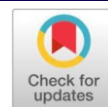


Original Research Article

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Adolescents' Aggression as Perceived by Teacher -An Interventional Approach



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ABSTRACT

The rate of maladaptive behaviours in adolescence is increasing day by day. Identifying, controlling, and managing highly aggressive behaviour and its ill effect of school-going adolescents have not yet been a major focus of education system of India. The consequences of aggression and related activities presently pose a major problem for society and uncontrolled aggression causes social, occupational, educational, physical, and mental health problems among adolescents. The aim of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions of the types and levels of aggression among adolescents. The study was conducted in the Sonitpur district of Assam. The sample (32 nos) for the study was selected purposively from a population of 185 students belonging to IXth (Ninth) standard of selected schools. A standardized questionnaire namely Direct & Indirect Aggression Scales was used to gather data from the teachers to find out the prevalence of aggression among adolescents. A Mindfulness-Based Intervention programme (Emotion Focused Coping Skills-A mindfulness approach) was conducted to manage and regulate unpleasant emotions. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The findings of the study revealed that three types of aggression viz. physical, verbal, and social were present among the respondents which were categorized as high, average, and low. According to teachers' report verbal aggression was more frequently shown by the respondents. Highly significant value of paired t-test ($P < 0.01$) and a significant increase in the percentage of respondents in low category in all three types of aggression revealed that a large section of respondents abate the level of aggression considerably after intervention. Therefore, it is of utmost interest for the policy-makers to introduce some activities in the education system which can help to manage aggression, and other distressing feelings and situations.

Keywords: Adolescents, Emotion, maladaptive behaviour, Aggression, Coping skills, Intervention, Mindfulness, Teacher.

1. Introduction

In today's world media frequently covers news about the extremely aggressive behaviour of young people who commit murder, perform physical violence against children, emotionally abuse their peers or engage in serious crimes, etc. Aggressiveness is not just a behaviour that causes physical harm to others but one that influences a child's development. Aggressive children often develop some aggressive behaviour in their early developmental period and experience difficulty in school or their later life. School bullying is most common which includes different types of aggressive behaviour that occurs in an educational setting mostly among peers. The nature of bullying can be physical, sexual, verbal, or social. Adolescents, use aggressiveness to create their position in their peer community. From the teachers' point of view, children do communicate aggressively in everyday life and very often they use aggressiveness as an instrument to reach a certain goal. The consequences of these behaviours may lead to poor performance in school, less communication with peers, irritability and sometimes lead to delinquency. But little effort has been made by the policy-makers to identify and manage the

adverse effect of aggression in the school level. Therefore, importance should be given to channelize unhealthy emotions during adolescence through interventional activities. Mindfulness-based intervention is one of the popular trends of intervention followed by most of the researchers and practitioners to regulate unhealthy emotions including aggression.

Hence, the present study was undertaken with the following objectives.

- ✓ To identify the types and levels of aggression of adolescents as perceived by teacher
- ✓ To intervene with mindfulness activities to manage unhealthy emotions and assess their efficacy.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The sample (32 nos) for the present study was the students showing aggressive behaviour, identified and selected from 185 numbers of students of class IX (14-16 years) from two selected schools.

2.2. Procedure

To select the desired sample, teacher's opinions were taken into consideration. Their responses were collected, found out, and listed down the names of students whose names were mentioned repeatedly by most of the students. Students from class IX were selected for this study as they belong to the early and middle adolescence period [11] in which aggression

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reaches in its peak led by heightened emotionality. Generally adolescents are portrayed as highly emotional, with their behaviour often captured by their emotions. In this stage, they experience physical and chemical changes which create much confusion in the life of adolescents. Considering these in view, the sample of the study was selected from a group of early and middle adolescents (14 years onwards) who had fulfilled the inclusion criteria of the sample of the study.

2.3. Materials and method

In the present study, the intervention was given to the respondents showing aggressive behaviour after doing baseline assessment. Two different follow-up assessments were conducted to find out the impact of intervention. In this regard quasi-experimental designs best suited the study. Sociometry was used in this study to identify the group with a maximum/high frequency of negative nominations. The demographic characteristics were collected by a self-structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. In order to assess the types and levels of aggression of selected respondents, a standardized structured questionnaire namely Direct & Indirect Aggression Scales (DIAS) developed by Bjorkqvist *et al.* (1992) was used. DIAS measures three kinds of aggression, namely physical, verbal, and indirect or social. A five-point scale (0=Never, 1=Seldom, 2=Sometimes, 3=Quite often, 4=Very often) was used for responses to all items given by the teachers. Informal discussion was also made with the teachers to collect additional information regarding students' aggression at school. The total scores of each respondent for physical, verbal, and social aggression were calculated. In this study the categories of "High", "Average", and "Low" for each type of aggression were made by following the method of class interval in which class intervals were decided by arranging the scores in different classes and width i.e. based on the highest and lowest scores obtained by the respondents.

2.4. Intervention

"Emotion-Focused Coping Skills-a Mindfulness Approach", is an intervention package developed by the researcher especially for adolescents with a view to the management of aggression. The package was prepared as a module and was implemented by the researcher to develop coping skills of adolescents to manage uncomfortable emotions mainly through mindfulness activities. This user friendly intervention package was a combination of learning psychoeducational components, mindfulness and meditative activities as well as essence to abate aggression. A sensitization programme for parents and teachers was also a part of this intervention. In the beginning, the students were oriented with the entire programme and sessions to be covered. A brief orientation was given on growth, development, emotion, anger, aggression, empathy, self-esteem, motivation, and problem solving which has an important influence on adolescents' well-being and success in life. The intervention program was conducted for eleven days which was completed over a period of one month [3].

In order to judge whether mindfulness activities for the management of aggression can really change the behaviour of the selected subject or not, post-tests have been conducted after the intervention. The 1st post-test was done after a gap of one month after the intervention (during 3rd month) and 2nd post-test was done after a gap of three months after the intervention (during 5th month). In both the post-tests (post-test 1st and 2nd) data was collected by using the same Direct & Indirect Aggression Scale (DIAS).

Scores obtained through teachers' estimation both before and after administering (1st and 2nd post-test) the mindfulness-based interventional activities were compared to find out the efficacy of intervention programme. Additional information regarding the respondents were collected by interviewing the parents through home visits, observation of the home environment during home visits, obtaining required information from parents through telephonic discussion, and direct discussion with peer groups and other teachers in the school [3].

2.5. Data handling and analysis

The data collected from each respondent were categorized, coded, grouped and tabulated. The data were tabulated to give a clear picture of the findings of the study and were analyzed to find out the prevalence of aggression (First Phase) as perceived by the teachers. After the intervention, the collected data were again analyzed to find out the efficacy of the intervention (Second Phase). Descriptive Statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviations were calculated using Microsoft Office Excel. Inferential Statistics namely Paired t-Test was calculated by using SPSS 23.

3. Results

Results of the baseline assessment demonstrated that three types of aggression viz. physical, verbal, and social were present among the respondents which were categorized as high, average, and low. According to the teacher, verbal aggression was most frequently showed by the respondents.

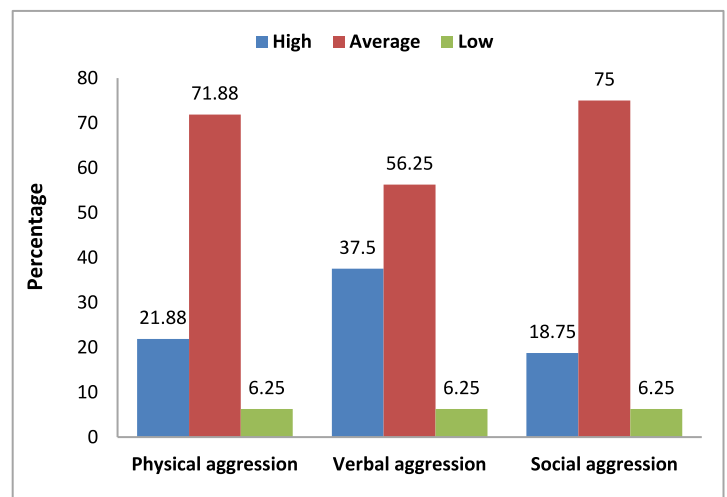


Fig. 1. Distribution of respondents according to types and levels of aggression as reported by teacher

It can be highlighted from the results that the majority of the respondents (71.88%) had an average level of physical aggression whereas 21.88 per cent had a high level of physical aggression. Likewise, greater number of respondents (56.25%) showed an average level of verbal aggression than that of a high level (37.50%). The same trend seemed to be followed in social aggression in which the majority of the respondents (75%) were in average level and 18.75 per cent were in a high level of social aggression. Here, the teachers had found more number of respondents who were involved sometimes in physical and verbal aggression. According to teachers' observations, the respondents exhibited their aggression more verbally than physically and socially. This may be due to the fact that teachers are responsible for students' discipline which includes evaluation of the conduct of every student in a classroom situation and guiding them to learn healthy behaviour in a classroom situation.

The teacher knows every student personally and it is the teachers' responsibility to observe or monitor the student's behaviour in each activity performed by the students. During school hours the students are under close supervision of the teachers. As the teachers have close association with students, the students come to them with complaints they face in the school environment. The students have a lot of conflicts with their friends and initiate fights with them and shout at them. Teachers have to play the role of a guide and problem solver. They know how to deal with problems and have the ability to proper conflict resolution and to build trusting relationships with students in order to create a safe, positive, and productive environment. This can be supported by the findings of Gregory *et al.* (2017) ^[8] who found that the frequency of verbal aggression depends on the rate in which students consult with teachers. They indicated daily student-to-student and student-to-adult verbal aggression. Teachers'-report being approached by students about verbal aggression at least once weekly with 35% indicating daily consultations, and a large number of teachers indicated that students approached them at least 3 times a day to report, complain, or seek advice about verbal aggression. Moreover, teachers are confronted with students, who, for multiple reasons, feel a need to draw attention, attack, provoke, and defy. In this perspective, the teacher's role is crucial. Finding of Barros (2010) ^[2], also emphasized that the teacher must be a manager of conflicts, emotions, and interests which requires skills of persuasion, and negotiation, combined with the willingness to listen and understand the students. In this way the teacher helps to discontinue aggressive patterns.

Types and levels of aggression as reported by teachers after intervention

The distribution of respondents according to different types and levels of aggression before and after intervention as reported by teachers is presented in Table 3.1. An insight from the table shows that there is a marked variation between the pre and post-test results of different levels in all the categories of aggression. It can be highlighted from the results that a large percentage of respondents had reduced their level of physical aggression after intervention which was reflected during post-test 1 and post-test 2. It can be mentioned that the intervention programme was effective enough to enable all the respondents to reduce the occurrence of physical aggression significantly as there was no one in the same category during post-test 2. It may be due to the influence of intervention which helped them realize the consequences of aggressive behaviour and could develop the techniques to control these behaviours mindfully. As far as verbal aggression is concerned the respondents showed a change in the high level with a variation of 37.50 per-cent to 9.38 per-cent in post-test 1 and '0' per-cent in post-test 2. Likewise, in low level, the percentage of the respondents had increased from 6.25 per-cent (pre-test) to 53.13 per-cent (post-test 2) after intervention and in average level it was recorded as 56.25 per-cent (pre-test) to 46.88 per-cent (post-test 2) after intervention. The data shows that a good percentage of samples had reduced their level of aggression due to intervention in terms of verbal aggression. It can be noted that after intervention no respondent was in high level of verbal aggression as reported by teacher.

Table 3.1. Distribution of respondents according to types and levels of aggression as reported by teachers after intervention

Levels of aggression	Number of respondents as reported by teacher (N=32)													
	Pre test		After intervention (Post test 1)						After intervention (Post test 2)					
	f	%	f	%	Diff of Mean	df	t	Sig (2-tailed)	f	%	Diff of Mean	df	t	Sig (2-tailed)
Physical aggression														
High	7	21.88	3	9.38	1.59	31	7.77	.000	0	0.00	3.88	31	9.60	.000
Average	23	71.88	22	68.75					9	28.13				
Low	2	6.25	7	21.88					23	71.88				
Verbal aggression														
High	12	37.50	3	9.38	1.66	31	7.94	.000	0	0.00	3.97	31	8.95	.000
Average	18	56.25	24	75.00					15	46.88				
Low	2	6.25	5	15.63					17	53.13				
Social aggression														
High	6	18.75	0	0.00	2.19	31	7.66	.000	0	0.00	4.38	31	7.55	.000
Average	24	75.00	30	93.75					25	78.13				
Low	2	6.25	2	6.25					7	21.88				

It can be rightly said that in social aggression the respondents showed a remarkable change in their aggression level during post-test 1 and post-test 2. It is interesting to note that no respondent was found to be in high level of aggression in both post-test 1 and post-test 2. It can also be concluded from the results of the calculated paired *t*-test which was highly significant ($P < 0.01$) in post-test 1 and post-test 2 for all the respondents in all types of aggression that there was a significant increase in the number of respondents who were able to reduce their level of aggression after intervention.

The researcher observed that as a part of the component of the mindfulness intervention, a sensitization programme for the teachers helped the teachers to pursue the responsibility of monitoring the respondents at the school setting. So, the teachers did constant supervision and provided guidance to the students to carry out the mindful activities of the intervention. As the students were under close supervision of the teachers

during school hours they could mark the changes of behaviour of students. They observed that the frequency of visiting the teachers with complaints had notably reduced. Besides teacher's reports were always considered to be authentic and significant to evaluate the child's behaviour. This possessed that the frequency of occurrence of showing aggressive behaviour was reduced after the intervention programme. Thus, the results proved the efficacy of the intervention programme in enhancing the skills in the management of aggression. The structured atmosphere of the classroom setting helped the respondents to modify and upgrade their competencies in aggression management through recognition, identification, analysis, and conceptualization of aggression, and their consequences. Studies by many researchers also proved that mindfulness-based interventions have been associated with numerous beneficial outcomes in emotional regulation, including decreased anxiety [1], depression [5], and anger

expression reduction [6], [12], & [7]. In the last decade, the practice of mindfulness has proven effective to the development of healthier habits and the generation of a better classroom climate [9] [10].

Conclusion

From the results, we can conclude that according to teachers' reports verbal aggression was more frequently shown by the respondents. The results of the study indicated that according to teachers' perception, three types of aggression viz. physical verbal, and social were present among the respondents which were categorized as high, average, and low. Verbal aggression was more frequently shown by the respondents. The Mindfulness-Based Intervention programme developed by the researcher helped to increase the percentage of respondents in low category in all three types of aggression which revealed that a large section of respondents could abate the level of aggression considerably after the intervention. Therefore, it is of utmost interest for the policy-makers to introduce some activities in the education system which can help to manage aggression, and other distressing feelings and situations. The school should also maintain an environment that is very favorable, pleasant, and friendly so that the students can develop healthy coping strategies to control their aggressive behaviours.

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