

**AGGRESSION AMONG SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN OF
WORKING AND NON-WORKING MOTHERS IN RELATION TO
SELF-ESTEEM, SELF-HOME PERCEPTION, AND STUDENT-
TEACHER RELATIONSHIP**

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Abstract

Keywords:

Aggressive behaviour;

Family;

Counselling;

Peer-perception;

Teacher

The present study focuses on aggressive behavior of school going children of working and nonworking mothers in relation to their self-esteem (SE), self-home perception (SHP), and student-teacher relationship (STR). This study has been conducted on 100 aggressive students from seven schools in the Ludhiana district (Punjab), India, as identified by the teachers. Self-constructed tools and Rosenberg's test for SE was used for data collection. Significant differences are observed based on different investigated factors for aggressive children of working and non-working mothers. Both SHP and SE were found to be higher in aggressive children of working mothers as compared to those of non-working mothers. Self-home perception and student-teacher relationships have been found to be significantly correlated with each other for aggressive children of both working as well as non-working mothers.

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1. Introduction

Recently, a tremendous increase in violence and anti-social behavior among children, adolescents, and youth has become a major concern all around the world. Aggression, although being a popular research topic, has been a difficult phenomenon to define appropriately [1]. Another issue related to aggression includes the “best” informants about “who is aggressive.” Generally, research on aggressive behavior of children has been based on peer, teacher, and parent reports [2]. Self-reports have also been used to investigate aggressive behavior [3]. Low to moderate latent correlations between peer, teacher, and self-reported overt and relational aggression (r 's ranged from .13 to .52) were found [4]. Further, various subtypes of aggression has been studied, many of which overlap [1]. Among these overlapping constructs are physical/verbal/overt/direct aggression, indirect/social/relational aggression, reactive/hostile aggression, and proactive/ instrumental aggression. A large body of research literature documents the intrapersonal characteristics of aggressors, and the social as well as developmental consequences of being aggressive [1]. Researchers have studied and begun to catalogue the intrapersonal characteristics of victims of aggression and the social and developmental consequences of being a victim [5].

There are many identified external or internal risk factors for aggression. Most of the external risk factors in childhood and adolescence are environmental influences such as family practices, neighborhood influences, social experiences, influence of the media, poverty and gang membership. As compared to internal risk factors, relatively more research has been conducted on external risk factors [6]. However, internal or individual level factors have also been considered to put children at risk for aggressive outcomes [7]. It is inferred that there are many risk factors which could give rise to aggression among children however, in the present study we shall focus on family, schools and teacher and SE of children.

Family as an external risk factor

Family plays an important role in child development. In families with substance abuse issues, children have been found more likely to be aggressive as compared to those belonging to non-substance abuse families [8]. It has been observed that more aggressive boys were descendents from polygamous families and crowded homes with more siblings. It is likely that these children

received less parental affection, and more physical punishment [9]. Prior studies have revealed that parental verbal aggression alone could contribute to lowering the children's SE and school achievements [10]. According to attachment theory, children begin to construct rudimentary models of self (and others) in response to the availability and sensitivity of caregivers in toddlerhood. Such representations of toddlerhood stay in the mind across the life span [11]. Thus, if caregivers are sensitive and available to the child during the developmental years, a child constructs a model of self that is worthy and desirable of love. It has been shown that the family as a system may have dysfunctions, which might result in aggression and delinquency in a child [12].

School and teachers as risk factor

Self-esteem, academic self-concept, and aggressive behavior are well investigated by Laramie, Pamela, & Oksana [13]. The relationship of children with their teacher is another key factor which plays an important role in the life of aggressive children [14]. Aggressive children are likely to have negative relationships with their teachers [15] and are at the risk of engaging in delinquent [16]. Aggressive children with poor social competence are likely to have negative relationships with their teachers [15]. Aggressive children with good student-teacher relationships have been observed to be less aggressive in subsequent years [17]. Further, peer perception is also among the reasons behind the aggressiveness of a child, a good student-teacher relationship has a positive effect on the peer's perceptions of a child [18].

Self-esteem as an internal factor

Self-esteem is another internal factor which is quite important for investigating the aggressive behavior of children and has been the focus of many research endeavors [19]. Self-esteem refers to an individual's personal judgment of his own worth or the extent to which, an individual considers that their present self matches up to their ideal self [20]. It is established that both low as well as high self-esteem may lead to aggressive behavior amongst children and adolescents [21]. Self-esteem has been correlated with attachment, availability, and verbal aggression of parents towards their children [10]. Defensive self-esteem, which is characterized by high levels of explicit but low levels of implicit SE, is directly related with aggressive behavior [22]. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, cannot be neglected for its role in aggressive behavior of

children [13]. Few researchers have explored the relationship between parental care and self-esteem but no one has investigated the relationship between self-esteem and aggression among children of working and non-working mothers to best of our knowledge. Therefore looking at above aspects, we may conclude that aggression is a context-sensitive behavior. The prevalence, intensity, nature, and consequences of being aggressive depend upon individual characteristics, previous interactions, social relationships, and the peer group.

To study the aggressive behavior of children, high school students seem to be most appropriate as the responses from them was thought to be free from bias. Further, at their age, we have a chance to learn about the exact reasons behind their aggressive behavior and to provide them with guidance and support to help in rectifying their behavior. Moreover, the school is considered to be the place where a child spends the most amount of time outside their home and his/her aggression can be judged better in this environment. In this context, the student-teacher relationship can help to identify children who exhibit aggressive behavior. In the economically developing world, where the ratio of working mothers is increasing, it is essential to investigate the aggressive behavior of school going children of working and non-working mothers. The presence or absence of mothers at home after the school time might affect the SE, and SHP, which in turn is related with the aggression as discussed earlier. Therefore, in this study, we have investigated the aggressive behavior of children of working and non-working mother in relation to their self-esteem, student-teacher relationship and SHP. On the basis of the literature review, the following statistical hypotheses were put forth and tested for this study:

- There will be a significant difference in the perception of self and home among aggressive children of working and non-working mothers.
- There will be a significant difference in the student- teacher relationship of aggressive children of working and non-working mothers.
- There will be a significant difference in the self-esteem of aggressive children of working and non-working mothers.
- There will be a significant relationship between the self-home perception and student-teacher relationship of aggressive children.

- There will be a significant relationship between the self-esteem and self-home perception of aggressive children.
- There will be a significant difference between the self-esteem and student-teacher relationship of aggressive children.

2. Research Method

Participants

Participants in the study were 100 school going children (government schools in urban areas) of standard 6th grade aged between 11-12 years. They were randomly chosen from the 120 aggressive children to avoid any bias identified by their teachers out of 387 students in the Punjab state of India. Further, students were categorized as children of working (N = 23) and non-working (N=77) mothers.

Procedure

Data for this research was collected by researcher. Contacts were made with various school administrations, out of which, finally seven schools in Punjab (India) participated in the study. On every working day, at least one school was visited. Following initial contact with head teachers, all teachers of standard 6th were pre-informed about the objectives of the study. Teachers anonymously filled out the scale of aggression among the school going children as provided by Sexena, & Gupta (1994) (described later), which were used to identify aggressive children. Following that, on the very next day, the scales related to self-esteem and self-home perception were filled by the identified aggressive children, and the scale for student-teacher relationship was filled by the teachers. All measures were administered within each classroom in January to March 2008.

Instruments

A scale of aggression among school going children by Arunima Saxena (SASGC) (1994)

The tool used for the identification of aggressive children of working and non-working mothers was Arunima Sexena's tool: "Aggression Among Children" [23]. This tool was based on the self-appraisal method in which respondents are provided with different options to respond like agree, completely agree, disagree, completely disagree, and nothing to say. The tool was

standardized by Sexena,& Gupta [23] during her research work. Scoring was done based on a 5 point scale. Out of 82 statements, only 21 statements were considered for the construction of the tool, which has a significant t-value at 0.01 level along with score more than the median. Therefore, significant t-value along with score more than median for respective statement had established the reliability of the tool. The respondent teachers had to write the names of students in front of each item according to the behavior mentioned there in. At the end of questionnaire, the number of students was counted who were mentioned against different statements. An average appearance of the name of children was calculated. The number of children whose name appeared average or more than average was considered as aggressive children.

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSE)

The Rosenberg SE scale [24] was used to assess the self-esteem of students identified as aggressive by their teachers. The Rosenberg's self-esteem scale provides a uni-dimensional measure of global self-esteem. The RSE consists of 10 questions presented with four response choices, ranging from "strongly agree to strongly disagree" as a six-item Guttman scale. We preferred to calculate the scale's total score by summing the subject's responses across all 10 RSE questions as was done by McCarty & Hoge [25]. The reliability of the scale was tested by a 2-week test-retest coefficient of .85 (N=28) by Silbert & Tippett, 1965 [26]. The validity of the scale was established with as Pearson coefficient of .67 using Kelly Repertory test [27]. Students who obtained a score above 25 were deemed to have low self-esteem and those with a score of less than 25 were considered to have high self-esteem.

A scale for self-home perception of aggressive children (SSHP)

This scale was constructed by the researchers to find out the self-home perception (for understanding of causes of aggressiveness) among aggressive children. SHP mean the perception about oneself in connection to home. It consists of 26 items, out of which 13 statements were regarding self-perception and 13 statements were regarding home-perception of aggressive children. This questionnaire was constructed by keeping diverse factors in mind that could lead to aggression. These factors include the family background (substance abuse/non-substance abuse), parental care, conflict with siblings, physical condition (weak/healthy), psychological health, interaction with peer group, and habits related to television watching and playing violent

video games. The scoring was done as 2, 1, and 0 for responses of Always, Sometimes, and never, respectively. Total score is the summation of the self- and home-perception item scores and can range between 0 and 52. A student who obtains a score in the range of 0-26 has a favorable SHP, which can be increased with supportive intervention at home. A score in the range of 26-52 suggests that both parents and student need counseling and have an unfavorable SHP. The reliability of the scale was tested by a 3-week test-retest coefficient of .81 (N=32). The validity was tested with a Pearson coefficient of .73.

A scale for student-teacher relationship for aggressive children (SSTR)

This scale was constructed by the researchers to investigate the student-teacher relationship. The scale consisted of 21 items. In this scale 13 out of 21 items were considered positive and eight items were considered negative. For positive items, the scoring was done as 1, 2, and 3 for Always, Sometimes, and Never, respectively. Similarly for negative items, scoring was done as 3, 2, and 1 for Always, Sometimes, and Never, respectively. The total score can range between 21 and 63. The students with a score above 42 have a poor student-teacher relationship, and students with a score below 42 have a better student-teacher relationship. The reliability of the scale was tested by a 3-week test-retest coefficient of .87 (N=32). The validity was tested with a Pearson coefficient of .70.

3. Results and Analysis

Data were analyzed by descriptive analysis, differential analysis, and bivariate correlation methods. Table 1 represents the measures of central tendency of SHP (SHP), student-teacher relationship (STR) and SE (SE) among the total number of identified aggressive children (N = 100) as well as among identified aggressive children of working (N = 23) and non-working mothers (N = 77).

Table 1

Mean, Median, Mode, Standard deviation (SD) and Kurtosis of SHP, STR and SE among total identified aggressive children, aggressive children of working and non-working mothers

A comparable value of the mean (25.83) and median (26.00) for SHP indicates that for the total sample of identified aggressive children, the SHP is favorable in nature. Similarly, mean value of 23.56 for SE is also comparable to median (24.00), which indicates that SE of identified aggressive children is neither very high nor very low. It has already been established that both high as well as low SE have led to aggression [21], however, from this study, it seems that children with good SE could exhibit aggressive behavior. The mean value of 43.00 for STR of identified aggressive children is higher than the Median i.e. 42.10, which indicates the absence of good STR among aggressive children. The poor STR can be an indicator of aggression [15], and delinquent [16] behavior among children. Therefore, the student and teachers must have good STR, which could lead to non-aggression among children, although, various other factors might lead to aggressive behavior [6]. Further, on comparing the scores for working and non-working mothers, it has been found that

the SHP and SE among aggressive children of working mothers is higher (SHP: 26.26; and SE:23.94) as compared to that of aggressive children of non-working mothers (SHP: 24.70; and

Among total identified aggressive children

	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Kurtosis
SHP	100	25.83	26.00	28.00	4.884	-0.117
STR	100	43.00	42.10	41.00	4.100	0.785
SE	100	23.56	24.00	25.00	3.397	-0.705

Among aggressive children of non-working mothers

SHP	77	24.70	26.00	28.00	4.85	-0.157
STR	77	42.98	42.00	42.00	4.01	0.984
SE	77	21.75	24.00	25.00	3.34	-0.974

Among aggressive children of working mothers

SHP	23	26.26	27.00	28.00	5.07	0.255
STR	23	42.39	43.00	43.00	4.43	0.548
SE	23	23.91	24.00	20.00	3.62	-0.636

SE:21.75). This can be due to the fact that aggressive children of working mothers receive less attention from their mother in different daily activities at home leading to high SHP as compared to children of non-working mothers. The lesser attention towards children [6] as a consequence of the working nature of parents which could lead to accumulation of stress can lead to aggressive behavior similar to that of child-onset delinquent behavior. As there are many reasons for the birth of aggressiveness in children, another reason may be the violent television programs and video games which children play mostly in their mothers' absence [28].

As can be seen from Table 1, the difference between mean and median i.e. 0.17 (for SHP), 0.44 (for SE), and 0.90 (for STR) for the whole population (N = 100) is not very significant. Similarly, there is a marginal difference in mean values obtained for different variables for aggressive children of working and non-working mothers. These marginal variations must be analyzed to get clearer insight. The extent and significance of such correlations can be measured by calculating the t-values for different parameters.

Table 2 represents the differential analysis as differential coefficient (df) and t-ratio was used to locate the difference in SHP, STR, and SE of aggressive children of working and non-working mothers.

Table 2

t-ratio to locate difference in the SHP, STR and SE among aggressive children of working and non-working mothers

Variable	df	t-ratio
SHP	98	1.339*
STR	98	0.604**
SE	98	2.669***

*t-ratio is significant at <0.2-0.1> level (two-tailed); **significant at 0.4 level (two-tailed); ***significant at 0.01 level (two-tailed).

As indicated by the t-ratio (Table 2), which is not significant at 0.05 level for SHP (t-ratio 1.339), STR (t-ratio 0.604), and SE (t-ratio 2.669) among aggressive children of working and non-working mothers, there exists no significant difference among SHP, STR, and SE of aggressive children of mothers who are employed and who are not employed at a level of 0.05. However, there exists a relationship at different level of confidence as indicated in Table 2.

Table 3 represents the coefficients of correlation for different parameters among total aggressive children, and aggressive children of working and non-working mothers. The motive of the present study was to evaluate whether there are any correlates of children's self-esteem (SE), self-home perception (SHP), student-teacher relationship (STR) and aggressive behavior of children of working and non-working mothers.

Table 3

Coefficients of correlation among total identified aggressive children, aggressive children of working and non-working mothers

Among total identified aggressive children

Variable	N	SHP	STR	SE
SHP	100	1.00	-0.437*	0.022
STR	100	-0.437*	1.00	-0.008
SE	100	0.022	-0.008	1.00

Among aggressive children of non-working mothers

SHP	77	1	-0.373**	0.030
STR	77	-0.373**	1	0.108
SE	77	0.030	0.108	1

Among aggressive children of working mothers

SHP	23	1	-0.461 [#]	-0.421 [#]
STR	23	-0.461 [#]	1	-0.358 ^{##}
SE	23	-0.421 [#]	-0.358 ^{##}	1

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (two-tailed); **Correlation is significant at 0.1 level (two-tailed); #Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (two-tailed); ##Correlation is significant at 0.1 level (two-tailed).

A correlation coefficient of 0.022 between SHP and SE, -0.008 between STR and SE, and -0.437 between SHP and STR was obtained for the total population (N = 100). Further, the correlation coefficient between different risk factors separately for aggressive children of working (N = 23) and non-working (N = 77) mothers was obtained. From the analysis, a correlation coefficient of 0.030, 0.108, and -0.373 was obtained for SHP and SE, STR and SE, and SHP and STR, respectively for aggressive children of non-working mothers. It is observed that only the correlation between SHP and STR of -0.373 is moderate at 0.1 level. On the other hand, a correlation coefficient of -0.421, -0.358 and -0.461 is obtained between SHP and SE, STR and SE, and SHP and STR, respectively for aggressive children of working mothers. As can be seen from Table 3, these correlations are positive (SHP and SE, significant at 0.05 level) and negative (STR and SE, significant at 0.05 level; SHP and STR, significant at 0.1 level) painting a complex picture of aggression of children of working mothers in relation to these parameters.

Among the total identified aggressive children (N = 100), there is no significant relationship between SHP and SE (correlation coefficient 0.022, not significant at 0.05 and 0.01 level) as well as between STR and SE (correlation coefficient -0.008 not significant at 0.05 and 0.01 level). As can be seen from Table 3, there exists a significant correlation between SHP and STR (correlation coefficient -0.437, significant at 0.05 level, two tailed). It seems that a good environment at home may lead to better student-teacher relationships, and a good student-teacher relationship is also anticipated to enhance students' perception about their homes. Both of these factors are essential in governing the aggressiveness of children. In general, the role of non-working mothers seems to play an important role in improving children's relationships with their teachers. However, a more detailed study involving large number of participants is much needed to address this issue in the growing era of female empowerment. Among aggressive children of non-working mothers, there is no significant correlation between SHP and SE (correlation coefficient 0.030, not significant at 0.05 and 0.01 level) as well as STR and SE (correlation coefficient 0.108, not significant at 0.05 and 0.01 level). However, it has been observed that there exists a significant

correlation between SHP and SE (correlation coefficient -0.421, significant at 0.05 level) as well as between STR and SE (correlation coefficient -0.358, significant at 0.05 level) for aggressive children of working mothers. Further, there exists a significant relationship between SHP and STR (correlation coefficient -0.461, significant at 0.05 level) among aggressive children of working and non-working (correlation coefficient -0.373, significant at 0.1 level) mothers. This establishes the interdependency of SHP and SE as well as STR and SE among aggressive children of working mothers. It is clear that SE, which is an important factor in governing the aggressive behavior of children, can be balanced by proper care and guidance to the children and this in itself would lead to better SHP. This does not mean that women should not join the workforce, but instead, with the help of counsellors and other family members as well as community, the home environment should be made comfortable for the children. In the past, there have been mixed findings on the relationship between aggressive behavior and SE [22]. High SE was found to be highly correlated with violence and aggression [29] whereas low SE has been correlated with aggressive behavior too as a cause of aggression [30], or as an indicator of aggression [31]. Looking at our results, in general it is established again that SE is not very directly connected with aggression and different measures are needed to get deep insight into the phenomenon of aggression in relation with SE. On the other hand, STR is another benchmark affecting the SE of children. From descriptive analysis, it is observed that STR of aggressive children is not healthy, which was expected to be one of the factors affecting aggressive behavior of children at this stage of analysis. STR has also been found to be correlated to SHP negatively which means that a better STR may lead to good SHP affecting the aggressive behavior in a positive way. Negative STR can be a cause, indicator, or just a factor affecting aggressive behavior among children. Healthy STR is also expected to positively affect the peer's acceptance of an aggressive student which can indirectly affect the aggressive behavior of that student in a positive manner. It is clear that good STR is very necessary in maintaining balanced SE. Teachers must identify aggressive children in their class and special attention must be given to them along with referring these kids to school counseling. Further, high SHP and SE among aggressive children of working mothers as compared to aggressive children of non-working mothers can be qualitatively correlated with many factors such as sympathy, timely conflict resolution among siblings, and style of parenting (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) etc.. On the other hand, if the working mothers are neglectful about their kids, they could get deeply attached with violent television programs

and play violent video games, which finally results into inducing aggressive behavior among children. Therefore, the working mothers must have proper childcare and the kids would not be allowed to watch violent television programs and play video games. It would be problematic to say that working nature of mothers is associated with aggressive behavior of children. Therefore a study on large population involving different other variables is needed to have some concrete idea. Further, it is important to mention that the results of this study cannot be generalized as this study is limited only to seven schools in the Punjab state of India. Further, the study is limited to 100 aggressive students randomly chosen from 120 identified aggressive children of 6th standard aged between 11-12 years.

4. Conclusion

This study investigated aggression among school going children (N = 100) of working (N= 23) and non-working mothers (N = 77) in relation to SE, SHP, and STP. Among the total identified aggressive children, SHP has been found to be favorable in nature and the SE of identified aggressive children has been found to be good. However, aggressive children have been found to possess negative STR. Among aggressive children of non-working mothers, there does not exist a significant correlation between SHP and SE as well as STR and SE, however it has been observed that there exists a significant correlation between SHP and SE as well as between STR and SE for aggressive children of working mothers. It is clear that SE, which is an

important factor in governing the aggressive behavior of children, can be balanced by proper care and guidance to children leading to better SHP. STR of aggressive children has been found to be negative, which can be directly correlated with aggressive behavior. Teachers must identify aggressive children in their class and more attention must be given to them. More attention towards such children would improve the peer's perception about children and would also help in balancing the SE of the children, which could lead to decrease in aggressive behavior. Further, teachers and school must refer these children to school counseling centers.

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