

Evaluation of Aggressive Behavior among Preschool Children: A Cross-sectional Study

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Abstract

Objectives: The present study aims to: (1) evaluate aggressive behavioral signs among sample of preschool children. (2) find out the relationships between aggressive behavior signs and some of socio-demographic variables for those preschooler and their parents.

Methodology: A cross-sectional descriptive study that carried out from November, 2013 to May, 2014. The study has been conducted in six kindergartens selected purposively in Baghdad, three governmental and three nongovernmental kindergarten distributed on both sides of Baghdad; Al-Kharh sector and Al-Rusafa sector. The sample of the study include 104 preschooler which are selected purposively (non-probability sample). The self-administrative questionnaire (supervisor's version) is adopted and modified as an instrument of this study. The questionnaire is consists of two parts: the first part is contain the covering letter and socio-demographic characteristics of preschoolers and their parents; the second part is contain the items of aggressive behavior which includes three domains. Each domain is consists of twelve items. The questionnaire of the study was translated into English and back translated into Arabic. For the clarity and adequacy of the questionnaire, it has been distributed to a panel of experts after modification in order to achieve the content validity of the questionnaire. The data are collected through the utilization of the self administrative questionnaire (supervisor's version), the filling time takes approximately 15-30 minutes for each preschooler. The data are analyzed by using statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 20.0. The analysis of data were employed by application of descriptive and inferential statistical approaches which were performed through the computation of the following: frequencies, percentages, mean of score, standard deviation, and chi-square.

Results: The results of the study reveal that more than half of preschooler were male and the majority of parents are living in a normal marital relationship with sufficient monthly income who are resident in popular district with family consisted of six or more member and living in an owned house. The preschooler showing moderate levels of aggressive behavior in all domain of the aggressive behavior scale. There is significant relationship between parent's marital relationship and aggressive behavior at all domains of scale. There is significant relationships between self-directed aggressive behavior and residence, and between other-directed aggressive behavior and housing type.

Conclusions: Preschoolers are showing moderate aggressive behavior regarding self, others and properties. Aggressive behavior among preschoolers influenced by social relationship of their parents and the nature of residence and housing.

Recommendations: (1) Providing an educational programs by The Ministry of Education in school and community that can reduce aggressive behavior among children. (2) It is necessary to restrict and control the media in order to reduce the programs that contain violence. (3) Replication of the study with large sample and with more variables.

Key Words: Aggressive behavior signs, Preschool' children

I. Introduction

Aggressive behaviors have been displayed by many young children during their early childhood. Due to many reasons, they showing different types of aggressive behavior. ⁽¹⁾

Generally, aggression can be defined by behaviorists as "behavior that is intended to harm another persons". Aggression has different subtypes, the common forms of aggression are: physical, verbal, and relational aggression. Usually, violence is conceived as more extreme form of physical aggressive behavior. ⁽²⁾

The young children may showing aggressive behavior as a part of their typical development. At the earlier age, the majority of children show high level of aggressive behavior. ⁽³⁾ Consequently, showing high level of aggressive behavior is due to their increasing motor skills and autonomy sense on others, younger

children may use aggressive behavior as a tool to convey themselves.⁽⁴⁾ Additionally, children may showing aggressive behavior due to undeveloped emotional regulation and language capacities.⁽²⁾

In conceiving the different types of aggressive behavior, it is important to notice that all different forms of aggression can be regarded as social categories that have developed to personal different means to hurt others.⁽⁵⁾

In the last recent years, the school and developmental psychologists among young children, and especially relationally aggressive behavior at school.⁽⁶⁾

Ostrove and Crick (2007) stated that "During early childhood, school-based research using teacher, peer, and occasionally observational methods, have documented that boys are significantly more likely to display and receive frequent levels of physical aggression than girls, especially in the company of male peers; whereas girls are significantly more likely than their male peers to be identified as relationally aggressive, especially in the company of female peers".⁽²⁾

Although, the school and developmental psychologists have disregarded the important of early school years. Theorists in this field have called for physical and relational subtype of aggressive behavior are present and prominent during all developmental periods of early childhood. Therefore, the study of aggressive behavior during early stage of childhood is very important effort that give the salience of emergent peer relationships and friendships for young children development, academically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively.⁽⁷⁾ In this study as researchers, we are attending to evaluate the aggressive behavior signs among preschool children, hypothesizing that preschoolers are affected by many factors that can lead them to show a different types of aggressive behavior.

II. Methodology

A cross-sectional descriptive study that carried out from November, 2013 to May, 2014 in which assessment approach is applied in order to achieve the earlier stated objectives. The study has been conducted in six kindergartens selected purposively in Baghdad, three governmental and three nongovernmental kindergarten distributed on both sides of Baghdad; Al-Kharh sector and Al-Rusafa sector. These settings of the study were selected conveniently based on the experience of the researchers, location and culture. The permission has been granted from the above to facilitate the entrance of the researchers. The sample of the study include 104 preschooler which are selected purposively (non-probability sample).

The self-administrative questionnaire (supervisor's version) is adopted and modified as an instrument of this study.⁽⁸⁾ The questionnaire is consists of two parts: the first part is contain the covering letter and socio-demographic characteristics of preschoolers and their parents; the second part is contain the items of aggressive behavior which includes three domains which are: aggression directed toward self, aggression directed toward others, and aggression directed toward properties. Each domain of aggressive behavior is consists of twelve items, these item were rated to three level of likert scale and scored as follow: always (3), sometimes (2), and never (1). The level of aggressive behavior is estimated by calculating the cut of points for the total score for each domain as follow: low= 3-13, moderate= 14-24, and high=25-36. The questionnaire of the study was translated into English and back translated into Arabic. For the clarity and adequacy of the questionnaire, it has been distributed to a panel of experts after modification in order to achieve the content validity of the questionnaire, these experts were selected from College of Nursing/University of Baghdad who are eight expert distributed into three specialties in nursing: (4) psychiatric mental health nursing, (2) community health nursing, and (2) pediatric nursing.

The data are collected through the utilization of the self administrative questionnaire (supervisor's version), the researchers entering the class and filling the questionnaire by the supervisors, the filling time takes approximately 15-30 minutes for each preschooler. The data are analyzed by using statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 20.0. The analysis of data were employed by application of descriptive and inferential statistical approaches which were performed through the computation of the following: frequencies, percentages, mean of score, standard deviation, and chi-square.

The researchers have experienced some problems in the present study as delimitations of the study which are: the sample could not be representative; and filling the questionnaire by supervisor may be a source of bias in the study because that the same supervisor had fill the questionnaire for many preschooler in the class.

III. Results

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Preschooler & Their Parents

No.	Variable	F.	%
1	Preschooler's gender:		
	Male	54	51.9
	Female	50	49.1
	Total	104	100
2	Parent's Marital Relationship:		
	Normal	82	78.8
	Separated	14	13.5
	Divorced	8	7.7
	Total	104	100
3	Parent's Monthly Income:		
	Sufficient	55	52.9
	Barely sufficient	17	16.3
	Insufficient	32	30.3
	Total	104	100
4	Number of Family Member:		
	≥ 5 member	50	48.1
	6 ≤ member	54	51.9
	Total	104	100
5	Residence:		
	City	62	59.6
	Popular District	36	34.6
	Other	6	5.8
	Total	104	100
6	Housing Type:		
	Owned	67	64.4
	Rented	20	19.2
	Involved	17	16.3
	Total	104	100

No: Number, F: Frequency, %: Percentage

The findings of this table reveal that more than half of preschooler were male (51.9%), and the majority of parents are living in a normal marital relationship (78.8%) with sufficient monthly income (52.9%) who are resident in popular district (59.6%) with family consisted of six or more member (51.9%) and living in an owned house (64.4%).

Table 2. Level of Aggressive Behavior Directed Toward Self

Level	F	%	M.S	S.D
Low	5	4.8	2.13	0.46
Moderate	80	76.9		
High	19	18.3		
Total	104	100		

F: Frequency, %:Percentage, M.S: Mean of score, S.D: Standard deviation

This table shows that preschool children have moderate aggressive behavior directed toward self (M.S= 2.13) with high percentage (76.9%).

Table 3. Level of Aggressive Behavior Directed Toward Others

Level	F	%	M.S	S.D
Low	24	23.1	2.07	0.73
Moderate	49	47.1		
High	31	29.8		
Total	104	100		

F: Frequency, %:Percentage, M.S: Mean of score, S.D: Standard deviation

This table shows that preschool children have moderate (47.1%) aggressive behavior directed toward others (M.S= 2.07).

Table 4. Level of Aggressive Behavior Directed Toward Properties

Level	F	%	M.S	S.D
Low	23	22.1	1.88	0.56
Moderate	70	67.3		
High	11	10.6		
Total	104	100		

F: Frequency, %:Percentage, M.S: Mean of score, S.D: Standard deviation

This table shows that preschool children have moderate aggressive behavior directed toward Properties (76.9%).

Table 5. The Relationship Between Self-directed Aggressive Behavior and Preschooler's Variables

Dependant Independent	Chi-square	d.f	P-Value ≤ 0.05	Significance
Preschooler's gender	19.226	19	0.442	N.S
Parent's Marital Relationship	70.807	38	0.001	S
Parent's Monthly Income	35.092	38	0.605	N.S
Number of Family Member	33.598	38	0.673	N.S
Residence	55.007	38	0.037	S
Housing Type	38.263	38	0.458	N.S

d.f: degree of freedom, p: probability, S: significant, N.S: non significant

This table show that there is significant relationships among self-directed aggressive behavior and parent's marital relationship and residence, and there is no significant relationships with remaining variables at p-value ≤ 0.05.

Table 6. The Relationship Between Other-directed Aggressive Behavior and Preschooler's Variables

Dependant Independent	Chi-square	d.f	P-Value ≤ 0.05	Significance
Preschooler's gender	19.777	23	0.655	N.S
Parent's Marital Relationship	71.451	46	0.009	S
Parent's Monthly Income	54.437	46	0.184	N.S
Number of Family Member	43.398	46	0.582	N.S
Residence	50.023	46	0.317	N.S
Housing Type	64.093	46	0.040	S

d.f: degree of freedom, p: probability, S: significant, N.S: non significant

The finding in this table indicated that there is significant relationships between other-directed aggressive behavior and parent's marital status and housing type, and there is no significant relationships with other variables at p-value ≤ 0.05.

Table 7. The Relationship Between Properties-directed Aggressive Behavior and Preschooler's Variables

Dependant Independent	Chi-square	d.f	P-Value ≤ 0.05	Significance
Preschooler's gender	18.645	19	0.480	N.S
Parent's Marital Relationship	63.369	38	0.006	S
Parent's Monthly Income	30.805	38	0.790	N.S
Number of Family Member	23.689	38	0.966	N.S
Residence	44.726	38	0.216	N.S
Housing Type	39.069	38	0.422	N.S

d.f: degree of freedom, p: probability, S: significant, N.S: non significant

This table reveal that there is no significant relationships between properties-directed aggressive behavior and preschooler's variables except Parent's marital relationship, it has been associated significantly with properties-directed aggressive behavior at $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$.

IV. Discussion

The descriptive analysis of variables in table (1) show that more than half of preschooler were males. Such finding may be explained by the nature human sex ratio in the entire world⁽⁹⁾, otherwise, we explain this ratio that not all families let their children to enter preschool, mostly they have registered in school at age six years especially females. A study presented supportive evidence to this result that found Kearny⁽¹⁰⁾. The table (1) show also that the majority of parents are living in a normal marital relationship with sufficient monthly income who are resident in popular district with family consisted of six or more member and living in an owned house. These findings could be demonstrated in a coherent social relationships who are living in a closed society that depicted to popular district according to our culture, and also, the sufficient income is explain that only economical enabled families send their children to preschool especially the nongovernmental that provide better services. A study presented supportive evidence for these result that found Jones⁽¹¹⁾.

It has known of the findings in table 2, 3, and 4 that preschool children have moderate aggressive behavior directed towards themselves, others, and properties. The moderate level of aggressive behavior can be interpreted that children are prone to many sources of violence in the community, the most important can be presented by the role of media and the role of terrorism. The media has the major role that affect and change the behavior of children to become more violently especially the programs of television such as actions movies, actions series and action shot which are negatively affect the children. On the other hand as we said that terrorism play another major role in the behavior of children especially the explosions and bombing cars that lead to change children to be more aggressively in their behaviors and even unconsciously. In addition we consider that boys personality is more tending to be aggressive which can easily affected by above source of violence. After these interpretation, we should not forget the developmental stage in which children are showing aggressive behavior as a normal part of their development. The findings of this study was supported by the findings of Fite et al.⁽¹²⁾ who reported the high level of aggressive behavior among children. Additional support was by Malik⁽¹³⁾ who reported an aggressive behavior among children also.

In table (5) show that there is significant relationships among self-directed aggressive behavior and parent's marital relationship and residence, and there is no significant relationships with remaining variables at $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$. the significant relationship could be interpreted by the quality of parental relationship in which the child who live with separated parent may show high level of aggression than that who live with parents in normal relationship. The table show also a significant association between self- directed aggression and residence, this mean that the nature of society and culture of the living place has an important role in molding the child' personality; considering that most of the preschool in this study were resident in a popular district. A study presented supportive evidence to this result who found Osborne et al.⁽¹⁴⁾ who reported association between behavioral problems and marital relationship and economic factors.

The finding in table (6) indicated that there is significant relationships between other-directed aggressive behavior and parent's marital status and housing type, and there is no significant relationships with other variables at $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$. the relationship between other-directed behavior and housing type may illustrated that housing type has an effect on children considering that as social need for children. A study presented supportive evidence for this result that found Odabi⁽¹⁵⁾ who reported a positive relationship between aggressive behavior and housing need.

In table (7) the result reveal that there is no significant relationships between properties-directed aggressive behavior and preschooler's variables except Parent's marital relationship, it has been associated significantly with properties-directed aggressive behavior at $p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$. It has been known out of results' analysis that the different types of aggressive behavior are influenced by the parents' marital relationship, this will put us again in the same explanation could we get from the tables (5,6), in which the children of broken families nay show high level of aggressive behavior in different ways. This finding depicted to the study of Osborne et al.⁽¹⁴⁾ who reported similar association.

V. Conclusions

The study concluded the followings:

- (1) Preschoolers children are showing moderate aggressive behavior in all domains; aggressive behavior directed toward self, others and properties.
- (2) Aggressive behavior among preschoolers is influenced by many factors such as: nature of the social relationship of their parents, nature of residence place, and housing type.

VI. Recommendations

- (1) Providing an educational programs by The Ministry of Education in school and community that can reduce aggressive behavior among children.
- (2) It is necessary to restrict and control the media in order to reduce the programs that contain violence.
- (3) Replication of the study with large sample and with more variables.

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