

Measurement of Students' Aggressive Behaviour in School Settings

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Abstract- Aggressive behaviour refers to behaviour that is intended to cause harm or pain. It can be external or internal, direct or indirect. A negative influence on society in general is obvious, but the influence on school work should not be neglected as well. It seems that the problem of aggressive behaviour in school settings has been increasing through the years and therefore affecting school work at many different levels. Therefore it is essential to develop valid instruments for measuring aggression in the school settings in order to control aggressive behaviour and improve the school climate for effective learning. In the following study we present the development of psycho metrically valid instrument for measuring student's aggression in school. We will use a newly developed instrument to identify correlates of student aggression according to different student and school factors. The students factors included in the analysis are: gender, age, educational aspirations, and activities in spare time and attitudes toward school. The school factors are focused on the level of job satisfaction among teachers and their perception of school safety. The value of the new instrument is shown through its metric characteristics and through investigating the role and importance of aggressive behaviour in school. Its practical value is shown in identifications of the student and school factors that are associated with aggression.

Keywords- Behavior, aggression, students, teachers, school

I. INTRODUCTION

The current study focuses on aggression, children and school. At the beginning it should be stated why these three. Well investigated and many times proven negative influence of aggression puts aggression in focus. Another point worth mentioning is that in trying to identify problems of modern school aggressive behaviour of students clearly represents one of them. While this already partly explains our focus on the school and children, there are still more explanations that need to be considered. One of them is that aggression is a stable personal trait lasting from childhood, through adolescence to adulthood (Loeber, Hay, 1997). As proven in many studies, it is a stable trait and when observed in children, it is a good predictor of later adult criminal behaviour (Ferris, 1996; Carr, 1998; Fossati, Maffei, Acquarini and Ceglie, 2003; van Lier

2005). Therefore, the only sensible thing is to try to influence it in childhood by identifying more aggressive individuals and trying to modify their aggression. That is especially important since aggression predicts future social, psychological, behavioural and educational problems (Schwartz, Nakamoto, Hopmeyer Gorman, McKay, 2006; Crick, 2006). Since school is an important factor in the process of socialization, the aim is to find correlates of aggression in school and try to influence aggression through them.

- to develop new instrument for measuring aggression in school;
- to investigate age and gender differences in aggression;
- to investigate the role of aggression in school;

II. AGGRESSION

As many other psychological phenomena aggression is an extremely complex concept and therefore, the definition itself is not very easy to obtain. If we have to sum up some of the existing definitions, we can say that majority of them are focused on its intent, expression and factors influencing it. They also include causing harm or intention to cause harm to another or self (Lamovec, 1988). Complexity is also evident from a variety of different aggression types. It could be classified either by its intention or its orientation. In intention oriented classifications, we can find instrumental aggression (orientated towards accomplishing specific goal), constructive aggression (oriented towards construction), destructive aggression (orientated towards destruction, harm) and frustration aggression (orientated towards releasing energy or frustration). Commonly used classification by its orientation is shown in the figure below.

Aggressive Behavior in Children and Youth

Youth aggressive and antisocial behavior has become a major problem throughout the world and therefore, a major research area for investigation. Researchers have defined many types and forms of aggressive behaviors. Hunt (1993) describes five patterns of aggressive behavior in students (Zirpoli, 2012): 1. Over aroused aggression; high levels of activity resulting in accidents and aggressive incidents. 2.

Impulsive aggression; quietness and passiveness but very low tolerance for frustration, resulting in violent or destructive activities 3. Affective aggression; characterized by severe rage, anger, begrudge and enmity. 4. Predatory aggression; waiting for a chance and taking revenge from others. 5. Instrumental aggression; bullying, intimidating and threatening others, to achieve the desired goals. Moeller (2001) has studied the contribution of genetic, biological, temperamental, family, social, and cultural factors in causing aggressive behavior in children and youth under 18 years of age. Television and media violence have also taken into account.

How does the aggressive student act out?

One can categorize the acting-out behavior of aggressive students into three general categories: verbal aggression, physical aggression and vandalism. What distinguishes these behaviors as exhibited by the hostile aggressive student is that they are done with intent to do harm, whether that is physical, emotional, or for revenge and retaliation. Verbal aggression includes defiance, continuous arguing, cut-downs, threats, swearing, bossing, sarcasm and teasing. Physical aggression can be exhibited as kicking, hitting, fighting, spitting, throwing materials with intent to do harm (either to a person or to objects, e.g., a window) and biting, among others. (Be sure to learn as much as you can about through observation; some of these behaviors could be a result of Tourette's Disorder.) Vandalism includes not only destruction or damage to property but theft as well.

What causes students to behave this way?

There are many theories as to what causes hostile-aggressive behavior in children. Several of which are especially important to teachers are as follows:

Modeling: Children observe hostile-aggressive behavior modeled by parents, teachers, peers, and in the media. Threats from parents, yelled reprimands from teachers, and violence among peers and in the media are then mimicked by the child.

Peer Reinforcement: Behavior such as fighting is reinforced by peers when they take sides in or cheer for individuals who are fighting. This leads to an increase in hostile-aggressive behavior.

Social Skills Deficit: Children lack the social skills necessary to deal with stressful situations in an assertive rather than aggressive manner. Their repertoire of problem-solving skills is limited to aggression, so they use this to fulfill their needs.

Low Self-Esteem: The hostile-aggressive child acts out of anger. According to researcher J.M. Medick, his reflects poor self-image and an identity of failure “resulting from an inability to satisfy two basic needs: giving and receiving love, and having a sense of worth.” They believe that it is not alright to feel anger and frustration and think they are bad people when they do have these feelings. Their behavior has led to rejection by both adults and peers, which causes their self-esteem to further plummet.

What are the typical teacher responses to these behaviors, and how do students react to these responses?

Teachers typically respond in one of two ways: authoritatively or attempting to reason with the student. When teachers respond authoritatively, it is because they feel they have lost control over the situation. Reacting as an authoritarian figure, the teacher gives ultimatums: “You better do what I say or else.” The hostile-aggressive student responds by acting as if he or she really does not care what the teacher says or does and continues hostile aggressive behavior, whether physically or verbally: “I hate you! You can't make me do anything.” The irony of this is that they are right. You cannot make any student do anything. While reacting authoritatively is an understandable response from the teacher, it is simply ineffective. The other way teachers typically respond is by attempting to reason with the hostile-aggressive student. They understand that the student's behavior is not a personal attack but indicative of an inferior ability to deal with emotions. This teacher attempts to explain with kindness and understanding what is really going on. However sincere these attempts are, they usually lead to circular arguments, dead ends or resentment from the student. The teacher ends up expending huge amounts of energy and is left feeling frustrated and unsuccessful.

Responding to Aggression

But what exactly should a teacher do when responding to verbal or physical aggression from a student? Adult responses to aggression must be, to the greatest extent possible, both nonaggressive and instructive (Kauffman et al., 1998). Non aggressive consequences suitable for classroom use include response cost (removal of points or tokens already earned); deprivation of treats, desired activities, or other rewards; and all levels of time-out. Other specific classroom strategies aimed at prevention of aggression and violence include

- reducing access to possible victims
- establishing reasonable norms and expectations
- avoiding confrontation

- minimizing competition
- using nonverbal signals and reminders
- providing desirable backup reinforces
- intervening early (before the onset of violent behavior)
- providing constant supervision (Guetzloe, 1991, 1992)

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