Aggression and its impact on academic performance

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Abstract
Aggression and aggressive behavior has become very common trend all over the world, making it vulnerable to investigate its influence and existence among students and how they affect the academic performance. This paper focuses on the effect of aggression on schools, colleges, students and teachers and various factors responsible for aggression. It also provides the intervention to deal with the same.

Keywords: Aggression, academic performance, shadow, provocation, aggressive cues.

Introduction
Aggression is derived from a Latin word ‘Agressio’ which means attack. It was first used in 1611, in the form of an unprovoked attack. In 1908 Alfred Adler mentioned about “aggressive drive” in his theory. Then in 1912, Sigmund Freud used this word in his writing which was the English translation of “hostile or destructive behavior”. From 1930s, child experts began to refer aggression instead of anger.

Aggression refers to overt or covert behavior intended to cause physical harm or mental disturbance to a person. It may occur as an instant reaction to a stressful situation that interferes with goal achievement. It may or may not be provoked by some other person. Any unpleasant feelings such as stress, anxiety, anger, irritability can trigger aggression.

Social psychologists define “aggression as behavior that is intended to harm another individual who does not wish to be harmed (Baron & Richardson, 1994)”.

Aggression depends upon how we perceive the intension of a person. It may look aggressive and dangerous from one point of view but not from the other. In context of academics, aggression to some extent is required.

According to Carl Jung archetype shadow, which contains the basic, primitive animal instinct is not only the source of evil but also the source of vitality, spontaneity, creativity and emotion. If the shadow is fully suppressed, the psyche will be dull and lifeless. There will be no excitement, enthusiasm and motivation and henceforth life will be withered.

Also if the shadow is totally repressed, the animal instinct do not disappear rather they lie dormant waiting for the crisis when ego is weak.

If aggression to certain extent is not expressed, it will remain suppressed and revolt back resulting in conduct disorder in students. But if it takes the form of physical and verbal assault, it should be controlled as well.
Aggression in school and colleges

Aggression is a common emotion present in all of us. Aggression and outburst of anger are considered normal when they occur on occasion but if occur frequently and out of control then it’s a problem. During early childhood, aggressive behavior is often normal as it results from the frustration of having partially developed language skills and limited ability to express feelings. But as the child enters the school, this behavior is no longer accepted.

Study by Estefania (2013); Savage & Wozniak (2016) mentioned that the outlook towards institutional and formal authorities are shaped and modified by school experiences. Students who like and feel comfortable in such settings consider it as a useful learning context. Such learning context will form a construct which will help to create a bright and beautiful future for them. This will made students to show positive and healthy attitudes for their teachers and institution and will not express behavioral or psychological conflicts. In contrary, when experiences at school and colleges are negative, it damages children and adolescent academic and social potential, fostering feelings of insecurity and emptiness resulting in aggressive behavior against others. In colleges, display of aggressive behavior represents masculinity. Dragowski and Scharron (2014) indicate that college male students feel more inclined to masculine display through violence as society demand them to. Taylor et al., (2013) added that when man is unable to express his masculinity performance adequately as society expects, there is evidence that he may use hyper-masculinity traits displaying through more violence. Corprew and Avery (2014) found that violence was considered manly among the college fraternity members. A study on South Korean male students suggested that students were to some extent open minded for aggressive behavior as aggression expressed on their peers manifest their manhood. Band-Winterstein & Eisikovits (2009) indicated as individual grows older, violent and aggressive activities started reducing. Usually college students involve in simple assault, contributing two-third of offence, is the most common type of violence performed and experienced by college students. Chandler, Johnson and Carroll (19990 compared and found that college athletes were more abusive than non-athletes. In which there were less chances of part time working student to indulge in violent activities (Allen, 2013). Henry et al (2000) supported the person-group similarity model given by Tversky in 1977. He suggested that when group of highly aggressive people forms a social group, they are socially accepted by the reduction of their aggressive behavior and using alternative conflict management strategies. Dishion et al (1999) supported deviancy training model suggesting that when aggressive students are grouped together, it triggers and boost violent behavior.

Types of Aggression

Aggression can be of two types: Reactive and Proactive. Reactive aggressive behaviors are impulsive and unplanned and usually a reaction to fear, anger or need to retaliate against someone whereas proactive behaviors are planned and calculated action with some motive other than harming someone. Bullying is an example of proactive aggression.

Other types are;

- Direct: when student abuse face to face directly or hurt someone by words or actions.
- Indirect: when student hurts other by gossips, rumors or internal murmurings
- Instrumental: It is cognitive where aggression is planned and intentional but not to hurt someone directly, rather achievement of goal or reward.
- Emotional: Also called as impulsive aggression as it occurs only with a small amount of forethought or intent.
Theories of aggression

- Cognitive neo-association theory: Aversive cues such as loud noise, frustration, provocation etc produce negative affect which activates our thinking process, memory and then expressive motor reactions and physiological response related to fight (anger) and flight (fear) situations.

- Social-learning theory: Just like we learn social behavior by direct observation or by imitation, similarly aggressive behaviors are learnt.

- Script theory: Script states a situation and guide behavior. Person first selects a script, and then chooses a character in the script. Then he learns the script and retrieve it when similar situation occurs and used as a guide for action.

- Social interaction theory: It interprets aggressive behavior (coercive) as a socially influenced behavior. Coercive behavior are performed to achieve a goal, or a valuable thing (money, information, services, safety, goods) or social identities (fame, prestige) etc.

- Instinct theory: It states that the aggression is the result of an inherent drive or need such as hunger, thirst, sex etc.

- Excitation transfer theory: It is based on the concept that the physiological arousal disperse slowly. When two arousing incidents occur with short interval, arousal from one incident dispersed to another incident. Consider if one incident was somehow aggressive, additional arousal from second incident make it worse or even angrier.

Effects of aggression on academic performance

Aggression on the part of student will cause distraction from the studies resulting in poor academic performance. Aggression of a student will not only distract him but disturb the whole class. The reason for aggression has been found to be difficult and complicated homework, reduced marks in exams, inability to understand class and low intelligence level. Several studies have been conducted to justify it.

Stipek and Miles (2008) found that students who find schoolwork difficult shows frustration, anger and unhappiness by acting aggressively. Also poor academic performance promotes aggression. They further identified that conflicting relationship between student and teacher undermines the academic engagement and learning. This study also mentioned that hyperactivity and attention are at fault, not aggression in affecting academic performance. Johnson (2009) showed in his research that overall low score was a better predictor of display of aggression at school. Schwartz et al (2006) suggested that mostly aggressive and popular students have unexplained absentees and low grade point average. Connor (2004) found close association between aggression and academic failure. Uluda (2013) suggests that the aggression has a negative impact on academic achievement and aggressive students tend to score low CGPA. Steinmayr, Ziegler & Trauble (2010) found a strong association between intelligence and academic achievement as well as intelligence deficit and violent behavior in adolescents. Stadler, Becker, Godker, Leutner & Greiff (2015) suggested that those with low intelligence face difficulty in complex problem solving, resulting incorrect decision making of non violent behavior as option in complex situations. Evans (2017) concluded that youth experience low tests scores in math and verbal assessment when exposed to violence. Howard et al (2010) proposed that students who are exposed to repeated violence are more prone to anxiety and aggressive behavior at school, which negatively affects academic achievement. Similarly, Borofsy et al, (2013) supported that students who are exposed to violence in home, neighborhood, community and through media are at high risk of developing attitude that accepts aggression as a part of life. Such attitudes in future will presume threatening and adversarial environment which will further dampen their energy for academic activities. In fact, these attitudes and beliefs may rob their hope and distract them from future interests and how academic performance may fulfill their goals.
Savagea (2017) found that academic achievement is inversely associated with conduct problem in adolescent, delinquency in adolescents and even criminal offences in adults. If aggression has a negative impact on academic performance, at the same time, it is beneficial and generating leadership skills among the students. Study of Chandran, Madhavan and Krishna (2018) suggested that students who are aggressive and bullies other students show excellent academic performance compared to other students. This study further suggested that students who are being bullied showed improvement of up to 20% in their academic performance when they are involved in extracurricular activities. Khurshid (2017) found in her study that 61 abnormal state of aggression, 126 medium level of aggression and 3 low level of aggression exhibited high academic performance. Barriga and his associate (2002) found that aggressive behavior exhibit zero correlation with academic achievement measure.

**Student’s violence**

Student’s violence comprises of physical fight, verbal abuse, psychological violence such as emotional torture, bullying including cyber bullying and in most chronic state, bringing weapons to college. It includes violence between students and some time verbal aggression on faculty members.

Student violence occurs in almost all countries and affect significant amount of children and adolescents world widely. Mostly it is perpetrated by peers but in few cases, is perpetrated by teachers and college staffs. There are several studies which support that boys show more aggression than girls but girls aggression are found to be more dangerous than boys.

Sammons (2011) mentioned in his study that females from infancy are taught that their gender implies them to be submissive, gracious, unassuming and agreeable. In support to Sammons, Park, Chiu and Won (2017) revealed that female students were more inclined towards internalized aggression than boys because females are instructed by their parents to be soft and submissive and abide by the rules of society as compared to males. Hence their anger remains repressed resulting in internalized aggression. Leschied, (2000-2004) found that the relational insults, verbal threats, need for revenge and disrupting interpersonal relationship were the most cited weapons of girls whereas physical aggression, verbal abuse, fighting for drug and alcohol were most cited behavior in boys. Crick and Dodge (1994) suggested that the girl shows more interpersonal aggression while boys uses instrumental aggression. It has been found that in boys with high academic grade, rural area boys are more aggressive than urban area. Whereas in girls with high academic grades, urban areas girls are more aggressive than rural areas. And in rural areas, boys with high academic grades are more aggressive than boys with low academic grades. (Revathy Chandran, 2018). Students from High socioeconomic status show more aggression than low socio-economic status. (Chatterjee, 2016) Chatterjee (2016) mentioned in her study that females are more aggressive than males adolescents.. Aggression were higher for girls with chronic school absence and higher dropout rates (Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990). It was also found that social rejection in school was predictor of later aggressive tendencies in girls, which were stronger risk predictor for girls than boys. Contradictory to this, Akhtar and Kushwaha (2015) found that boys are more aggressive than girls. Talukdar and Deka (2014) also found that male score higher than females in terms of aggression.

**Student- Teacher Relationship**

Since the ancient time, students-teacher relationship was considered most pure and valuable. India has a rich culture and symbolization of their love and respect such as Ekalavya and Guru Dronacharya who considered his teacher as God and gurukul as second home. Even in European history, there are great examples whose bonding was not only famous but has given rise to great philosophies of time. The bonding of Plato –Socrates and Alexander-Aristotle are one of them. But now, the relationship between student and teacher is not like the earlier. It’s becoming more delicate and fragile. The attitude of students has changed and they have forgotten the actual respect and esteem for teachers. Anyhow neither students nor teachers are liable for the downfall.
It’s a responsibility of teacher to provide continuous support and guidance to a student under any circumstance. When student repeatedly fail to get support from teacher, they took it in wrong way resulting in aggression and grudge towards teachers. There are few teachers who show affection to some of their favorite studious students neglecting other students, making them hateful towards them and the subject they teach.

Garcia & Orellana (2008), Yoneyama & Rigby (2006), Blankemeyer et al (2002) explained that “classroom environment was defined by two dimensions referring to perception of a supportive relation with teachers and perception of friendship and affiliation among peers in the classroom.” This result suggests that the student’s behavior was guided by the quality of interaction with teachers and peers. Brophy (1996) suggests that classroom consisting many disruptive-aggressive students creates such an environment which made it struggling for the teacher to sustain effective relations and use proper behavior managing schemes for the maintenance of discipline in classroom. Under such circumstances, teachers were forged to use coercive and punitive discipline that ironically increase instead of inhibiting their defiance (Hamre and Pianta, 2001). Schrock and Schwalbe (2009), Schwalbe (2012) revealed in their study that students in classroom show less aggression when it is discouraged by teachers and peers. Peer groups and public spaces provide opportunity to college students to display their masculinity which includes violence. Evans (2017) concluded that youth experience low tests scores in math and verbal assessment when exposed to violence, while also showing more negative attitude towards their teachers. Earlier Stipek and Miles (2008) mentioned in his study that students who find schoolwork difficult shows frustration, anger and unhappiness by acting aggressively. Also poor academic performance promotes aggression. They further identified that conflicting relationship between student and teacher undermines the academic engagement and learning.

Aggression due to Situational Factors:

Situational factors can be defined as the any situation or condition which can trigger aggression.

- Aggressive Cues: An aggressive cue refers to the object which triggers content of aggression in mind. Such as just the sight of badminton racquet or shuttlecock can increase aggression. Even few harsh or rough TV shows, films or video games can aggravate aggression (Anderson and Bushman, 2002).
- Provocation: Interpersonal provocation is the most important cause of human aggression which includes insults, verbal abuse, fighting, bullying and interference with ones attempt to attain an important goal.
- Frustration: Frustration arises whenever there is failure in attainment of goal. It can be direct or indirect or it can be displaced on an individual who might not be accountable for the frustration or unaccomplishment of goal.
- Pain and Discomfort: Researchers have found that aversive conditions such as loud noise, hot temperature, and unpleasant odor can increase aggression.
- Researchers have found that aversive conditions such as hot temperature, loud noises, unpleasant odors can increase aggression. Thomas and Bierman (2009) suggested that the inappropriate structure of school, sinking play grounds and economic disadvantages triggers and generate aggression.
- Drugs: Certain drugs like alcohol; caffeine has the tendency to provoke anger.

Discussion

Aggression refers to any behavior or action directed towards other person with an intension to cause harm. From the analysis of above data, the mechanism of aggression has been represented in the below figure. It is a schematic representation of how aggression is triggered in an individual. Input refers to all biological, psychological, social and environment factors that provoke aggression. Person refers to the characteristic of individual such as attitudes, personality traits, genetic predisposition, sex, values and long term goals which direct the person to act in a situation. It may include the knowledge structure and script roles of a person which
guide behavior. Situational cues are any situations that trigger aggression such as aggressive cues, provocation, frustration, drugs, pain and discomfort. Then both personal factors and situational factors will affect present internal state of a person influencing cognition, affect and arousal. Cognition acts on the cognitive neo-association theory, arousal will act as per excitation transfer theory whereas affect may represent state or mood of person such as pain give rise to anger. The final outcome will depend on the appraisal and decision making of a person. Immediate appraisal is automatic, spontaneous and occurs without awareness. An aggressive appraisal involves aggressive and violent memories and emotions, a revengeful goal and a strong determination to accomplish a target. The individual will involve in planned and calculated actions (proactive) when the immediate appraisal outcomes will be satisfying and considerate or else unplanned, destructive actions (reactive) will take place.

FIGURE 1: MECHANISM OF AGGRESSION

Aggression in school and colleges has become a trend for students. In most studies, it represents the masculinity and manhood and students are open about it. Usually college students involve in simple assault such as physical
fight, verbal abuse, bullying etc which reduced as they grow older. But if aggression is intense during school
days, instead of reducing, it will multiply resulting in conduct disorder among students. It has been found that
girls and boys shows similar level of aggression by age 10 but it varies after age 16. Boys involves in more overt
aggressive behaviors and girls aggression are more internalized which takes the form of jealousy, insults, revenge
and relationships destruction. Girls are reported high on co morbidity with aggressive tendencies that includes
anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation (Leschied, 2000-2004). This supports the Carl Jung archetype ‘Shadow’
which manifest that the recurrent suppress of aggression will revolt back when ego is weak resulting in
psychological problems and conduct disorder in student.

Most studies support that the aggression negatively impact academic performance. It reduces the interest and
motivation, creates conflicts between peers, teachers and staffs. It has been also found that intellectual deficit,
failure to complete homework, lack of support from teachers and teacher favoritism creates a boundary and
isolate student from performing best in academics.

In the inclusion of these factors, there are certain situational cues which aggravate aggression such as lack of air
conditioned rooms during summers. Only one reason is not sufficient to provoke anger, contribution of all these
reasons in certain amount lead to creation of aggression which ultimately hampers the educational performance
of student.

Suggestions:

Controlling aggression in school

With proper management skills, aggression of the students can be monitored and controlled.

- At the time of admission, assessment tools for aggression should be administered on students to know
  their aggression level and if they need intervention.
- Tool should be administered every semester to look for any change and reason behind them
- Counseling should be given to students regarding anger management and reason for aggression to be
  resolved.
- Students higher on aggression should be made the member of anger controlling unit whose responsibility
  will be to monitor themselves as well as the aggression of others creating conflicts.
- Student should be penalized if involved in violence and in-disciplinary acts.
- Involvement of students in extracurricular sports activities can dampen aggression to certain extent.
- Athletes should be reinforced for controlling their anger on field.

Controlling aggression in student and teachers

- Student and teacher are instructed to resolve their conflict by any possible way without disturbing the
  harmony of class and school or college.
- Counseling should be given to both to manage and control their angers, building a positive relationship is
  always difficult but not impossible, it takes extra effort but always remain fruitful.
- Teachers to be motivated to accept their student and converse about their interest, taking care to notice
  good behavior and convey high expectation.
- Teachers should be informed to avoid partiality and biasness among their students and provide constant
  support and help to all students.
- Students should be instructed to be flexible and accept the teacher and their strict, busy schedule and
  reach to them when they can actually help you.
Conclusion

Anger and Aggression have become most common among students nowadays as every student exhibit emotional response in variable amount. Whatever the degree of aggression, it can be reduced by adopting various approaches at psychological and sociological levels. Tolerance and empathy on the part of the students and teacher, followed by proper training and counseling may be the solution.

References


