



RESEARCH ARTICLE

A STUDY OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE EXPRESSION OF RELATIONAL AGGRESSION IN ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

The current study named "A study of gender differences in the expression of Relational aggression in adolescents" was carried out in Delhi, India. Aims of the study were to measure and compare expression of relational aggression between adolescent boys and girls. 92 adolescents (54 boys, 38 girls; mean age-13 years) participated in the study and fulfilled the relational aggression questionnaire. Results of the study showed that 34% of the adolescents were found to have high level of relational aggression. Boys and girls did not differ significantly in their expression of relational aggression.

INTRODUCTION

Aggression is one of the most critical problem in today's world. People are becoming very angry in nature, day by day and their tolerance level is reducing. Aggression has negative effect for all, aggressor, victim, society and Nation. So it needs to be controlled. Even though aggression was defined several times, by many researchers, but the crux of these definitions is that, aggression is deliberate actions to hurt someone or something and victim must have desire to evade that hurt (Baron and Richardson, 1994). Because of its detrimental effects, aggression is one of the most studied topic from several decades. But most of the researches done till now, especially in India, have been centralized on physical or verbal aggression, which was considered to be typical in males. Hence very little knowledge has been generated regarding the forms of aggression used by girls. But in 1995, Crick and Grotpeter coined the term relation aggression which was defined as "behavior that harms others through damage (or the threat of damage) to relationships or feelings of acceptance, friendship or group inclusion" (Crick *et al.*, 1997). But it was assumed by the researchers that relational aggression is typical in females, since they established more close and intimate associations with others (Block 1983; cited in Crick and Grotpeter, 1995). Studies conducted on relational aggression produced mixed evidences. Crick and Grotpeter (1995),

Crick (1997), Juvonen and Nishina (2005), reported that girls in comparison to boys are more relationally aggressive. On another side, boys reported more involvement in physical as well as relational aggression encounter than females (Tomada and Schneider, 1997; Hennington *et al.*, 1998; David and Kistner, 2000). But some of the studies could not find any significant gender difference in relational aggression (Rys and Bear, 1997, cited in Smith *et al.*, 2010). Since there is inconsistency regarding gender differences in relational aggression, there is a need to conduct research on this issue. Due to rapid cognitive and socio-biological changes happened during adolescence, it was most significant transition phase i.e, transition from child to adult. These changes occur very rapidly and create a havoc in the minds of adolescents. They have to learn to adapt to these changes, which could generate anger and in some cases even aggression. So they are the appropriate subject for studying relational aggression.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

- To study the expression of relational aggression in girls and boys.
- To study the expression of relational aggression in whole sample.
- To compare the expression of relational aggression in girls and boys.

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Null hypotheses: There is no significant gender difference in the expression of relational aggression among girls and boys.

Tool used in the study

‘What is your RA Quotient’ developed by Cheryl Dellasega and Charisse Nixon (2003) was utilized by the researcher to measure relational aggression.

Sample

With permission from principals of schools, researcher randomly selected 92 adolescents (54 boys, 38 girls; Mean age=13 years old) from three govt. schools situated in South region of Delhi, India. Proper instruction were given to the participants for fulfilling questionnaire. SPSS Software package 20 was used by the researcher to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Researcher has studied the level of relational aggression and gender difference in the expression of aggression in adolescents in the present study. It was found in the study that 37.04% of male in comparison to 31.58% of girls have high level of relational aggression and often behave in aggressive manure. 62.96 % boys and 65.96% girls showed average level of relational aggression. Not a single boy falls in low level of relational aggression but, 2.63% of girls are found to have low relationally aggressive behavior. Hence, researcher can claim that male adolescents are at 5% hike on high relational aggression. Same has been represented through Fig. 1.

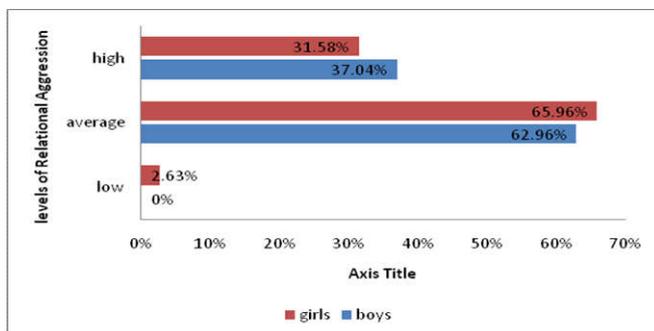


Fig. 1. % of adolescents in different level of Relational aggression

Relational aggression was also studied in the whole sample. It was found that 32.65% of the adolescents have highly relationally aggressive behavior. 64% of the adolescents have average level of relational aggression and only 1.3% of the adolescents were found to have low level of relational aggression. Same information has been represented through Fig. 2.

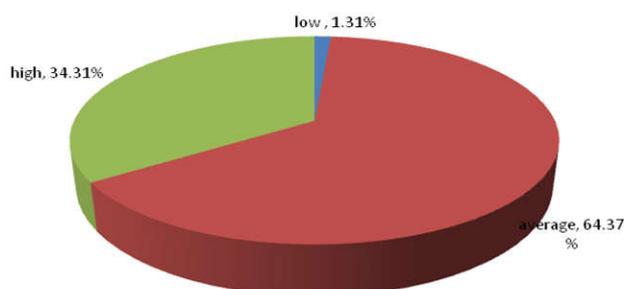


Fig. 2. % of adolescents in different levels of relational aggression

Researcher has used an independent sample t-test for finding out the gender difference in the expression of relational aggression.

Table 1. Relational aggression in Males and Females

N=92, df=90	Groups	Mean (M)	SD	t-value	Level of significance
	Females (38)	117.69	21.78	0.52	P > .05 (not significant at .05 level of confidence)
	Males (54)	110.95	19.51		

It can be seen through the Table 1 that t-value (t=0.52) was not found to be significant at either level of confidence, indicating that boys and girls did not differ significantly from each other in their level of relational aggression. Hence hypothesis in the present study was accepted. Finding of the present study are supported by Delveaux and Daniels (2000). They also did not find significant difference in relationally aggressive behavior of boys and girls. Sakai and Yamasaki (2004) found the same result in Japanese sample. Although, Osterman *et al.*, (1994) found the gender difference in case of physical aggression but not in case of relational aggression.

Conclusion

Although there is inconsistency regarding the gender difference in perpetration of relational aggression, but results from the present study gave support to the view, that there is no significant difference in the relational aggression. Girls and boys show more or less similar level of relational aggression. A limitation of this study was its small size, but it still provides a direction and insight to upcoming investigators for conducting researches on relational aggression.

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