

# Determinants of Aggression among Young Adolescents

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**Abstract**—Aggression is a multi-factorial concept and multi-level in nature. The Young Adolescent is being influenced by family, school and community. This paper is aimed to determine the following: aggression level among young adolescents, difference of level of aggression on school and year levels and to determine the correlates of aggression. There were 142 high school students from two different national high schools (Region 3 and National Capital Region). Convenience sampling was used in this study. The following measures were used namely: Aggression Scale, Parental Support Fighting Scale, Positive Behavior Scale and Exposure to Violence and Trauma questionnaire. There was no significant difference in aggression level among different year level and schools. The findings of the study suggested that high level of community violence and having low parental support for non-aggressive behavior contribute to the prediction of aggression.

**Keywords**—Aggression, Determinants, Young Adolescents.

## I. INTRODUCTION

AGGRESSION is said to have multi factorial concepts. It had been construed in different perspectives [8]. Several empirical studies considered aggression to be of negative connotation. In contrary to one study [8]; it has been categorized into good, bad and ordinary. Thus, it concludes that this term may imply hierarchical in nature. Not at times the word “aggression” has been used to denote pessimistic behaviors.

Erickson’s Theory of development depicted early adolescence years as Identity versus identity confusion. This is the time when one seeks his own self. Thus social involvement is one of its developmental need. In the event this has not been met, this may lead to dysfunction peer relation [14]. Such situation may lead to aggressive behavior

It has been noted that aggression is an outcome of multi-level cause. The young adolescent is being influenced by family, school and community. Young adolescent has several concerns as he or she faces the new exploration in his or her life. Each has his own unique concerns as he lives with his family, school and community. The family is within one’s immediate environment. Aggression has developmental progression. This may have started at an early age. In one study [4], the early part of our childhood is a determinant of what one would be in his adolescence years specifically personality traits. Thus it implies that the early years and family rearing has been influential to one’s young adolescence years. It has been noted that poor parent child relationships may lead to antisocial behavior [16]. This commences aggressive behavior

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Early adolescence phase extends beyond home. This is the period where they spend more time in school and community. School is one of the most immediate environments for them. The school climate is an important factor to consider. Thus, the school role in promotion of warmth and social competence is deemed important. Several empirical studies mentioned that school can either enhance or prevent aggression. The school can contribute and further bolster violence [8], [9]. Hence, it was introduced and proposed the Developmental Science Framework. This deals with the developmental dynamics of aggression. They categorized the prevention level such as universal, selective and indicated. Universal prevention is intended to all without manifestation of aggressive behaviors. This it advocates warm and supportive academic, social and behavioral support. Through this level of prevention the school has important role in prevention of aggressive behavior. The attempt to protect oneself against uncaring and threatening environment may lead to aggression. This has been captured in this study [8] that aggression may also be a way to protect oneself from a threat to others.

Community influence is such a broad perspective. This can be defined and specified such as the role of media [6] and community it. The community has vast elements that may directly and indirectly induce one to be aggressive. More than a few studies presented psychological effects of community violence among children and adolescents such as Post Traumatic Distress Syndrome and other mental health outcomes [10]. Aggression can be one of its consequences. It has noted that aggression is a cumulative risk from the violent media. The preferences observed between childhood and adolescent violent media exposure predicts significantly aggression [1], [2]. Certainly the contemporary youth are now exposed to other technology such as internet. Internet is now the preferred media for information and majority used this for listening to music and games [5]. This may also posed threat to violence and aggressive behaviors.

This study is aimed to:

1. To determine the aggression level among the young adolescents
2. To determine the difference of level of aggression on schools and year level.
3. To determine the correlates of Aggression among:
  - a. Parental Support
  - b. Media Exposure
  - c. Exposure to community violence

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Participants

There were 146 high students from two different national high schools. The two group sample came from a national

high school in Region 3 and National Capital Region respectively. One self-contained, heterogeneous classroom of third year high school students (N= 50) and one self-contained group (92), heterogeneous group of diverse year level of high school students. The participating groups were selected by the level coordinators and teachers respectively.

Convenience sampling was used for this study due to limited participants. The data collection coincides with final examinations

### B. Instruments

The following instruments were used to measure the following variables: aggression level; media, community and school exposure to violence; Parental Involvement (Support to non-aggressive behaviors)

- a. Aggression Scale [17] – this comprised of 11 item scale which specifically has the following measures : 0 (times), 1(time), 2 (times), 3 (times), 4 (times), 5 (times), and 6 or (more times). This encompassed and limited to overt aggressive behaviors. This does not measure relational aggression.

Validity and Internal Consistency – Aggression scale is positively related with number of day's student carried a weapon, number of days students reported drinking alcohol increased, parental monitoring decreased, and academic achievement decreased. This yields a Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranges from .85 and .87.

The use of this instrument was intended for middle school (grades 6-8). This was used with upper elementary and high school.

The scale ranges from 0 to 66 which are additive in nature. Thus high scores indicate higher frequency of perpetrating aggressive behaviors.

- b. Parental Support for Fighting Scale [17] – this comprised of 10 items which has closed ended response of Yes and No... The primary intention of this instrument is to assess the parents' support for aggressive and non-aggressive solutions as a means of resolving conflicts. The scoring may be done in two ways: first it can be additive in nature provided recoding will be done such as no= 1 and yes = 0. Thus if it yielded high scores, it will mean high parental support for non-aggressive behaviors. Similarly this was the way the data was processed in the study. Additionally, it can be subdivided into two subscales namely: Parental Support for Aggressive Solutions (item 1, 2, 3, 5 & 9) and Parental Support for Non-aggressive Solutions (4, 6, 7, 8 & 10). The total points will be added and computed for the mean. High scores suggestive of stronger perception of parental support for aggressive or non-aggressive. The additive way was used in this study where high scores would imply high parental support for non-aggressive solutions.
- c. Positive Behavior Scales- this comprised of 20 items which has the following measures: never, once or twice, about once a week and several times a week. This yielded a cronbach alpha of .91 for this sample.

- d. Exposure to Violence and Trauma Questionnaire [12]– this has four subparts namely: Exposures to media, home and community and school and psychological It obtained Cronbach alpha of 0.74 thus it is considered a reliable instrument. The items were summed up to form composite scores (Media 1-6, Home and Community 1-8. School 1-7). The following were given corresponding scores (1) not at all ;(2) rarely (3) sometimes (4) often and (5) a lot. This particular sample yielded a Cronbach alpha of .93
- e. Demographic variables – the following were also included in the questionnaire age, gender, family structure (single parent home or not) and race.

### C. Procedures

Permission for the use of the following instruments were solicited and approved for the use from the author. Letter of permission was sent and approved by the principal. Data collection period was March 25, 2010. Two teachers facilitated the distribution and administration of the questionnaires specifically the following: Aggression scale [17] Parental Support for Fighting [17], Positive Behaviors Exposure to Violence and Trauma Questionnaire [12]. This took them two consecutive days to accomplish the target number of participants due to limited number of participants. The data collection coincided with the last few days of the school year. Thus this limitation prompted convenience sampling. The stated above instruments were encoded and further analyzed.

### D. Statistical Treatment

SPSS for Windows (version 11.5, SPSS Inc., Chicago, Illinois) was the statistical software used in this study.

1. Frequency. Mean and Standard Deviation- this was used to answer research objective no. 1 and profile of the participants (To determine the aggression level among the young adolescents).
2. T test- this was used to answer research objective no. 2 (To determine the difference of level of aggression on schools). This statistical treatment used to compare two means such as the independent variable is categorical and contains two levels which are mutually exclusive [15]. There were only two schools compared.
3. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) – this was used to answer research objective 2 (To determine the difference of aggression on year level). This statistical treatment is appropriate to answer whether the group means differ from each other [15]. The independent variable (often called factor) has two or more levels Year level is a variable with four levels (first, second, third and fourth year). The dependent variable (Aggression level) is a continuous variable. It satisfied the assumptions of ANOVA namely that Aggression level is continuous and normally distributed (skewness-.203).
4. Multiple Regression- This was used to answer Research Objective no. (To determine the multiple correlates of aggression). This was used to predict outcomes and explain the interrelationships among variables [15].

### III. RESULTS

The following data and analysis are presented and arranged according to the objectives presented.

#### A. Distribution of Participants According to Selected Demographic Characteristics

There were 142 participants with a mean age of 15.09 (SD=1.228). This suggested that the sample were homogenous and clustered in terms of age characteristics despite that they were from two schools and different year level.

TABLE I  
 DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Demographic Characteristics	No.	%	Mean	SD
Sex				
Male	62	43.66		
Female	80	56.33		
Age			15.09	1.228

Parental Support for Non-Aggression responded homogenously and clustered (M=5.83 and 2.06). Hence, culture played an important role in child rearing. Filipinos are known to be less passive compared to other races. Media exposure has a mean of 28.31 (SD= 10.880). The dispersed distribution may be attributed to varied environmental exposure. Thus the groups are heterogeneous on this aspect. Additionally community exposure was also varied as related to previous assertions. There were several cases of students solely nurtured and reared by single parent. This is now the primary manifestations of stress in the Philippines. It has been attributed to absentee parenting and dysfunctional marriage [7].

TABLE II  
 STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND N SELECTED VARIABLES

Variables	n	M	SD
Media exposure	142	28.31	10.880
Home exposure	142	11.034	4.4713
Community exposure	142	27.61	11.66
Parental Support for Non-Aggression	142	5.83	2.06
Aggression level	142	13.23	12.02

Research Objective 1: To determine the difference of aggression level across school and year level.

The table shows that there was no significant difference in aggression level and schools,  $t(140) = 1.350, p = .529$ . The table 3 shows the number of subjects, the mean, and the standard deviation of aggression across year level. This can be attributed to the homogeneity of the sample and small sample size. The result is non-significant that may attribute to homogenous setting. Both groups are from urban setting but different regions (Region 3 and National Capital Region).

TABLE III  
 STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND N FOR AGGRESSION LEVEL

Schools	n	M	SD
School A	94	13.68	10.916
School B	48	12.33	14.020

TABLE IV  
 T TEST RESULTS OF AGGRESSION LEVEL BY SCHOOL

Source	df	F	p
Between Groups	1	.630	.529

The table shows that there was no significant difference between aggression level and year level,  $F(3, 119) = .274, p = .844$ . The table 5 shows the number of subjects, the mean, and the standard deviation of aggression level by year level.

TABLE V  
 STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND N FOR AGGRESSION LEVEL

Year level	n	M	SD
First year	2	15.50	16.26
Second year	14	11.57	11.04
Third year	91	14.08	13.10
Fourth year	16	11.94	9.6

TABLE VI  
 ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR AGGRESSION LEVEL BY YEAR LEVEL

Source	df	F	p
Between Groups	3	.274	.844
Within Groups	119		

Research Problem 3: To determine the multiple correlates of aggression among young adolescents.

Multiple regressions were conducted to determine the best set of variables for predicting aggression level. This combination of variables significantly predicted aggression level,  $F(3, 108) = 5.473, p < .05$ , with two variables significantly contributing to aggression level. The beta weights, presented in table 7 suggested that high level of violence in the community and having low parental support for non-aggressive behavior contributed to the prediction. This indicates that 1.7424 of the variance in aggression level was explained by the model.

In this study [3], it was noted that emotional expression in family is a significant predictor of social competence among children. Thus this was supported in this study [16] that pessimistic parent child relationship may lead to antisocial behavior. Similar study has resulted to consider exposure to family violence moderated school exposure [13]. Furthermore this validated the important and immediate role of family. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory emphasized the interconnectedness of different environment specifically family, school and community. It can further conclude that a harmonious connection among the three yields good outcome. Such it can be implied that programs for prevention of aggression among young adolescent can be better addressed in the early childhood. The attitude of a three year old kid has a high probability will be the same from young to later stage of adulthood [4]. Thus it supports the proposition in this book [11], aggression in the early stage should not be despised though some manifestations decreased as one get older, however it can likely to perpetuate and worsen to complex

problems like violence and delinquency. Additionally, the involvement of parents in the program is deemed important and vital. Family is the innermost circle in the ecological theory. Several empirical studies proposed interventions involving family. Finding thus far suggested the effectiveness in the outcome in such situations family members is involved. Conversely, children can be non-aggressive despite of home environment [11].

TABLE VII  
SIMULTANEOUS MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS SUMMARY FOR  
PREDICTING AGGRESSION LEVEL

Variable	B	SEB	$\beta$
Constant	14.035		
Parental support for non-aggressive behavior	-1.426	.576	.015
Community violence	3.942	1.710	.023

Note.  $R^2 = .132$ ;  $F(3, 108) = 5.473$ ,  $p < .05$

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Aggression is an important issue among adolescents that need to be addressed. There were some misconceptions on this aspect among teachers [11] which were identified like it is a normal part of childhood days; it will soon outgrow and better off be ignored than to consider. It was stressed that if left untreated and despised this can progress to complex problems of violence and delinquency. Based on the findings of this study the solicited level of aggression is fairly to moderate level ( $M = 13.23$ ,  $SD = 12.02$ ). The highest possible score is 66. The highest scored item was no. 4 (I said things about other kids to make other student to laugh) followed several items (item no. 2 I got angry very easily with someone; item no 1 – I teased students to make them angry). Items 6 (pushed or shoved other students to fight), item 5 (Encouraged to fight), item 8 (I got into a physical fight because I was angry), item 9 (I slapped or kicked someone), item 11 (I threatened to hurt someone) were the least five scored items. It implied that the sample for this study were not physically aggressive students. The verbal aggression highly dominated the sample specifically making others laugh at the expense of someone else and teasing. Though these are minimal cases as compared to physical aggression, however this can be a springboard for program in the school. The Developmental Science Framework wherein it has a hierarchical way in program implementation in the institution. Thus having this low scored aggression level may even be prevented to escalate to higher level of aggression.

The level of aggression does not vary with school and year level. Hence, the limited sample size may have influenced such results. Additionally, both were public school and majority was in the junior level. Had this been more diverse and large the probability of difference is high. The findings generated a model where it suggested that high level of

community violence and having a low parental support for non-aggressive behavior contributed to the prediction. The results complements with this study [16] that parent child relationship may mediate aggression.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Multiple correlates of aggression for this study were high level of community violence and low parental support for non-aggressive behavior.

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