

Assessment of Vulnerability to Anger, Aggression and Violence among Adolescents

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Abstract

Background: Anger and its expression represent a major problem in adolescents. Youth violence often emanates from multiple risk factors: biologic vulnerability; inconsistent, overly permissive, or harsh discipline; community deprivation and exposure to violence. *Objectives:* A study was done to assess the vulnerability to anger, aggression and violence among adolescents and seek the association between vulnerability to anger, aggression, violence and selected socio demographic variables. *Methodology:* Convenient non probability sampling technique was employed to interview 60 adolescents studying in a selected school of Central Delhi. *Results:* Findings revealed that all male adolescents belonged to age group of 14-18 years, 58.33% of the adolescents had mild vulnerability to anger whereas 75% adolescents had moderate vulnerability to aggression and equal number (75%) of adolescents had mild vulnerability to violence. There was no significant association found between demographic variables and vulnerability to anger, aggression and violence. Information booklet on Anger Management was prepared and disseminated in order to give the adolescents some insight into anger, its causes, consequences, manifestations and anger management techniques. Identifying the vulnerability to anger, aggression & violence may be important for early interventions and management.

Keywords: Adolescents; Anger; Aggression; Violence; Vulnerability.

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Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescence as the period of life between 10 and 19 years of age. These are the formative as well as impressionable years when the maximum amount of physical, psychological and behavioural changes takes place. Adolescence is the period of transition from 'childhood' to 'adulthood' [1]. It is a time of discovery of self and one's relationship to the world around oneself or herself. Adolescence is a time for developing independence. Children occasionally engage in physical confrontation. However, during adolescence, the frequency and severity of violent interactions increase. Although episodes of violence at school are highly publicized, adolescents are much more likely to be involved with violence (or more often the threat of violence) at home and outside of school.

Anger is defined as a person's response to a threat or the perception of a threat against an individual or group [2]. The types of threats that tend to trigger an anger response are broad in scope and include both physical threats and psychological threats, or threats to a person's pride or dignity. Anger can also evolve from empathic concern or perceptions of injustice and is related to cognitive factors such as hostility and cynicism [3]. Anger is an emotion that is often difficult to control because of the intense physiological reactions involved in the fight or flight response that triggers anger. The fight response is a response triggered naturally by the body to protect itself against the instigating situation [4]. Aggression is generally defined as a behavioural act that results in harming or hurting others.

Aggression is commonly viewed as being proactive or reactive; overt or covert; or physical, verbal, or

relational [5]. Reactive and proactive aggression appears to differ in social outcomes. In terms of peer relations, reactive aggression is associated with peer rejection and peer victimization, whereas proactive aggression is not [6]. In contrast, proactive aggression is related to leadership skills and a sense of humour [1]. Although arrest rates for serious violent crimes and juvenile homicides have fallen from an all-time high in the mid-1990s, many adolescents and children remain involved in aggressive, delinquent and violent behaviours such as physical fighting, bullying, using weapons, verbal threats of harm to others, and chronic impulsive aggression [7]. Youth violence often emanates from multiple risk factors: biologic vulnerability [8-10]; inconsistent, overly permissive, or harsh discipline [11, 12]; community deprivation [13]; easy access to guns [14]; and exposure to violence [15, 16]. Violent behaviour rarely appears spontaneously; it typically has a long developmental pathway [17-19]. In the context of disruptive disorders, extensive reviews examine the primary risk factors and developmental pathways while also recognizing that there is still a level of complexity that warrants further research to enhance our understanding of aggression and to inform effective interventions [20].

Methodology

Research approach in this study was quantitative with a descriptive survey design to assess the vulnerability to anger, aggression and violence among adolescents in the selected School of Central Delhi. 60 school children between 14-18 yrs of age studying in selected schools of Delhi were selected through convenience sampling technique. The tool used for study was structured interview schedule. It

included two parts. Part-1 consisted of questions related to personal and family details. Part-2 was divided into 3 sections. Section-1 contained 35 items related to vulnerability to anger. Section-2 contained 27 items to assess adolescent's vulnerability to aggression. Section-3 comprised of 15 items related to vulnerability to violence. For the collection of data, a formal administrative approval was sought from the school authorities to conduct the study. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was taken from the Institutional Ethical Committee. The data was collected on 29th December 2012. The purpose of the study was explained to respondents and their consent for participation in the study was taken. The data taken were subjected to analyse using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results

Findings Related to Sample Characteristics

As regards the background data of sample subjects, 45% of the subjects were 17 years of age, 50% of the respondents belonged to nuclear and joint family each, 81.66% of the respondents had father as their head of the family, 33.33% of the respondents' fathers were graduates whereas 33.33% of the respondents' mothers were educated up to matriculation. 54.23% of the respondents' fathers were doing private jobs and 85% of the respondents' mothers were homemakers.

Findings Related to Vulnerability to Anger

58.33% respondents were having mild vulnerability to anger, whereas 41.66% of respondents had moderate vulnerability to anger. However, none of the respondents had severe vulnerability to anger.

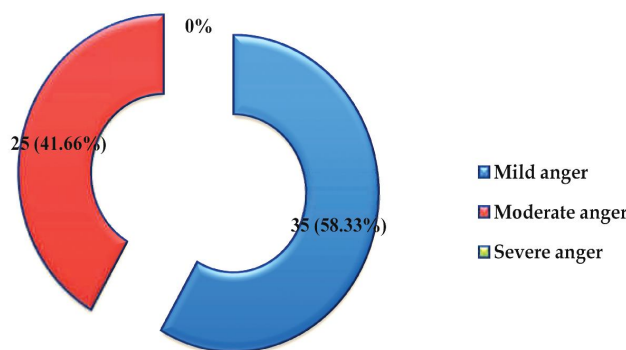


Fig. 1: Doughnut diagram showing frequency and percentage distribution of adolescents according to their vulnerability to anger

Table 1: Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation, Possible range of score and Range of obtained score of anger, aggression and violence **n=60**

Cat egories	Possible range of score	Range of obtained score	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard deviation
Vulnerability to Anger	0-140	15-85	46.95	46	57	16.22
Vulnerability to Aggression	27-135	34-107	61.01	61.5	46	13.72
Vulnerability to Violence	0-45	0-25	10.68	9.5	9	6.24

Findings Related to Vulnerability to Aggression

As for aggression, 75% respondents had moderate vulnerability to aggression whereas; only 21.66% respondents had mild vulnerability to aggression. A small proportion, i.e 3.33% respondents had severe vulnerability to aggression.

Results Related to Vulnerability to Violence

With regard to violence, it was seen that 75% of

respondents had mild vulnerability to violence, whereas 25% of respondents had moderate vulnerability to violence. However, none of the respondents had severe vulnerability to violence.

There was no significant relationship between vulnerability to anger, aggression, violence and selected socio-demographic variables, viz, age, mothers' education and fathers' education.

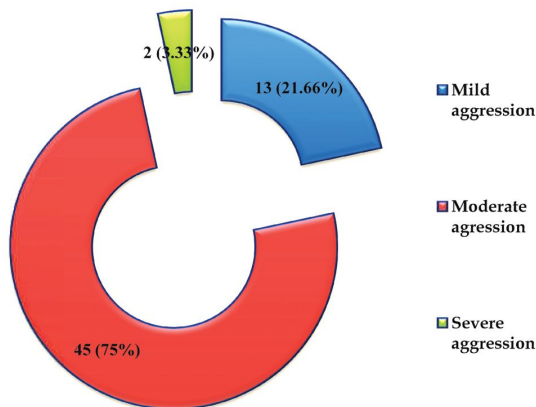


Fig. 2: Doughnut diagram depicting frequency and percentage distribution of adolescents according to their vulnerability to aggression

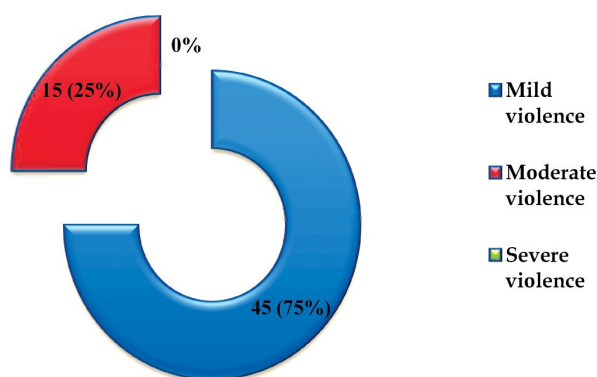


Fig. 3: Doughnut diagram represents the frequency and percentage distribution of adolescents according to their vulnerability to violence

Discussion

The findings of the present study showed that 58% of the adolescents had mild vulnerability to anger. A similar study was conducted by Muris, Meesters, Morren and Moorman [21] (2004) and results showed higher levels of anger among adolescents. The findings of the present study also showed that three fourth of the adolescents had moderate vulnerability to aggression. A study was conducted by Galhotra [22] (2013) in which 250 students of 10th class were randomly taken from government and private schools of Jammu district of J&K state.

The students ranged in age from 15 to 17 years. The study reported that boys were more aggressive. However, the present study was conducted in Boys' school and hence girls' vulnerability to anger, aggression and violence could not be assessed and compared with boys' vulnerability to anger, aggression and violence. The results of the present study showed that two third of adolescents had mild vulnerability to violence. This finding is in contrast to the findings of the study conducted by Smith, Iachan, Scheidt, Overpeck, Nic, Pickett, Harel & the HBSC International Violence Study Group [23] (2004) which showed that adolescents were highly violent.

Conclusion

During the survey, we found that 58% of the adolescents had mild vulnerability to anger, three fourth of the adolescents had moderate vulnerability to aggression, and an equal number, that is, three fourth of the adolescents had mild vulnerability to violence. There was no significant association between adolescents' vulnerability to anger, aggression and violence and selected demographic variables.

The period of Adolescence is filled with intellectual and emotional changes in addition to other major biological and physical changes. Adolescence is a time for developing independence. Children occasionally engage in physical confrontation. However, during adolescence, the frequency and severity of violent interactions increase. Although episodes of violence at school are highly publicized, adolescents are much more likely to be involved with violence (or more often the threat of violence) at home and outside of school. Many factors, including developmental issues, gang membership, access to weapons, substance use, and poverty, contribute to an increased risk of violence for adolescents. Keeping this in mind, this researcher prepared an information booklet on Anger Management and disseminated it to the study subjects and school authorities, in order to give the adolescents some insight into anger, its causes, consequences, manifestations and anger management techniques. Identifying the vulnerability to anger, aggression violence may be important for early interventions and management.

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