

AGGRESSION AMONG ALBANIAN ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the levels of aggression in a sample of Albanian adolescents. The measure used was the Buss-Durkee Hostility Inventory, composed of 8 subscales measuring: Direct Assault or Physical, Indirect Assault, Irritability, Negativism, Resentment, Suspicion, Verbal Assault, Guilt or feelings of having done wrong. The subscales were scored in: a.intra-directed aggression, that include: resentment, suspicion and guilt. b. hetero-directed aggression, that include: Direct Assault, Indirect Assault, Irritability, Negativism and Verbal Assault. The study involved 250, 17-years old students, 108 males and 142 females. In terms of residence, 200 lived in the city and 50 in rural areas. Results revealed overall high prevalence of both direct and indirect aggression. Gender differences (although small) and differences between Urban and Rural areas were also found for several types of aggression. Findings have several practical implications both in terms of future research and interventions to reduce aggressive behavior in Albania.

Keywords: Aggression, Adolescents, Males, Females(sex), Albania.

INTRODUCTION**Aggression: An overview**

Aggression has been defined as an emotional state, which is accompanied with a desire to attack others driven by the internal and/or external factors (Adam & Berzonsky 2003). According to John Dollard (1930), who is known as one of the developers of Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis, aggression comes as the result of frustration. According to the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1930) and the etiologist Konrad Lorenz (1976) all individuals have aggressive potential, since they are born. Indeed aggression and sexuality are key elements of the individual development, directly influencing behavior. According to Delfos, 2004 physical aggression is a norm in early childhood, but it is considered untypical when it continues into late childhood and adolescence. Born aggression is typical until the age of 2-3 years old, but if it is not managed in the correct way from family and school this behaviour becomes worse and can be manifested with violent acts in adolescence and adulthood (Gemeli,1996). Indeed according to Frick (1992) aggression might be expressed in form of antisocial behaviours. Moreover, Brody (2003) has suggested that aggressive behaviour often precedes or is accompanied with delinquent behaviour.

Several theories have suggested different classifications of aggression. According to Anderson & Huesman, (2003) aggression can be: a. Hostile or open aggression with a clear intention to harm (physical or psychological) b.Instrumental aggression:the aggressive act occurs in effort to achieve a certain goal but is not a purpose per se (Silva, 1983). According to Dodge (1997) instrumental aggression is not emotional or provocative. Conner (2004) also mentions another type of aggression, i.e., affective aggression, which is reactive to threat and has the purpose of defence. This type of aggression is accompanied by unplanned attack. Active aggression is characterized as a protective impulse to provocation (Dodge & Coie, 1987; Eisenberg & Fabes 1992) and according to Hubbard (2002) is usually physical.

Physical aggression is the most typical demonstration that the individual does not possess the necessary healthy mechanisms of coping with frustration, stress or engaging into reasonable decision making and problem solving activities (Strickle, Kirkpatrick & Brush 2009). One of the most important developmental stages to investigate aggression, is adolescence.

Aggression in adolescence

According to Essau and Conradt (2004) aggression in adolescence might be displayed openly or could be hidden

1. Open (physical violence, guns etc).
2. Hidden. The behaviours that accompany this kind of aggression are leaving school and their homes, stealing etc.

Although early in life gender differences in aggression are not pronounced (Hay, 2005), according to Kim – Cohen (2005), they become quite evident during school age, with males being more aggressive than females. A study in USA (2002) investigating physical, verbal and indirect aggression of adolescents, resulted that one in five children bullied others, and more than one in three high school students were involved in some form of physical attack. About 30-40% of males adolescents and 16-32% of females were involved in criminal, violent acts by the age of 17 (National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, 2002). Studies have shown that girls would display and receive more relational aggression (kind of nonverbal aggression) especially during interactions with females or inside their social group (Ostrov & Keating, 2004). Later research involving 73.498 adolescents also found gender differences between genders; physical aggression of boys was higher than the girls and the verbal aggression of girls was higher than boys (Card, Sawalani, Stucky, & Little, 2008). Similar results for physical and verbal aggression of males and females were also reported in another study of the University of California (Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2012). A study reporting prevalence data on aggression among American adolescents 15-18 old, found that 32.8% of them showed physical aggression outside school, (40,7% of them were males and 24,4% females). In -school physical aggression was shown by 12% of adolescents, of which 16% were males and 7.8% females(National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention 2012).

Findings from European countries are quite similar. A study in Germany reported that 43,7% of male adolescents and 23,6% of the females, interviewed, were involved in antisocial behaviours; 20,2% of males and 6,4% of females were involved in violent acts; 17,8% of males and 15,5% of females have caused physical violence; 29,9% of males and 7,1% of females were involved in acts of vandalism and 14,2% of males and 12,4% of females were involved in shop-lifting (Baier, 2009; München, 2013). In a study of UNICEF from 2002-2010 that included 30 countries (European Countries, USA, Canada and Russia etc) appeared two main trends: 1st. Decreased levels of aggression among adolescents from countries such as Russia, Belgium, Danimark, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and England 2. Increased levels of aggression in countries such as Spain or Greece. Findings were explained in the context of increasing knowledge and education on aggression and management techniques (Association for Young People's Health, 2013).

Aggression in Albania

The Albanian society and family are going through a long period of transition since the changes in the political system of 1991. In the report of the study of UNICEF Albania, 2007

in collaboration with the “European Community” and “Worldwide Swedish Agency of Development” and Children’s Human Rights Center of Albania provide some data on the extent of aggressive/antisocial behavior. The report maintains that 193 adolescents were involved in criminal offences, 38 of them were 17 years old and were punished, while 29 of them have done criminal acts against each other. The report documents an increase in aggression prevalence; Thus in 2004 only seven adolescents were involved in criminal acts like threat, offense etc., while in 2005 this number increased to 31 and during the first 6 months of 2006 it reached 193. Aggressive criminal acts were involved in acts like: murders or tentative of a murder, sexual assaults, acts of shame or keeping guns without permission. In terms of age 23 from this criminal acts were resulted younger than 14 years old, while 170 were adolescents between 14-18 years old.

Aggressive family models have been suggested as a possible explanation of this increasing trend; for instance in the demographic and health study in Albania 2008- 2009, done by INSTAT(Albanian Institute of Statistics) and ISHP (Institute of Public Health), resulted that 75% of children have experienced at least some kind of physical or psychological violence. According to the “National study for family violence” realised by INSTAT in 2009, resulted that 57.7% of children report that they were attacked by a member of their family, 56.8% were slapped or punched, 12.8% were attacked with objects, and 4% were burned with cigarettes.

To conclude, it is evident that aggression among Albanian adolescents is an ever-increasing problem which needs to be addressed; nonetheless a good understanding of the problem is mandatory at first. The purpose of the present study was to provide data on the level and types of aggression among Albanian adolescents. The study focused exclusively on 17 year olds as studies reveal this is probably the most problematic age (Lösel, & Bliesener, 2003). Thus 17-year olds are more likely to drop out of school, be violent to each other, consume alcohol and drugs, get involved in criminal behavior etc.

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

The study involved 250, 17-year old adolescents 108 males (43.2%) and 142 females (65.8%). In terms of residence 200 adolescents were recruited in two cities: Tirana (capital city with a highly heterogenous population) and Lezha (smaller city with homogenous population). 50 adolescents lived in rural areas, 12 villages in Mirdita. After getting relevant permissions, adolescents were reached in their schools. The students were clarified about the study, and also about the way they had to complete the questionnaire. They were allowed enough time to complete the test. All of the students were informed that their data were anonymous and confidential.

MEASURE

The measure used was the Buss - Durkee Hostility Inventory (BDHI, 1957) (Castrogiovanni & Andreani, 1982; Castrogiovanni & Maremmanni, 1993)” updated by Buss and Warren (2000). This test is the most widely used self-report assessment of aggression; it has been used in different populations and cultures, with the purpose of showing the level of aggression and understanding how gender influences different kinds of aggression (Yudofsky & Hales, 2008).

The test had 75 items and the students are asked whether they agree or disagree with the statements. It included 8 Subscales measuring: Direct Assault or Physical, Indirect Assault, Irritability, Negativism, Resentment, Suspicion, Verbal Assault, Guilt or feelings of having done wrong. The subscales were scored in: a.intra-directed aggression, that include: resentment, suspicion and guilt. b. hetero-directed aggression, that include: Direct Assault, Indirect Assault, Irritability, Negativism and Verbal Assault:

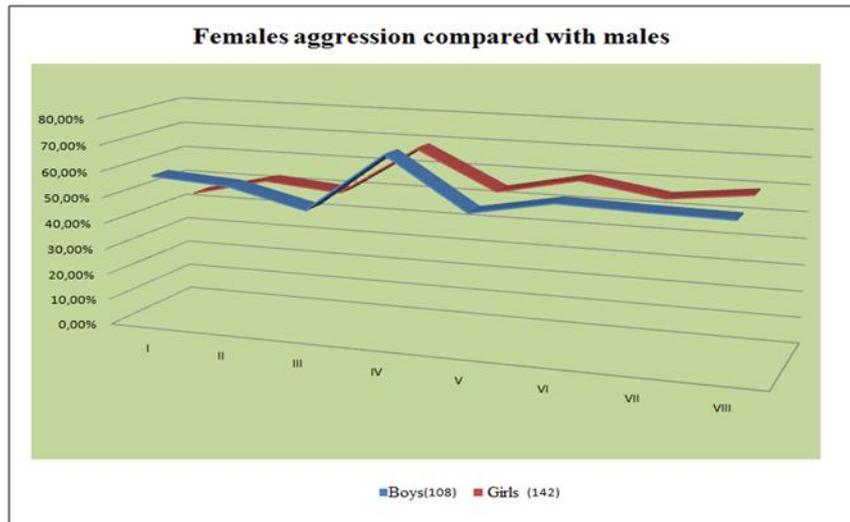
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data were analyzed with the purpose of finding frequencies and prevalence of the different types of aggression. Table 1 reveals figures (percentages) for each dimension of aggression; classification has been done in terms of Area (Urban 1 & 2) and Gender. Findings suggest high levels of aggression among adolescents (mean 54-56%). A tendency towards an increase of female aggression compared with the males aggression is evident, a finding which is also in line with research from other countries (Wood, Cowan & Baker,2002). More specifically, for the category "Indirect Assault or to objects" more than 50% of the sample report being involved. This is a considerable increase as compared with the data of the Institute of Public Health (ISHP, 2004), which reported only 11% (42% females and 58% males). Nonetheless considering that the data of the present study are not nationally representative, care should be taken with such a comparison; even so, there seems to be no obvious reason for which the specific areas investigated should have higher aggression rates as compared to other Albanian cities or rural areas. This aspect might be the focus of further research, with a nationally representative sample.

Table 1: Results by Dimension, Zone and Gender

Dimensions		Urban Zone 1 %	Urban Zone 2 %	Rural Area %
Direct Assault	BOY	61	55	56
	Girl	44	44	49
Indirect Assault	BOY	56	56	54
	Girl	54	55	59
Irritability	BOY	51	47	47
	Girl	49	50	48
Negativism	BOY	77	66	66
	Girl	68	69	68
Resentment	BOY	48	54	56
	Girl	55	54	53
Suspicion	BOY	59	54	62
	Girl	60	60	63
Verbal Assault	BOY	60	56	50
	Girl	57	57	50
Guilt	BOY	51	55	68
	Girl	56	61	60

Females aggression compared with males (Figure 1)



Graph 1: Male vs. Female Aggression

Results show that while direct aggression is more pronounced in males, indirect aggression seems to be more pronounced in females. Indeed Negativism was the dimension where females out-scored males. On the other hand Direct Assault was the dimension reported by the smallest fraction of the female sample. These findings are in line with research by Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) and also Hyde (1984) which suggest that males show more direct or physical aggression because of the higher levels of testosterone, which bring greater physical strength as compared to females (Crick, 1992, 1997; Archer, 2004). On the other hand it should be also mentioned that differences are very small, as both men and women tend to display direct and indirect aggression at similar levels; indeed according to Wohlman & Berk men display both kinds of aggression, the physical and indirect aggression.

One of the most interesting findings of the study concerns the dimension of Negativism, which was reported by the majority of boys in Urban Zones 1 and 2 but not the Rural Areas. Conversely the Guilt dimension was relevant in Rural Areas but not Urban ones. While the present data provide little evidence supporting an Urban/Rural relevant difference in displays of aggression, it might be suggested that future research further investigates this particular aspect. The particular living conditions in villages, e.g., requiring some adolescents to do hard physical work from a very young age, take care of their younger brothers/sisters etc. might be suggested as possible explanations of these findings which nonetheless need to be investigated in future research. Conversely Irritability and resentment were the dimensions reported by the smallest number of boys. Conversely females have the majority on resentment, suspicion and guilt, all dimensions which seem to be closely related to the typical female gender roles (internalizing anger). Traditional societies (or those in transition such as Albania) have still difficulties to accept individuality and independence, making the individual (especially women) feel guilty for wanting to outgrow as an independent person. Indeed the highest scores for this dimension were in the Rural areas (64%), where social norms and old fashion mentality are still very prominent and quite rigid. Particularly interesting are also the categories of Nervosism and Resentment; lack of support, understanding, trust and continuous criticism seem to be still integral part of parental styles in Albania. Although the present study did not directly investigate on parental styles, findings suggest that much of the problem lies within the family and relationships with parents. The role of schooling and education is also quite central although the study does not allow for any strong conclusions in this direction (Goleman, 1998, Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A., 2002; Baron, R., (2004). Further research is required to examine these particular aspects.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the present study was to investigate levels and types of aggression among Albanian adolescents. Results showed high prevalence of aggression (both direct and indirect) among adolescents. Also gender differences were found in terms of direct aggression being more prevalent among boys and indirect aggression more prevalent among girls; nonetheless differences should be carefully discussed because they are very subtle. Moreover differences in types of aggression have been found between urban and rural areas suggesting the involvement of specific socio-cultural factors.

Nonetheless, the present findings should be carefully considered, considering that the sample was rather small and non-representative of the Albanian adolescent population (17-year olds from two cities and several villages). Further studies with nationally representative data are needed before making any strong claims on prevalence. The same caution should be applied in the interpretation of gender differences or urban/rural area differences. Even so, the present study supplies some rather concerning findings which suggest the need to investigate further factors related to aggressive behavior in two main settings: 1. The family 2. The school environment. Further research is needed to identify setting-specific factors, which will then be useful in designing prevention/intervention programs tailored to the specific population and their needs.

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