

Gender Differences in Expression of Aggression

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ABSTRACT

An attempt was made in the present investigation to study gender difference in expression of aggression in school students. The sample of the study comprised of 200 adolescents (100 males & 100 females) in the age range between 16 to 18 years selected on random basis from different Hindi medium schools of Ranchi town. Hindi adaptation of Bus-Durkee Hostility inventory was administered on all the participants. Results show that males are more aggressive than female adolescents. The male group significantly scored higher in comparison to female group on assault and verbal aggression. On the other hand the females showed a trend to score higher on indirect aggression.

Keywords: *Aggression, Hostility and Indirect aggression.*

Aggression is a potential threat to individuals, society and nation. It can be defined as a class of behaviour that have in common an intrusive, demanding or aversive effect on others. Aggression ranges from verbal outbursts to physical injury leading to death. A common definition of aggression is the 'intentional behaviour of a person to harm another (Frieze and Li, 2010). In the culture we live in today, men's aggressive behaviour is encouraged due to the fact that media and the social environment glorifies it, displaying the trait as one that all men should possess in order to live up to group expectations (Campbell, 1994). Taylor, Peplau and Sears (2006) define aggression as any action that is intended to hurt others. Aggression that is outwardly observable, as in name calling, taunting or physical intimidation and threat, is overt and aggression that is not observable as in lying or stealing is covert. Aggression can also be direct (threatening, yelling, insulting, name calling, leasing, hitting, pushing, kicking) or indirect also known as social relational aggression which includes shunning, excluding, ignoring, gossiping, spreading false rumour or disclosing other person's secrets (Fite et al, 2012). Aggression increases during adolescence likely due to pubertal reasons and peaking concerns for dominance among peers. Aggression is a multi-dimensional construct, whereas goal oriented instrumental (proactive) aggression which is used for personal gain (forcing, dominating others) and reactive aggression includes angry, defensive responses to perceived provocation (little et al., 2003). Both reactive and instrumental aggression is related to peer rejection.

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There are several theories that explain the roots of human aggression in general. Instinct theories suggest that aggression seems largely from innate urges and tendencies. Lorenz (1960) and Freud (1920) were among of the proponents of instinct theories. Social psychologist recognises the potential role of biological factors in human aggression. The frustration – aggression hypothesis suggests that frustration is a very powerful determinant of aggression besides frustration, such as provocation, media violence and heightened arousal (such as anger and sexual arousal) and personality types/ traits. There are also situational determinants of aggression such as high temperatures, alcohol abuse etc.

Generally, Aggression is found to be more common in males than in females while males often engage in physical aggression and females are more likely to exhibit relational aggression such as exclusion of others from their social group and friends. Gender difference in aggression has been investigated though with conflicting results. Most of the studies have reported that men are more likely to engage in more verbal and physical aggression as compared to women (Cohn, 1991 and Eric, 1996; Archer, 2004; Thomas, 1989; Card et. al., 2008). According to Eagle (1987) men are more aggressive because society accepts them to be more assertive and aggressive on the other hand women are expected to be more nurturing, more emotional and more concerned for the well-being of others than men. Eagly et. al. (1991), has proposed that gender differences in norms and expectations about the appropriate roles of men and women. According to Driscoll et.al. (2006) women are most likely than men to experience act of aggression as expressive (a loss of self-control) than as instrumental (control over others). The most studies on gender difference in India have reported males to be more overtly aggressive than females. In India women are much more oppressed and this fact may be of relevance in regard to how females express their aggression in India. Previous studies also contain substantial evidence of female being more aggressive than males.

Thus, it can be said that sex differences in aggression are due to a complex interplay of biological, developmental and cultural factors. Such differences may be both innate and learned and in often very difficult to distinguish. Recent researches suggested that a number of factors combine to influence the development of gender differences including genetics, differences in psychological traits and differences in socialization of male and female may decrease or increase the size of the gender difference.

Objectives

- To find out the level and forms of aggression among school going adolescents.
- To find if males and females differ in expression of aggression.

Hypothesis

- School going adolescents would show various level and form of aggression.
- Male adolescents would prove to be more aggressive than female adolescents.

Sample

The sample of the present study consisted of 200 adolescents (100 males & 100 females), ranging in age from 16 to 18, selected from different Hindi medium schools of Ranchi town. Both the groups were matched on family structure, religion, socio economic status and place of residence.

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Measure

Hindi adaption of Bus-Durkee Hostility Inventory (Sultania, 2006) was used as a measure of expression of aggression. The inventory was designed to assess different forms of aggression and hostility and represents the following sub- Scale: a. Assault, b. Indirect Aggression, c. Irritability, d. Negativism, e. Resentment, f. Suspicious, g. Verbal Aggression and h. Guilt. This inventory includes 67 items out of which 52 are positive and 15 are negative items. The range of the score is 0-67. Higher the score greater is the magnitude of aggression.

Procedure

Permission from the principals of the schools was sought. Informed consent was taken from the students. The tools were administered in a group of 20 students each. A total of 16 sessions were conducted. A total of 300 students were assessed. The valid data considered for analysis was 200.

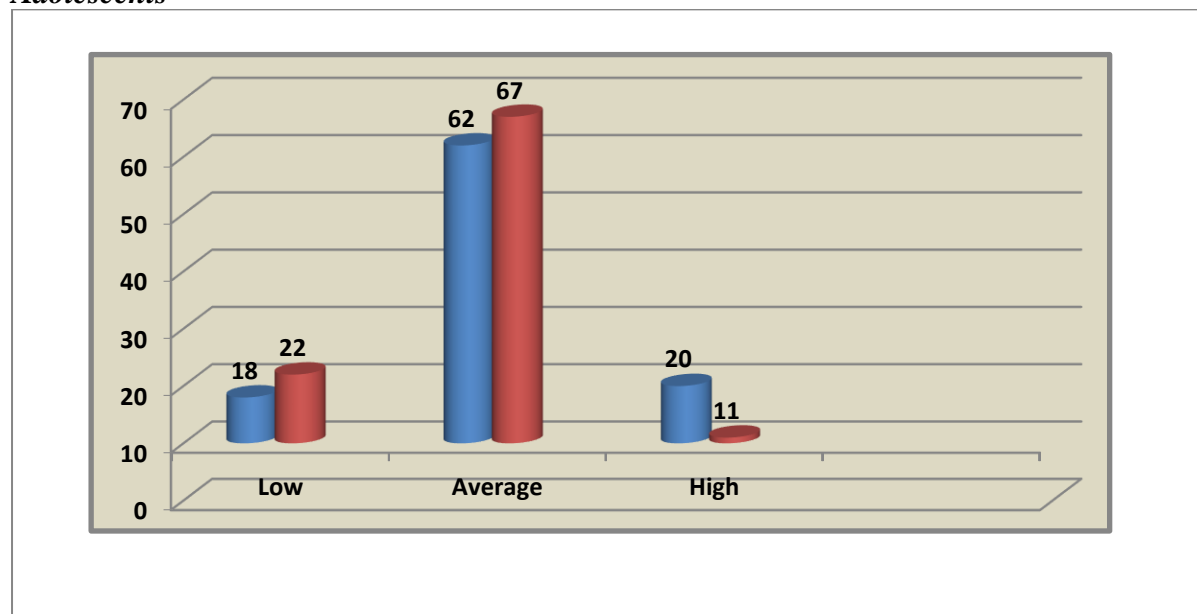
RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data was coded for computer analysis, obtained data was analysed using percentage and t-test.

Table I. Percentage Distribution of levels of Aggression among male and Female Adolescents.

GROUPS	LEVELS OF AGGRESSION		
	LOW	AVERAGE	HIGH
MALE	18%	62%	20%
FEMALE	22%	67%	11%

Figure I. percentage distribution of Levels of Aggression among male and Female Adolescents



A perusal of the table-I revealed that the percentage of high level of aggression was higher among male adolescents (20%) compared to female adolescent (11%). In contrast the percentage of average and low aggression was more among female adolescents (22%) than male adolescents (18%).

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Table II. Percentage distribution of levels of Aggression among Male and Female Adolescents (Dimension wise)

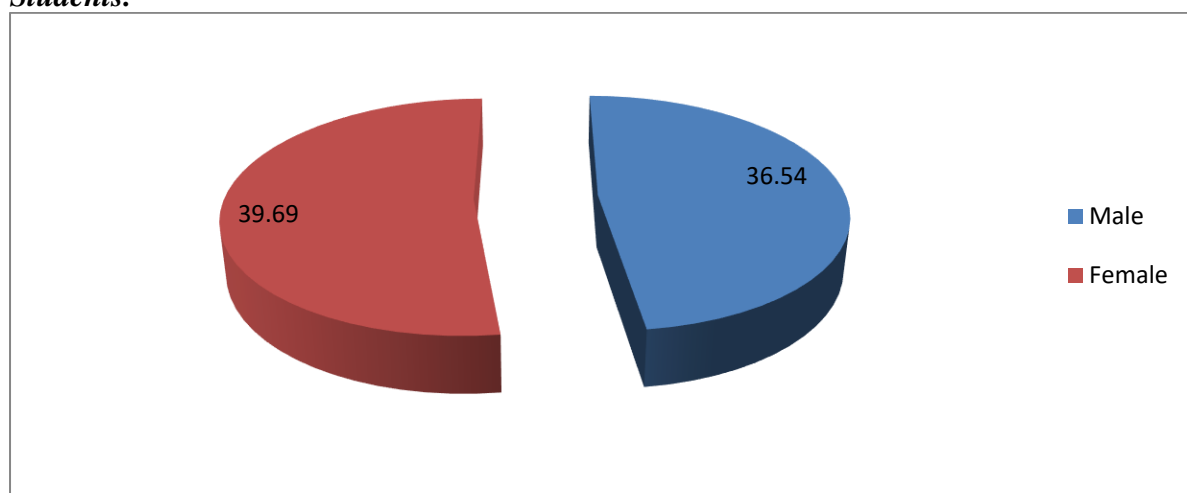
FORMS OF AGGRESSION	MALE (N=100)	FEMALE (N=100)
ASSAULT	10%	2%
INDIRECT AGGRESSION	15%	20%
IRRITABILITY	20%	5%
NEGATIVISM	8%	6%
RESENTMENT	12%	8%
SUSPICIOUS	10%	20%
VERBAL AGGRESSION	28%	10%
GUILT	10%	20%

The number and percentage of verbal aggression, resentment, negativism, irritability and assault was much higher in male group than female group whereas indirect aggression, suspicious and guilt were higher in female groups.

Table III. Comparison of Mean Aggression Score between male and Female School Students.

GROUPS	N	Mean	SD	Md	t	P Value
MALE	100	39.69	7.84	3.15	2.89	0.01
FEMALE	100	36.54	7.66			

Figure II. Comparison of Mean Aggression Score between male and Female School Students.



The above table and figure show the mean scores and standard deviation of the two groups on aggression as assessed by Aggression Inventory. Result indicates that male students in comparison to female students had higher mean scores for aggression. The mean difference was found to be significant ($t = 2.89$; $p < .01$). The result, thus appear in hypothesis direction and consistent with previous findings (Eagly and Steffen 1986; Di Dio, Saragovi and koestner; 1996, Anderson and Bushman 2002; Bettecourt and miller, 1996). Bettercourt et.al. (1996) believe that gender difference in high rise aggression is the result of differences in socialization of appropriate gender specific thoughts and behaviour. High scores on aggression of the male students can be explained in terms of the socialization process. Society labels certain behaviour patterns as unacceptable and prohibits their overt expression. Among them the expression of anger or aggression is one. Parents teach their

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children how to control anger. This is different for the two sexes. Females are expected to be emotional, sensitive and their expression of anger or frustration. Eagle (2007) found that girls express anger through behaviours that lack intent to harm or injured. Nanda (1997) reported that aggression was more prevalent among girls from more economically deprived families where they are forced to bottle up their feelings.

Several investigators argue that biological factors (genetics and hormonal effect) contribute to gender difference in aggression (Debbs and Morris 1990, Harris 1999). Contemporary theorists believe that gender roles and cultural norms contribute to gender differences in aggression. (Bem, 1974; Di Dio et.al. 1996). In the culture we live today, men's aggression is encouraged due to the fact that media and social environment glorifies it, displaying the trait as one that all men should possess in order to live up to group expectation (Campbell, 1994).

Table IV. Comparison between two groups on various dimensions of aggression.

Forms of Aggression	Male (N=100)		Female (N=100)		t	p. value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Assault	5.42	2.02	3.92	1.89	5.42	0.01
Indirect Aggression	3.98	1.70	5.02	1.44	4.66	0.01
Irritability	4.96	1.76	4.88	1.12	0.38	-
Negativism	4.82	1.06	4.06	1.16	4.84	0.01
Resentment	4.89	1.75	4.10	1.54	3.39	0.01
Suspicious	4.82	1.02	4.75	1.62	0.37	-
Verbal Aggression	5.58	1.95	3.97	1.49	6.56	0.01
Guilt	3.96	1.48	5.66	1.35	8.49	0.01

An observation of the table IV indicates significant difference between male and female students on the different forms of aggressive behaviour. It indicates that male and female students express their aggression differently. The male students showed more assault and verbal aggression whereas female students have shown higher level of indirect aggression and guilt as compared to the male students. In all, the other dimensions for the expression of aggression male scored higher than female. This study confirms the difference in the forms of aggression between genders. Although most of the forms of aggression expressed by both genders remained same (such as irritability, suspicion) but the difference persists regarding the degree of importance that each gender pays to a quality in general. The difference in the sex roles may account for the differences on aggression in the two sexes. The upbringing of male and female adolescent may lead to difference in the aggression level of the two groups. It was observed in the past studies that male engage in aggression acts as an exercise in control over others, on the other hand female aggressive behaviour is related to excessive stress and loss of emotional control. Males show more overt forms of aggression whereas females utilize covert form of aggression. Since the females are physically weaker than males, they may early in life learn to avoid physical aggression or direct aggression and instead develop other means. Khalakdina (2011) said that males are more expressive in virility, physical strength and in dominant behaviour, while females are curbed by the social norms of feminine behaviour. In the present investigation the sex difference on the two dimensions, assault and verbal aggression, where male secured higher than females indicate to the importance of their sex role standards. Though male and female express their aggression, female want to express aggression without damaging their feminine image. On

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the other hand, male express their aggression more directly. Bjorkqvist's (1994) research suggests that sex difference exist in the quality of aggression but not the quantity.

CONCLUSIONS

- The significant differences in aggression are present in the genders.
- The male group consistently and significantly scored higher in comparison of female group on assault and verbal aggression. On the other hand, the females showed a trend to score significantly higher on indirect aggression and guilt.
- In respect of the four variables i.e. both of the groups, did not show significant differences.
- Male adolescents are more aggressive than female adolescents.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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