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## INVESTIGATING AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR IN ADOLESCENTS

### *Abstract*

*The purpose of this study is to identify the level of aggression in Russian students before exams or sessions, using a 20-item questionnaire «Evaluation of aggressiveness in relationships» (Assinger, 1993). The study involved N = 100 respondents (F = 31, M = 69) aged 17-19 years old.*

***Keywords:** aggressive behavior, aggression, aggressiveness, adolescence, verbal aggression, physical aggression; violence.*

### **Introduction**

Aggression is a model of behavior, be it physical or verbal, which is aimed at causing harm to someone. Aggressive behavior is one's negative reaction to the situation of frustration created by others (a condition when there

are obstacles on the way to the goal, or one's interests are infringed) [3]. The main manifestations of aggression include: conflict, slander, pressure, coercion, negative evaluation, threats or the use of physical force. Hidden forms of aggression are expressed in avoiding contact, inaction in order to harm someone, self-harm and suicide. Aggressive attraction can also manifest itself through various affects, e.g., irritation, envy, disgust, anger, intolerance, fury, rage and hatred.

Aggression is an integral part of personal dynamics. However, it is also an individual feature. The experience of human aggression does not unambiguously lead to destructive actions. It is quite logical that, committing violence, a person can be in a state of extreme emotional arousal, and complete composure.

Aggressive behavior can take various forms, i.e. *situational aggressive reactions* (in the form of a short-term reaction to a specific situation), *passive aggressive behavior* (in the form of inaction or refusal) and *active aggressive behavior* (in the form of destructive or violent actions) [3]. The leading signs of aggressive behavior includes such manifestations as the explicit desire to dominate and exploit others, the tendency to destruction, the focus on causing harm to others and the tendency to violence (causing pain). Summarizing all these features, we can say that the aggressive behavior of the individual implies any action with a strong motive of domination [4].

The nature of aggressive behavior is largely determined by the age of the person. Each age stage has a specific situation of the development and puts forward certain requirements for the individual. A specific feature of aggressive behavior in adults is their dependence on the group of peers. At this age, being aggressive often means "seeming or being strong" [3]. Aggressive behavior is a common phenomenon for children and adolescents. Moreover, in the process of socialization aggressive behavior performs a number of important functions. Normally, it frees from fear, helps to defend one's interests, protects against external threats and promotes adaptation.

Despite the importance of age, gender and individual factors, social conditions of personality development, according to most researchers, play an important role in the formation of aggressive behavior. One of the most debated issues is the influence of the media on the individual's aggressive behavior. Numerous investigations have hypothesized that people learn how to behave aggressively, especially watching someone else's aggression [4]. While the influence of mass media on individual behavior is not quite clear, the family is currently recognized as the major social source of formation of aggressive behavior. Psychological or physical abuse is not uncommon in many families. Forms of aggression in the family are diverse. Family members themselves may exhibit aggressive behavior or may reinforce unwanted actions of the child.

Various family factors, for example, a low degree of family cohesion, conflict, insufficient proximity between parents and the child, adverse relationships between children, inadequate style of family education, are influenced by the formation of aggressive behavior of the child. For example, parents who use severe punishment, use of excessive control or, conversely, do not control the activities of their children, are more likely to cause aggression and disobedience in their children.

Aggression seems natural, because it is an indicator of the animal nature in man. Z. Freud, in particular, explained the phenomenon of aggressive behavior by the unconscious attraction of each person to death and destruction. But people are not only biological, but also social beings, intelligent, cultured and civilized. As a child, a person quickly understands that aggressive behavior allows you to more effectively and quickly get what you want; aggression helps to manipulate people, makes them fear, respect, and obey. Through aggression teenagers can earn their peers' respect; it helps them in difficult times.

Aggressive behavior covers the following motives:

- hostile (negative feelings, e.g., anger, hatred, envy, emotional breakdown);

- authoritarian (the thirst for power, the desire to dominate and subordinate);
- hedonistic (pleasure);
- mental and psychopathological (e.g., fatigue, insomnia, stress, neuroses, psychoses, other mental disorders and diseases);
- protective (e.g., self-defense, a protective mechanism of the psyche and the instinct of self-preservation) [2].

The habit to act aggressively forms aggressiveness. Aggression and aggressiveness are not the same. Aggression is an action, aggressiveness is a quality of personality. Anyone can behave unconsciously aggressively, but only an aggressive person is capable of intentionally causing harm or pain to another person. Aggressiveness is a willingness to be aggressive and a tendency to perceive and interpret other people's actions as hostile. Prerequisites for the development of aggressiveness lie in the characteristics of the individual, his or her attitudes, principles and worldview. Such situational factors as noise, heat, polluted air or lack of it can increase the level of aggression. Even the kindest person will feel discomfort, irritation, anger, or rage in the crowded stuffy transport.

Aggressive people need psychological correction of personality and behavior, as the roots of aggressive behavior can be very deep, and psychological correction alone may not be enough. A research by Darmawan was conducted with the aim to study the forms of aggression (proactive and/or reactive) associated with bullying behavior, as well as the motives of aggression (power related and/or affiliation related) in students from two Secondary Schools in the city of Palu (Indonesia). The sample comprised 97 boys and 149 girls attending grades 7 and 8. The findings showed that in general boys were more involved in bullying than girls. However, girls were more often involved in calling names or teasing than boys, and no less than boys in physical bullying.

A. Bandura and R. Walters studied the relationship between the socialization of adolescents and their family conditions and identified three main features that determine the behavior of the child: his willingness to establish dependent relationships, the degree of conscience, and the motivation for aggression. According to the authors, the family should create minimum conditions for effective socialization. The first important condition is to stimulate the motivation of attachment, through which the child learns to desire the interest, attention and approval of others. The second necessary prerequisite is called "socialization pressure" in the form of consistent requirements and constraints. On the contrary, hostile forms of behavior are laid in the family because of frustration of the need for parental love, the constant use of punishment, inconsistency of demands from parents, the demonstration of aggression by parents themselves [6].

G. Ammon, German psychiatrist, developed an idea of the three forms of aggression, which within the framework of his concept are closely related to various personal traits and intrapersonal factors. A constructive form of aggression involves societal acceptance of aggression and the individual's ability to resist harmful influences. The destructive form in its manifestation is associated with the violation of moral and ethical norms, destruction and deformation of relationships with others. The deficit form of aggression is characterized by a low level of social activity, insufficient development of behavioral skills that contribute to the implementation of aggressive motives [7].

### ***Material and methods***

The purpose of this study is to identify the level of aggression in adolescents and students before exams or sessions. The study was conducted with adolescents in the amount of 100 people aged 17-19 years: 31 girls and 69 boys. Each participant took the test individually. The subjects were asked to answer 20 questions. The responses were graded on two scales. The indices of various forms of aggression and hostile reactions were calculated by the number

of matches with the key. The norm of aggressiveness is the value from 10 to 31 points, and hostility is recorded at 32 – 40 points. At the same time, the attention was drawn to the possibility of achieving a certain value showing the degree of aggression. The result from 0 to 9 points showed the lack of self-confidence in the respondents and is quite a controversial indicator, since teenagers do not have enough determination to show aggression.

### ***Results and conclusions***

The survey found that 67 subjects are among the overly aggressive personalities; they are often unbalanced and excessively cruel to other people. 21 respondents are among the moderately aggressive personalities, whose actions are destructive; they are prone to ill-conceived actions and fierce discussions; their behavior provokes conflict situations that could have been avoided. 12 subjects were found to be peace-loving.

The results of the survey showed that the manifestations of aggressiveness in 19 subjects are more destructive than constructive. Thus, it can be concluded that 67% of the students surveyed tend to display aggressive behavior. The study found that aggression is a form of one's behavior aimed at insulting or harming other people. The definition emphasizes that aggression is a pattern of behavior, rather than an emotion or a motive.

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