44)	10 (27.78)	10 (27.78)	4 (16.67)	6 (25.00)	14 (58.33)

10	Has twitches, mannerisms, or tics of the face and body	12 (33.33)	2 (5.56)	22 (61.1)	5 (20.83)	1 (4.17)	18 (75.00)
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Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to the respective totals

Table 1 showed that in urban areas, hundred per cent of boys and girls each always used force on others i.e. push/pull. A total of hundred per cent boys threw toys/objects while maximum of girls (87.5 per cent) did so. Only 12.5 per cent of girls never did that kind of activity. Hundred per cent of boys snatched toys/objects while more than half (66.67 per cent) girls did so. Thirty three per cent of girls never did that activity. Five per cent of boys kicked, bite or hit other children always and often each while 88.89 per cent boys never did that activity. None of the girls performed that activity. Maximum (97.22 per cent) boys did fighting with other children followed by 2.78 per cent of boys who never done so. Seventeen per cent of girls performed that activity while 20.83 per cent girls often did that activity followed by 75 per cent girls never done so. Twenty eight per cent of boys tripped the other one while 69.44 per cent often did so followed by 2.78 per cent never done so. A total of 29.17 per cent girls performed that activity while 25 per cent did so followed by 45.83 per cent never done so. Maximum (77.78 per cent) of boys shoved the other one while remaining (22.22 per cent) boys often did so. Seventeen per cent of girls performed that activity while 8.33 per cent of girls often did so followed by 75 per cent girls never done so. Eleven per cent of boys destroyed own or other's belongings always and often each followed by 77.78 per cent never done so. Only 17 per cent of girls did that activity followed by 95.83 per cent never done so. A total of 44.44 per cent boys squirmed and fidgeted while 27.78 per cent often and never done so each. Seventeen per cent of girls always performed that activity while 25 per cent girls often did so followed by 58.33 per cent never done so. One-third (33.33 per cent) of boys had twitched, mannerism or ticked of the face and body while 5.56 per cent often did so and 61.1 per cent never done so. A total of 20.83 per cent girls performed that activity while 17 per cent often did so and 75 per cent never done so.

Table 2: Involvement of Rural children in Activities Leading to Physical Aggression

n=60

Sr. No.	Statement	Boys (n=45)			Girls (n=15)		
		Always	Often	Never	Always	Often	Never
1	Use force on others i.e. push/pull	45 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	15 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
2	Throws toys/objects	39 (86.67)	2 (4.44)	4 (8.89)	15 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
3	Snatches toys/objects	34 (75.56)	3 (6.67)	8 (17.78)	13 (86.67)	0 (0.00)	2 (13.33)
4	Kicks, bites or hits other children	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	45 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	15 (100.00)
5	Fights with other children	8 (17.78)	1 (2.22)	36 (80.00)	2 (13.33)	1 (6.67)	12 (80.00)
6	Trips the other one	14 (31.1)	17 (37.78)	14 (31.1)	4 (26.67)	9 (60.00)	2 (13.33)
7	Shoves the other one	15 (33.33)	16 (35.56)	14 (31.1)	7 (46.67)	6 (40.00)	2 (13.33)
8	Destroys own or other belongings	0 (0.00)	1 (2.22)	44 (97.78)	1 (6.67)	0 (0.00)	14 (93.33)
9	Squirmy fidgety child	16 (35.67)	10 (22.22)	19 (42.22)	4 (26.67)	4 (26.67)	7 (46.67)

10	Has twitches, mannerisms, or tics of the face and body	7 (15.56)	9 (20.00)	29 (64.44)	5 (33.33)	0 (0.00)	10 (66.67)
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Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to the respective totals

Table 2 showed that in rural areas, 100 per cent of boys and girls each used forces on others i.e. push/pull. Maximum (86.67 per cent) of boys threw toys/objects while only 4.44 per cent often did so and 8.89 per cent never done so. Hundred per cent of girls did that activity. Coyne, Archer and Eslea, (2006) found that adolescents were exposed to nearly 10 times more indirect, relational, and social aggression on television than they are in school. Girls perceived indirect, direct, relational and verbal aggression as more harmful than did boys. Limited evidence was found for a distinction between indirect, relational, and social aggression, although it was clear that they were more similar than different. Seventy five per cent of boys snatched toys/objects while 6.67 per cent often did so and 17.78 per cent never done so. Eighty seven per cent of girls always performed that activity while 13.33 per cent never done so. None of the boys and girls each kicked, bite or hit other children. Eighteen per cent of boys fought with other children while only 2.22 per cent often did so followed by 80 per cent never done so. Thirteen per cent of girls performed that activity while 6.67 per cent often did so followed by 80 per cent never done so. A total of 31.1 per cent boys tripped the other one while 37.78 per cent often did so followed by 311 per cent never done so. In girls, 26.67 per cent always performed that activity while 60 per cent often did so and 13.33 per cent never done so. One-third (33.33 per cent) of boys shoved the other one while 35.56 per cent often did so and 31.1 per cent never done so. A total of 46.67 per cent girls always performed that activity while 40 per cent often did so and 13.33 per cent never done so. Only 2.22 per cent of boys often destroyed own or other's belongings while 97.78 per cent never done so. Seven per cent of girls always performed that activity while 97.78 per cent never done so. Seven per cent of girls always performed that activity while 93.33 per cent never done so, 35.67 per cent of boys always squirmed and fidgeted while 22.22 per cent often did so and 42.22 per cent never done so. In girls, 26.67 per cent performed that activity always and often each while 46.67 per cent never done so. Only 15.56 per cent of boys had twitched, mannerismed or ticked of the face and body while 20 per cent often did do and 57.78 per cent never done so. In girls, 33.33 per cent always performed that activity while 66.67 per cent

never done so. Ostrov *et al.*, (2004) revealed that gender differences in subtypes of aggression may be apparent as early as 3 years of age. Specifically, girls were found to deliver and receive more relational aggression than males, whereas boys tended, although not significantly, to deliver and significantly received more physical aggression than females. Relational and physical subtypes of delivered and received aggression were differentially associated with preschoolers' social-psychological adjustment.

Table 3: Involvement of urban children in activities leading to verbal aggression

n=60

Sr. No.	Statement	Boys n=36			Girls n=24		
		Always	Often	Never	Always	Often	Never
1	Use abusive language	0 (0.00)	1 (2.78)	35 (97.22)	0 (0.00)	2 (8.33)	22 (91.67)
2	Shouts/screams at others	35 (97.22)	0 (0.00)	1 (2.78)	24 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
3	Tells lies	3 (8.33)	0 (0.00)	33 (91.67)	9 (37.5)	0 (0.00)	15 (62.5)
4	Has stutter or stammer	30 (83.33)	0 (0.00)	6 (16.67)	20 (83.33)	0 (0.00)	4 (16.67)
5	Bullies other children	17 (47.78)	2 (5.56)	17 (47.78)	17 (70.83)	0 (0.00)	7 (29.17)
6	Refuses to share toys/objects	3 (8.33)	28 (77.78)	5 (13.89)	7 (29.17)	10 (41.67)	7 (29.17)
7	Cries easily	7	17	12	11	8	5

Sr. No.	Statement	Boys n=36			Girls n=24		
		Always	Often	Never	Always	Often	Never
		(19.44)	(47.78)	(33.33)	(45.83)	(33.33)	(20.83)
8	Calls the other one names	26 (72.22)	7 (19.44)	3 (8.33)	22 (91.67)	1 (4.17)	4 (16.67)
9	Tease the other one	5 (13.89)	13 (36.11)	18 (50.00)	8 (33.33)	9 (37.5)	7 (29.17)
10	Insult the other ones	4 (11.1)	0 (0.00)	32 (88.89)	12 (50.00)	0 (0.00)	12 (50.00)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to the respective totals

From Table 3, it was observed that in urban areas only 2.78 per cent of boys often used abusive language while 97.22 per cent never used such language. Only 8.33 per cent of girls often used abusive language whereas 91.67 per cent never used such language. A total of 97.22 per cent boys always shouted/screamed at others while only 2.78 per cent never done so. Hundred per cent of girls always performed that activity. Only 8.33 per cent of boys lied always whereas 91.67 per cent never lied. In girls, 37.5 per cent always lied whereas 62.5 per cent never lied. Maximum (83.33 per cent) of boys and girls always had the problems of stutter or stammer whereas 16.67 per cent never had that problem. Forty eight per cent of boys always bullied other children while 5.56 per cent often did so followed by 47.78 per cent never done so. More than half (70.83 per cent) of girls always bullied other children whereas 29.17 per cent never done so. Only 8.33 per cent of boys always refused to share toys/objects whereas 77.78 per cent often did so followed by 13.89 per cent never done so. In girls, 29.17 per cent always refused to share toys/objects whereas 41.67 per cent often did so and 29.17 per cent never done so. Nineteen per cent of boys always cried easily whereas 47.78 per cent often cried easily and 33.33 per cent never done so. In girls, 45.83 per cent always cried easily whereas one-third (33.33 per cent) often cried easily followed by 20.83 per cent never cried easily. More

than half (72.22 per cent) of boys always called the other(s) by name(s) whereas 19.44 per cent often did so followed by 8.33 per cent never done so. Maximum (91.67 per cent) of girls always performed that activity while 17 per cent each often and never done so. Only 13.89 per cent of boys teased the other one always whereas 36.11 per cent often teased the other one followed by exactly half (50 per cent) of them never done so. One-third (33.33 per cent) of girls always teased the other one while 37.5 per cent often did so followed by 29.17 per cent never done so. Only 11.1 per cent of boys always insulted the other(s) whereas 88.89 per cent never done so. Exactly half (50 per cent) of the girls each, always and never, done that activity. Ostrov *et al.*, (2008) examined relational and physical aggression and deceptive behavior among 120 preschool-aged children observed relational aggression was significantly associated with concurrent and prospective increases in deceptive behavior, even after controlling for gender and observed physical aggression.

Table 4: Involvement of Rural children in activities leading to verbal aggression**n=60**

Sr. No.	Statement	Boys (n=45)			Girls (n=15)		
		Always	Often	Never	Always	Often	Never
1	Use abusive language	45 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (13.33)	13 (86.67)
2	Shouts/screams at others	17 (37.78)	12 (26.67)	16 (35.56)	15 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
3	Tells lies	41 (91.1)	0 (0.00)	4 (8.89)	0 (0.00)	6 (40.00)	9 (60.00)
4	Has stutter or stammer	1 (2.22)	0 (0.00)	44 (97.78)	15 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
5	Bullies other children	1 (2.22)	0 (0.00)	44 (97.78)	10 (66.67)	1 (6.67)	4 (26.67)
6	Refuses to share toys/objects	5 (11.1)	19 (42.22)	21 (47.67)	9 (60.00)	6 (40.00)	0 (0.00)
7	Cries easily	4 (8.89)	18 (40.00)	23 (51.1)	9 (60.00)	4 (26.67)	2 (13.33)
8	Calls the other one names	2 (4.44)	2 (4.44)	41 (91.1)	14 (93.33)	0 (0.00)	1 (6.67)
9	Tease the other one	5 (11.1)	2 (4.44)	38 (84.44)	10 (66.67)	2 (13.33)	3 (20.00)
10	Insult the other ones	38 (84.44)	2 (4.44)	5 (11.1)	10 (66.67)	0 (0.00)	5 (33.33)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to the respective totals

From Table 4, it was portrait that in rural areas, 100 per cent of boys always used abusive language. Only 13.33 per cent of girls often used abusive language while maximum (86.67 per cent) never used abusive language. A total of 37.78 per cent boys shouted/screamed at others always whereas 26.67 per cent often did so followed by 35.56 per cent never done so. Hundred per cent of girls always performed that activity. Maximum (91.1 per cent) of boys always lied while 8.89 per cent never lied. In girls, 40 per cent often lied followed by 60 per cent never lied. Only 2.22 per cent of boys always had the problem of stutter or stammer whereas 97.78 per cent never had that problem. Hundred per cent of girls were always having that problem. Only 2.22 per cent of boys always bullied other children followed by 97.78 per cent never bullied other children. More than half (66.67 per cent) of girls always bullied other children while only 6.67 per cent often did so and 26.67 per cent never done so. Only 11.1 per cent of boys always refused to share toys/objects while 42.22 per cent often did so followed by 47.67 per cent never done so. Only 8.89 per cent of boys always cried easily whereas 40 per cent often cried easily followed by 51.1 per cent never cried easily. More than half (60 per cent) of girls always cried easily while 26.67 per cent often did so and 13.33 per cent never done so. Only 4.44 per cent of boys called the other(s) by name(s) always and often each followed by 91.1 per cent never done so. Maximum (93.33 per cent) of girls always called the other(s) by name(s) whereas only 6.67 per cent never done so. Eleven per cent of boys teased the other one always while 4.44 per cent often did so and maximum (84.44 per cent) never done so. Two-third (66.67 per cent) of girls always teased the other one while 13.33 per cent often did so and 20 per cent never done so. Maximum (84.44 per cent) of boys always insulted the other(s) while 4.44 per cent often did so and 11.1 per cent never done so. Two-third (66.67 per cent) of girls always insulted the other(s) while remaining one-third (33.33 per cent) never done so.

The preschool children have been found to be indulged in different kinds of aggressive behaviour. The most common forms include - use of force, hitting, threatening to hit, throwing objects, screaming, shouting and snatching. (Campbell, 2002; Shaw *et al.*, 1996) suggested that aggression starting at an early age continues throughout development

Use of force by the child included pushing and/or pulling. The children were observed to push other child, exerting force (sometimes lightly) with one hand or both to move the other child. This was observed during free play as well as class room situation. Another form of use of force was pulling. The children were observed to pull other child's body part like arm, hair and sometimes the article of clothing. This "pulling" as exertion of force was often observed in situation where the child wanted something from the peer, who was avoiding giving. During the preschool years, children tend to resort to instrumental and physical expression of aggression such as snatching toys and pushing a playmate. Hostile aggression that is exhibited as aggressive behavior directed to others, such as name-calling, criticizing and ridiculing, comes much later, at around 7 years of age. (Coie and Dodge, 1998)

Preschool children were observed to be indulging in hitting, often to express their anger. Most common form of hitting was slapping especially on the back of other children. During individual activities, interference from other child, often sitting next to the child, invited slapping on the back from the child or during play children would slap peer to show disagreement. Another form of hitting was kicking the peer or raised leg as if almost to kick. Children were seen to threatening to hit the peer, sometimes to display anger sometimes to demand abidance. Fagot and Hagan (1991) noted that there was a differential pattern in aggressive acts during the early years; aggressive young toddlers had brief interactions, whereas older toddlers engaged in aggressive acts for longer periods. They would raise the arm as if about to hit. This threatening was often accompanied with the verbal threat. Threatening to hit was sometimes only verbal. Threatening words of one girl were "I will shoot you" when she was not being turn to swing.

Children were noticed to scream and shout at other children. This was often done to display anger or to scare them, making them comply to his/her wish. Children while playing pretended to shoot other children. They would pick up blocks and hold them in position like they would hold a gun, then would act as if firing bullets. Another form of aggression in children is manifested as snatching object from peer's hands. This object did not always belong to the child. Preschool age marks an increasing possessiveness about their belongings.

Snatching of one's toys or belongings like bag, by one child is often resisted by the owner child and this often resulted in fighting.

Other behaviour observed included interfering in others' work or place e.g. during individual drawing or colouring session, some children would start colouring in other's sheet, sometimes only making one or two strokes. Some children seemed to enjoy this. They would get up and move around the class to look for peer whose work they wanted to interfere with.

These findings were largely supported by results of teachers' interviews conducted. Pulkkinen and Pitkanen (2006) found that developmental trajectories for physically aggressive girls differed from those for verbally and facially aggressive girls, the former being less oriented to education. Sex differences did not exist in the amount of aggression when measured with peer nominations, but boys were more aggressive when measured with teacher ratings. Tripathi (2000) revealed that aggression increased with advancing age in early childhood. Family environment also played a significant role in inducing aggression. Older children, if placed in a negative environment, developed behaviour problems. Boys (44.44%) were more prone to acquire aggressive behaviour than girls (35.55%). Hostile behaviour in male children could be attributed to the cultural setting. The frequently reported aggression behaviour was use of force and hitting. Children used force on their peers in situations like taking back their belongings or as snatching/wanting something attractive other child has. Hitting was reported as fighting was many times done to demand compliance from peer.

Balda and Duhan (2009) revealed that majority of mothers used reasoning and verbal reprimand to control aggressive behaviour of their children. About half of the mothers reported using physical punishment to cope with aggression in their children. A few mothers also reported using perspective-taking, time out, and alternative thinking. To cope with withdrawn behaviour of children, most of the mothers encouraged children to make friends and to interact with others. A few mothers also reported that with growing age shyness sheds off on its own. Further, majority of mothers believed that children learn aggressive behaviour from aggressive models and when their wishes are not fulfilled. A good percentage of mothers also reported that exposure to aggressive mass media inculcates aggression in

children or that aggression is a basic human nature. For withdrawn behaviour, majority of mothers believed that shyness is a basic human nature/temperament. It had been found that children displayed aggressive behaviour more in the absence of teacher. This had been supported by the interview of three teachers “They don’t dare to speak/fight in presence of teachers”.

CONCLUSION

The overall conclusion showed that boys were more physically aggressive and girls were more verbally aggressive, in Rural and urban areas. Majority of urban and rural boys used the force on others, throws toys/objects and snatches toys/objects and girls kicks, bites or hits other children to show physical aggression. Boys from urban settings and girls from rural areas show verbal aggression by shouts/screams at others. While rural children shows verbal aggression by using abusive language and telling lies.

There is need to guide parents in dealing with childhood aggression since parents may not have access to information about how to cope with aggressive behavior in their children. Also it is important to teach children age-appropriate strategies for regulating their behavior and help them learn anger management from early years.

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