

Research Paper

The Social and Cultural factors of Adolescent Aggression and behavioral Problems: Influences, Implications and Interventions

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a crucial stage of human development characterized by greater social and cultural influence, emotional sensitivity, and a lack of behavioral control. Various social and cultural factors, including family dynamics, peer interactions, media exposure and societal norms can shape aggression in adolescents. Aggressive acts of adolescents may be driven by familial conditions that are marked by conflict, strict parenting, or a lack of emotional support. Peer groups are also an influential contributing factor since adolescents may show aggression or get involved in inappropriate activity to fit in or improve their standing among peers. Cultural norms and values, such as promoting rivalry and aggressiveness, also affect adolescent aggression. The literature on the causes of aggressiveness and behavioral issues forms the basis of the current investigation. Academic databases such as Web of Science, PubMed, Scopus, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar are searched for relevant literature between the years 2015 and 2025 using keywords such as adolescent aggression, behavioral problems in adolescents, social factors of aggression and behavioral problems, and cultural factors of aggression and behavioral problems. This study examines how social and cultural elements interact to shape adolescent aggression and behavioral issues and emphasises the value of creating conditions that are conducive to adolescent's growth.

Keywords: *Adolescent, Aggression, Behaviour Problems, Social Factors, Cultural Factors*

Adolescent is defined as a period of time after puberty that a young person transitions from a Child to an adult. According to the World Health Organization any person between the age of ten years to nineteen years comes under this stage.

However, adolescence is often narrowly associated with puberty and the physical transformation cycle that leads to reproductive maturity. Other cultures view adolescence more broadly, encompassing not only the purely physical components of maturity but also psychological, social and moral domains. The term “adolescence,” which is essentially similar to “teens” in these civilizations, usually refers to the time between the ages of 12 and 20 (*Adolescence | Definition, Characteristics, & Stages | Britannica, 2025*).

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF AGGRESSION

Biological theories/ Perspective of Aggression:

Aggression has its evolutionary roots, as humans had to be violent to survive (Archer, 2009). As societies developed and civilizations expanded, people had to stand up for their own rights, values, and culture, which meant vigorously defending their customs and culture (McNeill, 2024). Thus, aggression is a natural inclination driven by biology (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1977). Aggression has been described by Freud as possessing an inbuilt, Self-directed death impulse, or “Thanatos,” as opposed to a life instinct, or “eros”. Eventually, the self-destructive Thanatos turns towards other creatures. It leads to aggression and violence if it is not appropriately dealt or channeled (Ogretir Ozcelik, 2017).

According to genetic studies (Dorfman, Meyer-Lindenberg, and Buckholtz, 2014), aggression is influenced by the MAOA gene. They discovered that the gene predisposes the person to environmental risk factors for violence. Serotonin levels are regulated by the MAOA gene, which is important for regulating aggressive behavior (Caramaschi, de Boer & Koolhaus, 2007).

Additionally, it impacts how the prefrontal cortex, which regulates aggressive impulses, functions (Buckholtz & Meyer-Lindenberg, 2013). However, the expression of a specific behavior is not always ensured by the presence of a genetic component for that behavior. It shows that, with the correct environmental stimuli, such behavior is possible. The degree to which genetic potential is realized is influenced by social circumstances.

Theories Based on Drive

The drive theories of aggressiveness suggest that unfavorable environmental and external circumstances and conditions can create an internal urge to injure others, in contrast to Freud’s theory of the innate inclination for violence. Therefore, external circumstances that give rise to the desire to harm others are the root cause of violence. The dissatisfaction-violence hypothesis (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowerer & Sears, 1939) is the most well-known of these ideas. It essentially asserts that violence is a direct result of dissatisfaction.

It claims that when we are unable to accomplish our purpose, frustration ensues. This causes a drive to be aroused with the intention of hurting the person who is thought to be the source of the dissatisfaction. You may have witnessed situations where your friend began mistreating her rival for a part in the campus theatre because she was so upset that she was passed over for the part. Economic factors, social background and discriminatory societal norms can also be the source of frustration. Therefore, the cause of annoyance might not always be obvious. This hypothesis has also drawn criticism because there are numerous other reasons that might contribute to aggressive behavior and frustration does. It claims that when we are unable to accomplish our purpose, frustration ensues. This causes a drive to be aroused with the person who is thought to be the source of the dissatisfaction. You may not necessarily result in aggression.

General Aggression model

The general aggression model was suggested by Anderson and Bushman (2002). This, out of all the theories of violence, is the most thorough. It considers a wide range of variables that could contribute to an individual’s hostility. But additionally, it discusses how cognitive and decision-making processes mediate the actual aggressive behaviour. According to the model shown below, a variety of situational and person-related factors, including personality,

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provocation, frustration, alcohol use, media violence, etc., combine to influence an individual's present internal states.

In other words, they cause the person's arousal level to rise, produce unpleasant feelings, and produce hostile or negative thoughts. The person then evaluates the current circumstances, or interprets them, and makes decisions based on their assessment. These decisions can result in either a deliberate action or an aggressive one. As a result, the initial input factors go through affect cognition and arousal before being mediated by appraisal and decision-making processes to produce either aggressiveness or no aggression.

Role of observational learning in aggressive behaviour: observational learning can be defined as learning by seeing behaviors of others whom we think as role model (Nolanobrien, 2019). Albert Bandura explored in his bobo doll experiment that children can acquire aggressive behavior by observing others through modelling (Huesmann, 1997).

Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979): the basic ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (1977) serves as a framework for reviewing the documented risk and protective factors linked to children and adolescent engagement in bullying at school. Peers (Socialization during adolescence), families (violence, lack of parental supervision), communities (violence exposure), and schools (teacher attitudes, atmosphere) are examples of microsystems that influence the prevalence of bullying among young people. The mesosystem, which is the interaction between the elements of the microsystem, provides information about how situations can either prevent or lessen the impact of bullying on young people (e.g., parental support can buffer impact of peer victimization) (Espelage, 2014).

Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis

One approach used in social psychology is to understand the causes of violence is the frustrated aggression hypothesis. This theory, put forth by Dollard in 1939, holds that anger frequently results in violence. The tension that arises when our attempts to accomplish a goal are thwarted is called frustration. According to the frustration aggression theory, when we feel frustrated over not being able to accomplish a goal, we will become aggressive as a cathartic release of our frustration (Berkowitz, 1989).

SOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING ADOLESCENT AGGRESSION

A. Family Dynamics Among the most important factors influencing a young person's violent behavior are early experiences and family ties (Labella & Masten, 2018). Children who are raised in violent or neglectful homes are more likely to grow up to be aggressive, according to numerous studies, seeing or experiencing domestic violence in particular can normalize aggressive behaviors, increasing the likelihood that these youngsters would follow suit when faced with difficulties (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999).

For instance, a youngster who witnesses parents frequently fighting verbally or physically may grow up believing that using aggression to settle disputes is acceptable (Jaffe et al., 1986). This comprehension gets embedded in their behavioral repertoire even though it is not always conscious. Adolescents who grow up in supportive settings that prioritize emotional control and peaceful dispute resolution, on the other hand, typically exhibit reduced levels of aggression. Parenting styles (authoritarian, neglectful, permissive, authoritative) also influence development of aggression in adolescents. Low parental support

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at community level can lead to aggressive behavior (Heizomi et al., 2021). Parental neglect and emotional wellbeing (Chidambaram et al., 2023).

A child's behavior and emotional health may be significantly impacted by the parenting style they encounter, according to this research. Empowering parents is crucial for communities to make sure they have the tools and knowledge how to give their kids a loving and caring environment. We may support better outcomes for kids and lower the likelihood of violent behavior by tackling neglect and emotional health at the community and parental levels (Barth, 2009).

Similar result was found by Ahmed et al.,(2021) their study indicated that Negative parenting practices, age and gender of the child are significantly predict behavioral problems. Individuals who received less parental control and supervision are more prone to behavior problems (Barnes & Farrell, 1992).

Lack of emotional support and communication

Insecure attachment characteristics were related to behavioral problems, substance use, and poor family functioning predicts behavioral problems in Juvenile Delinquents (Elgar et al., 2003). Urban people show more behavioral problem than rural individual. Internalizing and externalizing behaviors, issues with peer interactions and family functioning and insecure attachment traits were all linked to these traits. Angry/distress, Availability of AAQ scale is associated with behavioral problems. Salas et al., 2016 studied about the predictors of behavioral problems in children who are adopted. Young et al., 2011 conducted study on 54 students between the age of 12 to 17 years old with the mean age score of 14.59 years who lived in South London. Paternal and maternal reports of total difficulties (11.3%, 13.6%), externalizing (2.3%, 1.9 %) and internalizing behaviors (8.6, 7.4%) among adolescents are reported. Predictors of abnormal behaviors per paternal reports include lower social class and poor paternal con

Family violence: Exposure to family violence can lead to supportive factor for violent behavior in future (Stoddard et al., 2015). This is due to the fact that children's who witnessed violence in the family could grow up thinking that using violence to settle disputes is common. The notion that using violence to dominate people is acceptable may also become ingrained in them. In the absence of assistance and intervention, these people might be more prone to act violently in their own relationships as they get older.

B. Peer Influence

Research suggests that violence in girls may be linked to social power dynamics, including exclusion and bullying, which are often exacerbated by peer pressure (Macklem, 2003; O'Brien & Dadswell, 2020; Osler, 2006). Youth behavior is greatly influenced by peers, and the demand for social approval, particularly in adolescence, can result in the adoption of aggressive behaviors. Peer pressure, or the influence of one's social circle, can drive someone to use violence in order to fit in, defend themselves, or advance in their standing. This is especially prevalent in situations like some school or neighborhoods were using aggression is viewed as a show of power or authority. Gang culture is one such example, where young people may use violence to demonstrate their allegiance or establish their authority inside the group.

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Hensums et al., 2023 found out in his research that , there was a favorable correlation between bullying and aggression and agentic goals, but not any significant correlation between bullying and aggression and community goals. Despite being popular, people who engage in bullying and aggressive behavior have a lower probability of being loved by others due to their actions.

C. School Environment

Significance discrepancies between school violence and overall homicide trends were found in the data, which supports the theory that many school violence incidents are the result of retaliatory aggression triggered by highly felt social-identity threats (Brown et al., 2009). The act of damaging peer relationships through manipulation, gossip and exclusion is known as relational violence. Adolescent relational aggression has been shown to be common in a variety of cultural contexts by groundbreaking research.

Nevertheless, there aren't many attempts to look into how cultural norms affect relational aggressiveness. Relational Aggression in Adolescents in various cultural contexts: A comprehensive analysis of the literature (Voulgaridou, 2023).

CULTURAL FACTORS AND ADOLESCENT AGGRESSION

A. Societal Norms and Values

Gender norms and expectations also have an impact on aggression. According to many socialization standards, violence is linked to masculinity and passivity and emotional control to femininity. The socially acceptable behaviors of boys and girls are a reflection of the differences in their upbringing. For example, boys may be socialized to use physical aggressiveness as a way to vent their frustrations, whereas girls are often encouraged to suppress such emotions or channel them into relational violence (such as gossip or social isolation) (*Factors Influencing Aggression*, 2024).

If we talk about Indian culture boys are more likely to get involved in physical aggression and females shows their aggression in the form of emotional and psychological way (Sharma & Marimuthu, 2014). The way that aggressiveness is perceived and manifested is also impacted by cultural norms and values (Bond, 2004). Because aggression is seen as a display of masculinity or dominance, it may be fostered in some societies, especially among young males (Lisak, 1991). Societies that value cooperation, pacifism, and collectivism, on the other hand, could stigmatize or even forbid aggressive behavior (Bonta, 1997).

In Indian society, for instance traditional notions of masculinity usually associate men with strength and power, which might lead to expectations of violent behavior (Kumar, 2025; Sen, 2018). These social norms, along with a tendency to suppress emotional sensitivity, may create an environment where young men feel that it is appropriate to use violence to uphold their honor or prove their worth. These cultural influences have potential to normalize and even praise aggressive masculinity if they are not opposed (Fleming et al., 2019). As a result, young people are more prone to act aggressively when they encounter challenges in their life (Gable & Manning, 1996).

B. Cultural practices

Cultural norms, ideas and traditions typically influence a person's behavior and their outcomes.

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B. Media Exposure and Violence: the way that young people perceive aggression is greatly influenced by media, including social media, video games, movies and television. According to research, young people who are exposed to violent media may become less sensitive to violence in real life and be more inclined to act aggressively themselves. The belief that violence is a legitimate solution to issues can be strengthened by depicting aggression as a legitimate or even heroic reaction to conflict.

For example, violent confrontations are a common theme in video games, and players are rewarded for using aggression. Excessive exposure to these games over time can change how people view violence, reducing empathy and raising aggressiveness tolerance. Additionally, online harassment and bullying are frequently made worse by social media platforms, which can lead people to resort to verbal assault as a means of asserting their dominance or power in virtual environments.

The impact of violent films on emotions related to hostility and aggression and hatred implies that affect is one way that violent media may exacerbate aggression (Anderson, 1997).

C. Socioeconomic and Ethnic Factors: one important situational factor influencing violence is acceptance or rejection by society. People who are socially rejected or alienated may become insecure and experience a strong sense of unfairness. Aggressive behaviors may result from this as a way to gain control or relate to others. Studies have found that social exclusion can increase violent thoughts and behaviors, especially in young people who are still developing social coping mechanisms.

For someone who feels alienated, aggression might be a way to reconnect with their group or to get even with those who have rejected them. Particularly in school settings, where bullying and social isolation are common and children are more likely to react violently to perceived slights or insults, this is particularly common (*Factors Influencing Aggression*, 2024). The likelihood of behavioral issues is reduced by excellent parenting practices and a positive outlook on children's (Sekaran et al., 2020).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

A. Family-Based Interventions

Parenting programs and emotional support initiatives: Historically, punishment has served as a deterrent to violence and aggressive behaviors by the nation's law and order system in the home, at school, and in society at large. In situations involving aggressiveness and violence people are imprisoned, sentenced to life in prison, or perhaps executed. The primary justification for these penalties is that the offenders or criminals earned them, even though it has long been disputed whether they are morally appropriate.

Punishments are therefore applied for two primary purposes. To serve as a deterrence to future acts of violence and criminality, and on the grounds that the preparators or offenders merited them. A few things to keep in mind when administering punishment are, the aggressor should perceive it as a form of retribution, it should be obvious that certain acts of aggression will result in punishment, the severity of the punishment should be commensurate with the severity of the aggression and violence, it should be administered consistently, and it should be immediate.

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Catharsis: this process entails letting go of the bad feelings that accumulate within the body. Reducing angry sentiments and violent behaviors can be achieved by letting go of these suppressed emotions. Instead of dwelling on it, they must be communicated in a positive and innocuous manner. Thinking about the unpleasant feelings and the cause of the suffering is known as rumination. Concentrating on one's bad mood just serves to amplify it and may even incite hostility.

Conversely, taking part in healthy activities like gardening or working out might help lessen feelings of rage. As a result, catharsis can also be applied to hostile behavior. However, as noted by Baron and Byrne (1995), research on the catharsis theory has yielded conflicting results.

Cognitive Strategies: aggression can be planned out or result from an impulsive act. Therefore, it is necessary to concentrate on the individual's thought and cognition in order to alter harmful thought patterns. One must be conscious of the automatic ideas that arise in our minds and serve as the foundation for violence in the future. In order to prevent aggressiveness, it is helpful to analyse the scenario or incident, provide justification, and offer logical reasons.

Social Skills Training: individual who act aggressively frequently lack the necessary social skills. They could not have the appropriate and pertinent skills needed for social interactions.

Through focused training program, people can improve their ability to handle interpersonal situations and lower their risk of reacting aggressively. Lessons on assertive communication, empathy, active listening and conflict resolution may be covered in such training. Enhancing these abilities enable people to communicate their wants and feelings more effectively and constructively, which promotes more constructive relationships and less dependence on violent actions.

CONCLUSION

There are several social and cultural elements that affect teenage violence. Family dynamics that normalize violent behaviors include neglect, emotional deprivation, and exposure to violence. Teenagers may act aggressively to blend in or establish control due to peer pressure and the desire for social acceptance. Aggressive tendencies are also influenced by the school environment and peer relationships. The perception and manifestation of aggression are influenced by cultural norms and values, such as gender expectations and society views towards aggression. Considering all the factors that are related to adolescent's aggression it is essential to make an effective plan to tackle all these problems.

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Conflict of Interest

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