

Original Research Article

Prevalence and psychosocial aspects of verbal aggression among adolescents in rural block of Haryana

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ABSTRACT

Background: Aggression refers to behaviour which causes intentional harm to others. There are about 1.2 billion adolescents in the world today, making 16% of the world's population. Now a day, it is a common phenomenon to find adolescents being involved in aggressive activities frequently. Various studies in India has observed that prevalence of verbal aggression varies between 50% and 70% with more aggression among male as compared to females. The studies regarding the prevalence of verbal aggression are relatively scarce in the particular study area. Hence this study was conducted with an objective to estimate the prevalence of verbal aggression among adolescents and to study the psychosocial aspects of the aggression among them.

Methods: A 29-item Buss and Perry scale interview schedule was used to estimate level of verbal aggression among school going adolescents in rural block of Haryana. Data was collected, compiled and analysed using SPSS.

Results: A total number of 480 study participants were enrolled in the study. The prevalence of verbal aggression was observed to be 48.3% in the study participants. Mean score of the verbal aggression was 16.60 ± 3.619 . History of substance abuse was significantly associated with verbal aggression ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusions: From our study it may be concluded that verbal aggression is high among school going adolescents. Overall males were more verbally aggressive than females. Substance abuse was significantly associated with verbal aggression, while other factors like socio-economic class, age, classes were not significantly associated.

Keywords: Adolescents, Haryana, Psychosocial factors, Verbal aggression

INTRODUCTION

Aggression refers to behaviour which causes intentional harm to others. The term aggression as an umbrella term includes both the overt acts of hostility, attack, violence, assertion, intrusion, destruction and combat etc. and covert acts of sarcastic remarks, taunts, abuse, undue criticism, character assassination, scandal, mocking etc.¹ There are about 1.2 billion adolescents in the world today, making 16% of the world's population.² This makes them one of the major demographic force and future of the world. Adolescence is considered as the most important transition period of life, as adolescents face an intense

turmoil because of the cognitive, biological and social changes taking place in this period. Along with the physical changes this is also the stage of emotional and psychosocial transition from a child who has to live in a family to an adult who has to live in a society. Aggression as a group consist of hostile, instrumental, emotional, physical and verbal aggression. Now a day, it is a common phenomenon to find adolescents being involved in aggressive activities frequently. Various studies in India has observed that prevalence of verbal aggression varies between 50% and 70% with more aggression among male as compared to females. The studies regarding the prevalence of verbal aggression are

relatively scarce in the particular study area. Hence this study was conducted with an objective to estimate the prevalence of verbal aggression among adolescents and to study the psychosocial aspects of the aggression among them. As said by Margaret J. “Aggression only breeds more aggression. It only creates more fear and anger” it is important to study psychosocial aspects of aggression.

METHODS

Study area

The study was conducted in government senior secondary schools in rural block of Beri, district Jhajjar (Haryana). Which is rural field practice area attached to the Department of Community Medicine, Pt. B. D. Sharma PGIMS, Rohtak.

Study design

It was a school based descriptive type of cross-sectional study.

Study population

The study included school going adolescent children from class 8, 9 and 10.

Inclusion criteria

School going adolescent children from class 8, 9 and 10 and willing to participate.

Exclusion criteria

Those who were absent on the day of visit. Children who had disabilities like learning disability, dyslexia, ADHD, autism, mental retardation, slow learners, and who were reported by the teachers, were not included in the study. Children who were physically handicapped or had any other major illness were not included in the study.

Sample size

A total of 480 study participants were enrolled in this study and was calculated using formula $4pq/L^2$, taking p (prevalence of aggression among school children from previous study as 17.7%), q as 1-P and L as allowable error as 20% of prevalence.

Study tool

The questionnaires included were 1) Information on demographic profile and socioeconomic status. Socio-economic status was assessed through Udai Pareek socioeconomic status scale. 2) Information related to psychosocial factors of aggression. 3) Buss and Perry aggression questionnaire.

Data collection and analysis

Out of total government secondary schools, eight schools were selected randomly by lottery method for enrolment in the study. Further, twenty students from each class (8, 9 and 10) from each school were selected randomly. Information was obtained from the students using interview schedule technique using the study tools.

Data analysis

The data collected was then entered into the MS-Excel Sheet and analysed using SPSS software v20.0 using chi-square test and student t test of significance and association. The results then obtained were expressed as mean±SD.

RESULTS

In this study equal number (33.33%) of participants were from class 8th, 9th, 10th. It was observed that 54% of study participants were male whereas 46% participants were female. Mean age of the study participants was 14.11±1.12 years. Maximum (67.3%) were in the age group of 12-14 years followed by 29.6% in 14-16 years age group. Majority (51.9%) study participants belong to upper lower class of socio-economic status as per Udai-Pareek scale as described in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of study participants as per various socio-demographic variables.

Socio-demographic variables	Frequency (%)
Class	
8 th	160 (33.33)
9 th	160 (33.33)
10 th	160 (33.33)
Gender	
Male	259 (54)
Female	221 (46)
Age (in years)	
12-14	323 (67.3)
14-16	142 (29.6)
>16	15 (3.1)
Socio-economic status (as per Udai-Pareek scale)	
Upper middle	5 (1.0)
Upper lower	249 (51.9)
Lower	226 (47.1)

The prevalence of verbal aggression was observed to be 48.3% in the study participants. Mean score of the verbal aggression (16.60±3.619) on buss and Perry scale was taken as the cut-off score. As per this 48.3% of study participants were verbally aggressive. The verbal aggression was found to be statistically significant with gender, with male study participants being more verbally aggressive than female.

Statistically significant association was also observed between class, substance abuse and verbal aggression in which it was observed that study participants with substance abuse were found to be more verbally

aggressive than those without substance abuse. The association between age, socioeconomic class and verbal aggression was also not statistically significant as described in Table 2.

Table 2: Association of socio-demographic variable and status of verbal aggression.

Variables	Status of verbal aggression		Total	P value
	Present (%)	Absent (%)		
Gender				
Male	163 (62.9)	96 (37.1)		<0.001*
Female	69 (31.2)	152 (68.8)		
Class				
8 th	69 (43.1)	91 (56.9)		0.010*
9 th	93 (58.1)	67 (41.9)		
10 th	70 (43.1)	90 (56.2)		
Age (in years)				
12-14	160 (49.5)	163 (50.5)	323	0.221
14-16	68 (47.5)	74 (52.1)	142	
>16	4 (26.7)	11 (73.3)	15	
Socio-economic class (as per Udai-Pareek scale)				
Upper-middle	1 (20)	119 (80)		0.116
Upper lower	130 (52.2)	125 (47.8)		
Lower	101 (44.7)	248 (55.3)		
Substance abuse				
Yes	79 (61.2)	50 (38.8)	129	0.001*
No	153 (43.6)	198 (56.4)	351	

*Significant

DISCUSSION

The prevalence of verbal aggression in our study was estimated as 48.3%. The findings of our study were alike the findings of Sidhu et al who found 53.66% participants to be verbally aggressive with a mean of 15.01±4.31.³ Verbal aggression was more prevalent (56.8%) in study done by Dutt et al in Bengal.⁴ In our study, higher number of male subjects were verbally aggressive than the females. Findings were alike the findings of Sharma et al.⁵ Our study was contrary to the study done by Garg et al who found females to be more verbally aggressive.⁶ Most of the participants between 12-14 years of age group showed verbal aggressive (49.5%). Similar finding was also observed by study conducted by Kumari et al and Garg et al, where also it was observed that with increasing age the prevalence of aggression decreases.^{6,7} From our study it was evident that those participants who were abusing one or more substances (68.2%) were more aggressive than those who were not abusing (42.5%) any substances. The relation between aggression and substance abuse among the participants was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Our study findings were comparable to the study done by Sharma et al, who found substance abuse as a risk factor for aggressive behaviour in adolescents. Verbal aggression was most prevalent among upper lower class (52.2%) followed by lower class. This

study finding was alike to that observed by Datta et al and Madasu et al where also aggression was found to be more prevalent among lower socioeconomic class.^{8,9}

There are some limitations of this study. Participants were school going adolescents of government schools from a rural area only and thus generalization of the results is somewhat limited.

CONCLUSION

From our study it may be concluded that verbal aggression is high among school going adolescents. Overall males were more verbally aggressive than females. Substance abuse was significantly associated with verbal aggression, while other factors like socio-economic class, age, classes were not significantly associated. Verbal aggression among school going adolescents are very serious problems due to their immanent dangers. It therefore becomes imperative that every necessary measure should be taken so as to eliminate or mitigate aggression in our secondary schools.

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Conflict of interest: None declared

Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

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