

## **Adolescent Aggression and Parental Behaviour: A Correlational Study**

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**Abstract:** The study was designed to examine the relationship between aggression of adolescents and their parental behavior. A sample of 155 adolescent students (80 Boys and 75 Girls) was taken from the different Senior Secondary schools of District Gurdaspur affiliated to CBSE. Aggression was measured by Aggression Scale (Pal and Naqvi, 1983) and Parental Behaviour was measured by Multi Dimensional Parenting Scale (Chauhan and Khokhar, 1997). The results show that there is significant positive correlation between aggression among adolescents and deviant parental behaviour. Findings of the study revealed that parents show more deviant parenting towards girls in comparison to boys in some of the dimensions. The results also throw some light on gender differences in aggressive behavior of adolescents.

**Keywords:** Adolescence, Aggression, Parental Behavior.

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### **I. Introduction**

Aggressive and violent behavior by one human being towards another is not a new phenomenon. It was prevalent among our hunter ancestors thousands years ago and it is still prevalent almost in every society today. The prevalence of aggressive and violent behavior among adolescents today is sufficient to make it a social problem worthy of attention around the world. "Aggression is a set of behavior that is likely to, or has the potential to cause harm to others or intended to cause harm and are goal directed" (Berkowitz, 1993). Aggression can be expressed in seven different forms according to Myer (1988) including: Predatory, Inter male fear induced, Irritable anger, Territorial, Maternal/Paternal, and Instrumental. In terms of positive and negative value, aggression can also be classified into two types i.e. Hostile Aggression and Instrumental Aggression. Hostile aggression (Reactive aggression) is conceived as impulsive, thoughtless, springs from anger and provides injury to others. Instrumental aggression can be understood as a drive or motivation, as it is proactive and is conceived as premeditated means to obtain some goal (Berkowitz, 1993 and Geen, 2001). Hostile aggression is "hot" and instrumental aggression is "cool". There are some factors affecting aggression which can be classified into three broad categories like Person-centered (when root of aggression resides within an individual), Situation centered (when root of aggression resides in environment) and Interaction centered (when root of aggression arises due to the interaction of both the above forces).

Under the modern materialistic pressure, the world appears to be going towards a kind of chaos and confusion. Moreover feelings of malice, mutual suspicion, jealousy and hatred are prevailing everywhere. Its foremost attack is adolescence age. Adolescence is the most important period of human life. It is that span of years during which boys and girls move from childhood to adulthood mentally, emotionally, socially and physically. This period has been portrayed as a period of emotional turmoil. Instead of adjusting passively to obstacles by developing defeatist attitudes, many adolescents react aggressively towards the source of frustration. Adolescent Aggression has been defined as a harmful behavior which violates social conventions and which may include behavioral traits like deliberate intention to harm and injure another individual or object. Adolescent's behavioral traits are markedly influenced by the parenting or the environment he receives at home.

### **II. Aggression And Parental Behaviour**

Parenting is a complex activity that includes many specific behaviours that work individually and together to influence child behaviour. The parenting style construct is used to capture neural variations in parent's attempt to control and socialize their children. Parents are care takers, concerned about their child's safety and want their child to grow up to be happy, healthy and responsible. Parents think that they should guide their children in every venture whereas adolescents think that parents should not interfere in their affairs as they are mature enough to take care of everything. This causes conflict between them and give birth to the frustration in children. Baumrind (1971) found convincing links between parental behaviour and effect on children. Adolescents are strongly influenced by their parents. The quality of parent- adolescent relationship is perhaps the most important single determinant of adolescents' attitude and behavior. Mostly the parents'

attention is focused on the satisfaction of the needs of whole family and a very little attention is paid towards the growing needs of the adolescents due to which their behavior becomes problematic. Parents are not able to understand this kind of problematic behavior and rebellious attitude of their children and feel helpless when they are confronted with their assertion of independence.

### **III. Review Of Related Literature**

Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh (1970) found that most of the behaviour problems in children are usually caused by their parents' behaviour. Barber, Chadwick & Oerter (1992) and Rudo & Doulop (1998) found that adolescents who perceived their parents to be authoritarian demonstrated more overall aggressive behaviour. Adolescents exposed to aggression and violence in their homes were at greater risk for developing behavioural problems. The top five causes of indiscipline identified by teachers were family problems, disinterest of parents towards children's education, parents' negative attitude towards children, effects of violence presented in television and over-crowded classrooms. Corvo & Williams (2000) found a negative correlation between parental involvement and behavioural problems such as aggression and violence. Grych (2002) studied that inter-parental conflict has a negative influence on adolescents and found relationship between externalizing behaviour problems like aggression, academic achievement and inter-parental conflict. Phares & Epps (2004) described the relationship between the aspects of family functioning and young adults' pattern of anger expression and found that people from more negative expressive families reported higher level of negative self-expression. Siegler, Deloache & Eisenberg (2006) claimed that permissive parenting correlates to children's impulsive behaviour and low levels of self control. Gulati & Dutta (2008) examined inter-parent marital effect and other poverty related risk factors on the psychological adjustment of adolescents. Inter-parent discord was significantly associated with all forms of conduct disorders among children. Families multiple risk status showed significant correlation with both internal and external categories of behaviour problems in adolescents.

Gecas (1971) indicated that children who are given freedom and autonomy are more likely to explore their surrounding world, facilitating the development of competence, thus positively influencing the child's self esteem. Zuckhew (1980) found that parental warmth, use of praise and encouragement to do work, motivates the child towards higher achievement and success.

Baumrind (1991), Greenberg, Speltz & DeKlyen (1993) and Nassar-McMillan (1997) indicated that children who experienced authoritative parenting grow to be socially responsible, assertive, and competent and display self control resulting in less problematic behaviours. On the other hand Weiss, Dodge, Bates & Pettit (1992) and Vissing, Straus, Geller, & Harrop (1991) emphasized that parents who rely on aggression in the form of physical discomfort to manage their child's behavior are far more likely to have aggressive children than parents who use more positive strategies. They found parental behavior such as arguing; threatening, yelling can also be viewed as aggressive and will encourage a child to deal with frustration in the same way. Even in the absence of physical aggression, verbal aggression in parents has been linked to aggression in children.

Neuro-developmental research (Glaser, 2000; Schwarz & Perry, 1994) suggests that child abuse and neglect can affect brain development at critical and sensitive periods. Abuse and maltreatment of children through a parent's high aggressive behaviours can have lasting effects on a child's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and interpersonal functioning (Glaser, 2000).

Susan (2008) reported that parents are vitally important throughout a child's life as source of love and security, as teachers and as role models but they are particularly important in the earliest years. Paradis, Reinherz, Giaconia, Beardslee, Ward & Fitzmaurice (2009) found the impact of family arguing and physical violence is long standing, with implications for adult functioning years later.

Men have been involved in an aggressive act in public environments more often than women because women are not as comfortable displaying this behavior out in the community (Frieze & Li, 2010). In contrast women typically display relational aggression, which is similar to indirect aggression because it is more passive (Rhys & Bear, 1997). It has been seen that young girls tend to model their mother's behaviour, who attempt to display little or no signs of overt aggression (Campbell, 1994). Because of this modeling, young girls disassociate femininity with overt aggression.

Some of the studies claimed that permissive parenting correlates to children's impulsive behavior that leads to low levels of self control. On the other hand other studies show that parental involvement, parental care and positive attitude towards children are negatively related with aggression among adolescents and some have concluded that high aggressive behavioural patterns are responsible for aggression and anti-social behaviour among adolescents. Keeping in mind the above stated literature this study was conducted to assess the relationship between the Adolescent Aggression and Parental Behaviour. It was hypothesized that there will be a significant relationship between the adolescent Aggression and parental behaviour..

#### IV. Method

**IV.1. Sample:** The study was conducted on a sample of 155 adolescents (80 boys and 75 girls) studying in +1 standard of secondary schools affiliated to C.B.S.E of District Gurdaspur. The technique of purposive sampling was used.

#### IV.2. Description of Tools

**IV.2. (i) Aggression Scale (Pal and Naqvi, 1983):** This test consists of 30 statements and each statement describes different forms of individuals' aggression in different situations. Each of the items has six alternatives, such as, very much, much, ordinary, less, very less, not at all and the answers are graded on 5 point scale. There is no time limit for the test. The reliability and validity coefficients reported by the authors were 0.82 and 0.74 respectively which shows that scale is highly reliable and valid.

**IV.2. (ii) Multi Dimensional Parenting Scale (Chauhan and Khokhar, 1997):** This scale consists of 56 statements for seven areas of parenting which include seven negative and seven positive dimensions. It is a 5 point rating verbal scale that can be administered individually as well as in groups. It has measures for parents on the two dimensions (i.e. positive and negative). There is no time limit.

#### V. Results And Discussion

The purpose of the present investigation was to study the gender differences and adolescent aggression in relation to parental behaviour. In order to achieve the objective of the study, the results were discussed in terms of:

1. Comparison of Means
2. Correlation Analysis

#### V.1 Comparison of Means

In order to find out significant difference between aggression of boys and girls, univariate 't' test was used. Table No. 1 shows the means and standard deviations of boys and girls along with the statistical significance of difference between means. The results can be interpreted as:-

1. There is no significant difference between boys (M=91.01) and girls (M=90.25) on the measure of aggression. It means that boys and girls are equally aggressive. The present study is in contradiction to many earlier studies such as Eagly and Chaiken (1993) and Frieze and Li (2010) who found that men are more likely to engage in and display aggressive behaviour than women.
2. It is also evident from the results that there are significant differences in the Parental Behaviour towards boys and girls with regard to negative dimensions i.e. like B (Hate), J (Submission), N (Dependency) and positive dimensions like E (Acceptance), G (Progressiveness), I (Democratism). On all these dimensions girls have scored higher than boys. It indicates that inspite of showing positive values like Acceptance, Progressiveness and Democratism towards girls; parents have also shown some faulty value assumptions like Dependency, Submission and Hate. Because of high scores on negative dimensions, parental behaviour can be termed as 'deviant parenting' towards girls in comparison to boys.

**Table No. 1. Means, Standard Deviations, 't'-ratios along with Level of Significance  
(Boys: N=80; Girls: N=75)**

VARIABLES	BOYS		GIRLS		t-value	Significance level
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Aggression	91.01	14.42	90.25	17.27	0.296	N.S
<b>Parental Behaviour</b>						
Love (A)	18.55	6.11	19.09	6.3	.533	N.S.
Hate (B)	14.89	4.61	16.79	3.97	2.767	0 .01
Encouragement (C)	13.45	3.62	12.55	3.17	1.644	N.S.
Rejection (D)	15.57	5.02	14.40	4.45	1.545	N.S.
Acceptance (E)	12.49	4.32	14.44	4.04	2.895	0 .01
Autocratism (F)	12.48	3.40	13.97	3.67	2.592	N.S.
Progressiveness (G)	9.64	3.42	10.87	3.48	2.216	0 .05
Discouragement (H)	11.49	3.49	11.47	4.02	.024	N.S.
Democratism (I)	7.22	2.27	9.60	3.41	5.089	0 .01
Submission (J)	6.14	2.56	7.38	2.62	2.983	0.01
Independency (K)	6.15	2.25	6.75	2.05	1.717	N.S.
Conservatism (L)	5.37	1.89	5.89	1.81	1.742	N.S.
Dominance (M)	4.20	2.74	3.77	2.65	.993	N.S.
Dependency (N)	3.46	1.71	4.21	1.19	3.200	0.01

**t- value significant at 0.05 level=1.98 & 0.01 level=2.61**

## V.2. Correlation Analysis

### V.2. (i) Boys

The values in the Table 2 indicate the correlation between Aggression and Parental Behaviour among boys. There is a significant positive correlation between Aggression and dimension I i.e. Democratism, ( $r=0.247$ ) of Parental Behaviour. It means freedom, independence and democracy may lead to more aggression. As many studies revealed that catharsis for everything and everywhere becomes a habit after some time and any block or hindrance in its way may give birth to Aggression. So, freedom and democracy should be checked time to time. Parents should decide that how much freedom is required and justifiable for their children. The results of the studies conducted by Barber, Chadwich & Oerter (1992) and Rudo & Doulop (1998) are in line with the results of the present study. Baumrind (1991), Greenberg, Speltz, & DeKlyen, (1993) and Nassar-McMillan (1997) indicated that children who experienced authoritative parenting grow to be socially responsible, assertive and competent and display self control resulting in less problematic behaviours.

### V.2. (ii) Girls

The values in the Table 3 indicate the significant positive correlation between Aggression and Parental behaviour among girls. There is a significant positive correlation between Aggression and dimension M i.e. Dominance, ( $r=0.261$ ) of Parental Behaviour. It means more dominant parental behaviour is likely to increase aggression among girls. Barber, Chadwich & Oerter (1992) and Rudo & Doulop (1998) found that adolescents who perceived their parents authoritarian demonstrated more overall aggressive behaviour. Weiss, Dodge, Bates & Pettit (1992) and Vissing, Straus, Geller, & Harrop (1991) emphasized that parents who rely on aggression in the form of physical discomfort to manage their child's behavior are far more likely to have aggressive children than parents who use more positive behaviour strategies.

**Table No. 2: Correlation Matrix (Boys: N=80)**

Variables	Aggrs.	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Aggrs.															
A	.137														
B	.052	.172													
C	.008	.112	.037												
D	.071	.139	.103	.023											
E	.142	.048	.086	.180	.142										
F	.155	.073	.151	.084	.308	.165									
G	.106	.094	.279*	.085	.090	.006	.184								
H	.196	.436**	.281*	.063	.020	.069	.143	.056							
I	.247*	.055	.052	.053	.070	.219	.034	.098	.141						
J	.027	.118	.117	.064	.004	.124	.091	.195	.158	.057					
K	.124	.044	.056	.032	.132	.289**	.157	.144	.203	.053	.285*				
L	.024	.093	.108	.019	.074	.039	.254*	.314**	.171	.015	.266*	.134			
M	.070	.076	.052	.030	.223*	.181	.059	.014	.020	.009	.069	.004	.249*		
N	.045	.267*	.254	.120	.107	.128	.009	.87	.165	.173	.127	.147	.057	.169	

\*Correlation Significant at 0.05 level, \*\*Correlation Significant at 0.01 level

**Table No.3: Correlation Matrix (Girls: N=75)**

Variables	Aggrs.	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Aggrs.															
A	.084														
B	.043	.236*													
C	.041	.183	.171												
D	.129	.039	.229*	.180											
E	.120	.190	.343**	.174	.286*										
F	.63	.315**	.272*	.130	.018	.561**									
G	.014	.015	.027	.129	.010	.125	.106								
H	.215	.217	.268*	.200	.144	.289*	.135	.084							
I	.009	.140	.134	.086	.336*	.260*	.099	.003	.135						
J	.17	.124	.010	.009	.142	.026	.159	.253*	.021	.150					
K	.112	.055	.103	.022	.279*	.003	.092	.249*	.207	.188	.364				
L	.051	.63	.03	.258	.187	.063	.081	.042	.94	.025	.158	.094			
M	.261*	-.007	.04	.049	.034	.0113	.098	.054	.039	.171	.007	.108	.039		
N	.084	.183	.098	.084	.143	.032	.122	.066	.037	.156	.061	.026	.038	.002	

**\*Correlation Significant at 0.05 level, \*\*Correlation Significant at 0.01 level**

### **Educational implications**

Children with severe aggression require the intervention of a mental health specialist to teach children how to manage their aggressive behavior. Aggressive children are often spanked or get other forms of physical punishment from their parents and teachers. It is best to stop using this discipline option. Verbal aggression can have the same negative impact on aggressive behavior as spanking. Children respond to frustration with a calm voice and respectful requests, when they model that type of response as well. If child seems to become even more agitated when tried to help them calm down, then he/se should simply be left alone. Many parents unknowingly reinforce their child's aggressive behavior. One way that aggressive behavior may be unintentionally reinforced is through rough play. It is often during rough play the child gets in trouble for being aggressive. For these children, such roughhousing should be eliminated for a period of time. More appropriate ways to encourage child's physical activity include riding bikes, going for walks, shooting baskets, or joining karate classes. Parents and teachers are required to use these types of strategies to help them to channelize their pent up energy and to check their aggressive behavior.

## **VI. Conclusion**

External and internal factors are responsible for aggression among adolescents. Aggressive behavior among boys is related with freedom provided to them and aggressive behavior among girls is linked with dominant attitude of parents. So there is a joint responsibility of parents and teachers to control these factors and helping the students to overcome their problems. The parents and teachers should act intelligently to give free and consensual environment to the adolescents so that their personality can develop in a smooth manner. Parent's less effective and less intelligent acts may darken their future and ultimately the future of nation. Thus, aggression has dangerous consequences not only for those who aggressed but also for those who aggress, that is those who cause harm to the victim and at the same time breakdown their own personality. So there is a great need to study the aggressive behaviour of adolescents and its root causes.

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