

Aggression and Gender Differences among Adolescents as Revealed by Hopelessness

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ABSTRACT

The term adolescence comes from the Latin word “adolescere”, meaning ‘to grow to maturity’. As it is used today, the term adolescence has a broader meaning. Relational aggression: An exploratory study was carried out in Chandigarh city, to know the prevalence of Aggression among early adolescents (N=200). The age range of the participants was 15-17 years and they were studying in different Sr. Secondary Schools of City Beautiful, Chandigarh. The standardized psychological tools like Hopelessness Scale developed by Beck et al (Beck, 1974) and Aggression Questionnaire developed by Buss and Perry (1992) were used in the current study. Initially, the Beck Hopelessness Scale was administered for screening purposes only and all the participants were divided into two groups (High and Low on Hopelessness). The study revealed that both boys and girls have a different level of aggression and besides this hopelessness also plays an important role for the onset or maintaining aggression among the adolescents.

Keywords: *Aggression, Gender Difference, Adolescents, Hopelessness*

The Indian adolescents account for 22.8% of the population (as on 1st March 2000, according to the Planning Commission’s Population projections). This implies that about 230 million Indians are adolescents in the age group of 10 to 19 years. The term adolescent means ‘to emerge’ or ‘achieve identity.’ Adolescence is defined as a phase of life characterized by rapid physical growth and development, physical, social and psychological changes, and maturity, sexual maturity, experimentation, development of adult mental processes and a move from the earlier childhood socio-economic dependence towards relative independence. This is also the period of psychological transition from a child who has to live in a family to an adult who has to live in a society. Adolescents have very special and distinct needs, which can no longer be overlooked. It is also essential to invest in adolescents, as they are the future of the country.

According to Sadock and Sadock (2003) adolescence is commonly divided into three periods; early (ages 11 to 14), middle (ages 15 to 17) and late (ages 17 to 20). Myers (1996) view adolescence as one stage, varying from 12 to 21 years of age and as incorporating the entire

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Received: March 10, 2019; Revision Received: June 26, 2019; Accepted: June 30, 2019

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above but not in any particular sequence or stage. Sadock and Sadock (2003) stressed that the divisions of the three periods that they refer to are arbitrary and that growth and development occur along a continuum that varies from person to person. Adolescence is a time of excitement and of anxiety, of happiness and of troubles, of discovery and of bewilderment; and of breaks with the past and yet of links with the future.

When we think deeply on the word adolescent then certain characteristics and problems emerge from the same word and these characteristics are:

- **A** – Aggressive, Anemic
- **D** – Dynamic, Developing, Depressed
- **O** - Overconfident, Overindulging, Obese
- **L** – Loud but lonely & Lack of information
- **E** – Enthusiastic, Explorative & Experimenting
- **S** – Social, & Spiritual
- **C** – Courageous, Cheerful, & Concern
- **E** – Emotional, Eager & Emulating
- **N** - Nervous, Never say no to peers
- **T** – Temperamental

Aggression is defined as behavior intended to harm another living being, either physically or emotionally (Berkowitz, 1998a; Geen, 1998) and aggression can be of various type. The degree to which men and women differ in their expression of behavioral aspects of hostility has received relatively little attention in empirical research. Although there is considerable evidence linking hostility and aggression to males, it is poorly understood how women express different behavioral aspects of hostility. One well-documented theory of gender differences in aggression expression is the theory that men exhibit more forms of direct aggression, while women exhibit more forms of indirect aggression. However, little research proposes a model accounting for these differences. Current literature proposes two possible models, the threat model that states aggressive behavior is determined by perceived or actual threat, and the social sanction model stating aggressive behavior is determined by social expectations.

Hopelessness plays an important role in the total behavioural development of adolescents. Hopelessness, defined as negative expectancies toward oneself and toward the future, is also a factor in a variety of psychopathological conditions. Such negative expectations toward self, future, and environment may cause the child to become more vulnerable to stressors, resulting in behavior disorders. A major finding in this study by Kashani, Soltys, Dandoy, Vaidya, and Reid (1991) shows that children with high hopelessness have a temperamental constellation that resembles that of the difficult child: negative mood, low adaptability aggression, Violence, and withdrawal with low hopelessness. Given the pressures and stressors that are connected to the negative child, the child can be viewed as "obstinate" by others.

Hintz notes that it is widely accepted that with hope, human beings act, move, and achieve, and he quotes Stotland (1969) as saying that without hope, we are often dull, listless, and moribund. He cites Swindoll (1990) in saying that he is convinced that life is 10% what happens to us and 90% how we react to it; we are in charge of our attitudes (Hintz, 1997, p. 2). Hintz's approach and point of view seem to make sense.

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Hypotheses

1. It is hypothesized that girls are more likely to engage in aggression as compared to boys,
2. It is expected that adolescents high on hopelessness will have more aggression as compare to low on hopelessness.

METHOD

Sample

The sample of the current study consisted of 250 (male and female) in equal numbers were randomly selected from the schools located in Chandigarh, the participants belong to the age between 15-17 years and all they were randomly selected. The initial screening of the participants was done on the basis of their obtained scores on hopelessness. The final sample comprising of 200 (males and females) in equal numbers were further divided into two groups i.e. High and Low on hopelessness, respectively.

Tools:

The following psychological tests administered on the selected sample for data collection purposes:

1. Beck Hopelessness Scale (Beck et al. 1974)
2. Aggression Questionnaire (Buss and Berry, 1992).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No.1: Mean, SD and t-ratio of Boys- High Hopelessness and Low Hopelessness

| Group | Mean | SD | t-value |
|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| HHS | 94.32 | 16.59 | 8.96** |
| LHS | 55.52 | 13.26 | |

Table No.2: Mean, SD and t-ratio of Girls- High Hopelessness and Low Hopelessness

| Group | Mean | SD | t-value |
|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| HHS | 83.92 | 12.85 | 10.35** |
| LHS | 45.72 | 12.72 | |

Table No.1, clearly depicts that males high and low on hopelessness have mean value 94.32 and 55.52 respectively is higher than their counterparts, female participants i.e. 83.92 and 45.72 on high and low hopelessness and the obtained results are significant at .01 levels respectively. It clearly indicates that hopelessness plays an important role among both males and females to engage in more aggression oriented activities. The reasons for this type of aggression may be numerous, like peer rejection, high/low status and peer ratings of leaderships, etc. Decades of research in developmental psychopathology have shown that high degree of hopelessness generate aggression and antisocial behavior which are associated with a higher risk for peer rejection (Coie, Dodge, & Kuperschmidt, 1990; Hughes, White, Sharpen, & Dunn, 2000; Keane & Calkins, 2004), social-psychological maladjustment (Ostrov, Woods, Jansen, Casas, & Crick, 2004), and unappealing qualities such as impulsivity (Pope, Bierman, & Mumma, 1991; Similarly, empirical researches have offered some support for links among aggression, dominance, and high status among young children (e.g., Boulton, 1992; Pettit, Bakshi, Dodge, & Coie, 1990; Vaughn & Waters, 1981; Wright, Zakriski, & Fisher, 1996). For instance, aggression and dominance are significantly associated with peer ratings of leadership (Pettit et al., 1990; Vaughn & Waters, 1981; Wright et al., 1996), suggesting that aggressive individuals may be perceived by peers as high in

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status and popular (Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998). In contrast, there is mixed evidence regarding the links between aggression, dominance, and group acceptance (LaFreniere & Charlesworth, 1983; Pettit et al., 1990; Vaughn & Waters, 1981; Wright et al., 1996).

Table No.3: Mean, SD and t-ratio of Boys and Girls on Hopelessness

| Group | Mean | SD | t-value |
|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| Boys | 74.92 | 15.02 | 10.15** |
| Girls | 64.82 | 12.79 | |

The obtained results tabulated in table-3 indicated about the gender differences in aggressive behavior and according to these results males and females, both depicting different levels of aggression respectively. The mean value of the males and females are 74.92 64.82 respectively and the t-value is significant at .01 level. Gender differences in aggression have frequently been reported and found that males show more aggression than females, especially in terms of physical aggression (Burton, Hafetz, & Henninger, 2007).. However, to explore the phenomenon of bullying between girls suggests that females are not necessarily less aggressive, but tend to express through not only physical aggression, but also through non-physical means, such as manipulation, exclusion, and gossip (Dettinger & Hart, 2007). This type of aggression is referred to as relational aggression. Relational aggression has been described as the kind of aggression which is not physical, but does harm to others via manipulation, social inclusion/exclusion, and damaging of relationships with others (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Although males have long been considered more overtly aggressive than females (Lorenz, 1966; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), and certainly more lethal in their aggression (Daly & Wilson, 1994; Wrangham & Peterson, 1996), relational (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Crick & Rose, 2000), social (Underwood, 2003), and indirect aggression (Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1992) appear to be the modus operandi of girls. girls are known to effectively employ gossip, rumor spreading, interpersonal betrayal, and social exclusion as means to harm the social standing of peers (Hrdy, 1981 & 1999).. Although the relationships between girls' aggression and several conceptions of social status have been investigated and its relationship to social dominance remains relatively unexplored.

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Acknowledgment

The authors profoundly appreciate all the people who have successfully contributed to ensuring this paper in place. Their contributions are acknowledged however their names cannot be mentioned.

Conflict of Interest

The authors carefully declare this paper to bear not a conflict of interests

How to cite this article: Lal. R., & Sekhri. R. (2019). Aggression and Gender Differences among Adolescents as Revealed by Hopelessness. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 7(2), 833-837. DIP:18.01.101/20190702, DOI:10.25215/0702.101