

THE FAMILY AND PEER GROUP INFLUENCES IN AGGRESSION

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to find a relationship between factors in the family, peer group, and levels of adolescent aggression. 148 adolescents and their mothers were studied. It was found that negative parenting and exposure to deviant peers influenced aggression among the adolescents.

Key Words : Aggression, socialisation, parents, peer

The family is the individuals first socialisation agent. The fine grained texture of family relationship is revealed through the specific moment to moment discourse between family members, reflecting such basic themes as mutual respect, affection, abuse, or indifference. These family interactions are markers of relationships, provide valuable clues about how they influence family members. The family is an interconnected system in which members behave and react to each others.

During adolescence the peer group becomes an important agent of socialisation. They acquire a wide range of behaviour from his peer group by interacting and observing them. If the peer group model aggression during playing, or while interacting with one another, then the possibilities of learning aggression is high.

Bandura's (1973) social learning theory views aggression not as innate or because of frustration, but as the manifestation of experiences. He connoted that there are three main components, acquiring of aggressive modes of behaviour, instigation of aggression and reinforcement of the behaviour. Bandura (1973), contended that patterns of behaviour can be acquired through direct experience or by

observing violent behaviour of others viz. modelling. The role of parents, and peer group are important determinants of modelling. People who are repeatedly exposed to aggressive parent or peer models will be more assaultive in their interaction than those who are not exposed.

The focus of this study is on the relationship between socialisation and aggression among adolescents. This study explores specific aspects of socialisation such as the family and the peer influence on the individual. This study has been carried out with the following objectives : (i) To determine the levels of aggression among adolescents; (ii) to study the connection between element of the family and levels of adolescent aggression; (iii) to find out the association between factors of the peer group and levels of adolescent aggression & (iv) to measure the comparative contribution of the family and peer group factors to the levels of aggression.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study was done in small locality called Southerpet, Mangalore. This locality is mainly occupied by people with low socio-economical status. They belong to a particular tribe.

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This class was involved in cleaning waste and removing human excreta two decades back. The total population of southerpēt was 1,316 people of which 601 were males and 711 females. All the available adolescents and their mothers were included. In all, 148 adolescents were studied and their mothers included.

Census method was used to collect data. All the respondents were studied in their respective homes. The method of data collection was through interview. Two interview schedules were used one for the adolescents and the other for the mothers of the adolescents. The first schedule for the adolescents included questions pertaining to their select characteristics, a latent aggression scale and a family functioning scale. Additional data were tapped on their peer group factors.

The latent aggression scale was developed by Blackburn (cited in Broadsky and Smitherman, 1983). It is a 31item self inventory. The original item pool was administered by Blackburn to 184 male patients admitted to Broadmoor Hospital in England. He found the reliability of this scale to be 0.88 and the validity 0.37. The reliability and validity of this scale could differ in India. A high score on the aggression scale indicates a likelihood of aggressive feelings.

Family influence was measured by using Bloom's (1985) family functioning scale. It is a self report scale for the assessment of 15 different aspect of family functioning. Each aspect is measured through students Cronbach alpha, which ranges between 0.40 and 0.85, with a mean of 0.71. Average inter item correlation ranges from 0.13 to 0.53, with a mean of 0.36. (Values could differ in an Indian setup). Some items receive a score of one if the response of 'No' is made, other items receive a score of one if the response of "Yes" is made.

Peer group influence was measured using a questionnaire that included variables like teasing, impulse controls, conflicts, truancy, flight in games and habits. Peer group influence was measured by allotting appropri-

ate weighed scores to the different responses to each of the questions included in this dimension.

The second schedule for mother, included Deshpande's Marriage Adjustment Inventory (Cited in Pestonjee, 1988). It is a self report scale that has 15 dimensions, and each dimension has 5 item. The reliability of this scale is 0.83 and the validity of this scale is 0.49.

The data from the schedule and the scales were transferred to a code sheet. The data were compiled and processed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

RESULTS

TABLE 1
ADOLESCENT LATENT AGGRESSION SCORES
(N=148)

Level	No.	%
Low (4-9)	56	37.8
Mid (10-13)	52	35.1
High (14-22)	40	27.1

Table 1 shows that 37.8% of the individuals had a low level of aggression compared to 27.1%, who had a relatively high level. About 35.1% of the individuals had moderate levels of aggression.

From table 2 it is observed that, there is a low but significant inverse Pearson's

TABLE 2
LEVELS OF AGGRESSION AND FAMILY
FUNCTIONING

Levels of family functioning	Levels of aggression			Total (N=148)
	Low (N=56)	Mid (N=52)	High (N=40)	
Low (24-36)	03	03	06	12
Mid (37-49)	40	33	28	101
High (50-62)	13	16	06	35

$r = -0.18, p < 0.05$

correlation between family functioning and aggression ($r=-0.18$, $p<0.05$). Hence, it can be observed that lower the family functioning higher the aggression. Multiple regression was run to see which variable influenced the family. The items of the family functioning scale have been taken as independent variable and aggression as dependent variable.

TABLE 3
INFLUENCE OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLE
ON AGGRESSION

Variables	Cor.	R. Sqr.	R.Sqr. change	F	Sig. F
Family conflicts	0.28	0.078	0.078	12.48	0.0006
Fly. organisation	-0.26	0.121	0.048	9.92	0.0001
Temperamental Differences	-0.21	0.045	0.04	6.94	0.009

R = Regression; Cor. = Correlation; R-Sqr. = R Square; R. Sqr. ch. =R Square change; F= Critical value

Table 3 depicts influence of independent variable on aggression. Family conflict influenced latent aggression upto 7.8% and family organization influenced aggression upto 4.8%. The cumulated value is 12.6%.

Since family conflicts and family organization influenced adolescent aggression it would be worth examining the parental relations. Adolescent's aggression and parental relations showed an inverse but not significant relation ($r=-0.13$, N.S.). However, from substantive view the two variables appear to have a relation.

Multiple regression was done to find out which variable caused disturbance in parental relations.

It can be inferred that temperamental difference that is the extent to which partner adjusts to spouse's temper, moods and nature, caused marital conflicts. In other words mothers of the adolescents were unable to get along too well with their spouses. The extent of influence was upto 4% on the adolescent aggression (Table 3).

Peer group influence : Correlation analysis between peer group influences and aggression showed a moderate but significant inverse re-

lation (-0.18). Thus, the observation that poorer the peer group influence, higher will be the levels of aggression is affirmed. In other words more favourable the peer groups influence the lower will be the levels of latent aggression.

At this stage it is indebted to know, which variable, either parent or peer group was dominant in influencing adolescent aggression. To assess this a series of multiple regression were done.

From the analysis, the total variance explained was 33.5% of which family influence and peer group influence contributed 22.2% and 11.3% respectively. This clearly indicated that family factors were more dominant than peer group factors in influencing aggression among the adolescents. Thus, it can be stated that family factors will be more dominant than peer group factors in influencing levels of aggression.

DISCUSSION

Aggression has been defined in copious ways by different authors to include behaviour ranging from aggression in sports to homicide. In simple sentence, aggression can be defined as a behaviour aimed at hurting others. Aggression has three subcomponents: physical aggression verbal aggression, and vandalism. This study has focused solely on the parents and peer group influence on adolescent aggression.

Most accounts of the socialisation contributors to the development of aggressive behaviour stress the role of family and peer experiences. In this study, aggression and related behaviour problems have been found associated with high levels of negative parenting behaviours. Indicators of negative parenting vary widely by study but typically include harsh punishment, rejection, and intimidation. In this study, few indicators of negative parenting were poor family functioning inscribed by family conflicts and poor family organization temperamental differences among their parents. In other words, the adolescents came from families where there were marital conflicts amongst their

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parents invariably leading to conflicts in the family and poor family organization. Exposure to physical or verbal abuse, either as a direct victim or a witness to intra familial conflict has been associated with aggression. The victim or witnesses learn to use aggression through exposure to violence in their families. During the adolescent period of development peer values and belief particularly becomes important as substitute for parental values and beliefs and play an essential role in the development of aggression. In this study, peer influence also appears to be a factor, in that exposure to deviant peers leads to increase in aggression, especially among those adolescents who are psychologically susceptible to peer pressure.

In summation, there is extensive amount of empirical evidence supporting the premise that the development of aggression occurs as

a function of cumulative transactions among adolescent dispositional characteristics, such as family functioning, and degree of exposure to and involvement with deviant peers.

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