

Research Article

# Aggression and Juvenile Delinquents

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## I N F O

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## A B S T R A C T

**Objective:** The objective of the study is to find out the effectiveness of eclectic counseling in reducing the aggression level of juvenile delinquents.

**Method:** Aggression scale, developed by Buss and Perry and Biographic datasheet was used for the study. The participants of the study were thirty seven institutionalized juveniles from Tamil Nadu, India. After collecting the demographic details, aggression questionnaire was administered. The responses were scored and tabulated. Eclectic counselling was provided as intervention for a span of three months. Again the data was collected using the same questionnaire. The post-test results were discussed and conclusions were drawn by comparing with pre-test data.

**Results:** The initial results showed that the subjects had a high level of physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, hostility and overall aggression. The intervention for aggression mainly included relaxation training, self monitoring, reinforcements and group counselling. After three months of intervention, the participants were again assessed and there was a significant reduction in the aggression level of the participants with a t value of 14.774. After intervention, it was found that the level of aggression and its dimensions reduced from high to low except for verbal aggression which fell from high to average.

**Conclusion:** Eclectic counselling helps in the reduction of aggression and the four dimensions of aggression, physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility, of the juvenile delinquents.

**Keywords:** Juvenile delinquents, Aggression, Eclectic counseling, Anger, Hostility

## Introduction

The children are the assets of a country. It is the duty of the parents and government to care for them properly and ensure social justice. Sometimes, the derailment in the justice or growth and development would result in making them to commit delinquent acts. Juvenile delinquency is defined as the unlawful activities committed by young children who are below 18 years.<sup>1</sup> The word juvenile has

been derived from the Latin word 'delinquere' which means to leave or to abandon. As the unlawful activities are harmful to the human beings, the delinquents tend to be aggressive by nature.

According to social psychologists, aggression is defined as a behaviour that is intended to harm another individual who does not wish to be harmed.<sup>2</sup> Intentional harm is perceived as worse than unintentional harm, even though

both are similar.<sup>3</sup> Aggression can be physical or non-physical. Physically aggression includes hurting other physically by hitting, stabbing or causing injury whereas non-physical aggression is verbal and it includes yelling, screaming, swearing and name calling. Non-physical aggression also includes social or relational aggression which is intentionally damaging one's social relationship.<sup>4</sup>

Emotional or impulsive aggression is the aggression that occurs without any forethought and as a result of impulsive, instant emotions whereas instrumental aggression is planned.<sup>5</sup>

The causes of aggression for children include family structure, school environment, poor parenting style, poor relationship skill, lack of social skills, inability to tolerate frustration, life experiences, substance abuse, peer pressure and so on. In adolescent males, increase in secretion of androgen hormones cause high level of anger and aggression.

Aggression is used by the humans to express anger, frustration, stress, hostility, to intimidate or threaten, as a response to fear and pain, to achieve goal, to assert dominance, to express possession and to compete with others.<sup>6</sup> Men use physical aggression more often whereas women use verbal aggression, relational aggression and social rejection, to express their aggression.

Aggression is an important personality trait of the juvenile delinquents. Juvenile delinquents externalize their anger and do not know the right way to handle their anger and aggression. Hence, they must be taught to handle the anger, aggression and hostile feelings as a part of rehabilitating the delinquents to ensure the social justice of the delinquents.

Eclectic counseling is the synthesis and combination of directive and non-directive form of counselling.<sup>7</sup> It incorporates a variety of techniques and principles from various schools of psychology to form a treatment program based on the specific needs of the client. The causes for juvenile delinquency and aggression vary from individual to individual. Hence, eclectic counseling can be used to plan the treatment program based on the causes.

During the course of the study, it was found that most of the participants had high level of aggression and the general causes for the aggression were found to be self-esteem issues, neurotic tendency, faulty learning, poor role modeling and drug abuse. So, the intervention was designed based on the individual needs of the participants and it included relaxation training, deep breathing exercises, mindfulness training, reinforcements and self-monitoring. Group counseling was also given where the participants were allowed to discuss the causes, actions during anger and they were allowed to set target. Reinforcement was given based on the progress made by the participants.

They were made to monitor their own behaviours and the group member's behaviours. A discussion was made about the same in the subsequent sessions and they were made to come out with solution for the undesirable aggressive behaviour.

Jacobson Progressive Muscle Relaxation was used as a part of relaxation training. It was given regularly twice a week. Mentally and physically, it relaxes them and thereby, reduces the anger and aggression.

## Need and Significance for the Study

Aggression is a complex behaviour which impacts the family, society and even, economy of a country. Government spends considerable amount of money on education and health of the young children. There is a current trend of growing aggression, violence and delinquency, despite all the efforts. In India, the crime statistics published by the National Crime Record Bureau says that over 40,000 juveniles have committed criminal act in 2017 which is 11% increase than the previous year.<sup>8</sup> This delinquency and aggression are considered as an 'epidemic' to the society with a significant financial burden. Hence, it is important to readjust the attitude and reallocate the resources to prevent and rehabilitate the aggression and delinquency of the young children.

Moreover, the aggression which originates from childhood is relatively persistent. Hence, it should be understood, diagnosed and treated in an efficient and sustainable manner. Both the aggression and delinquency acts are attributed to the interaction of genetic and environmental factors. There should be awareness on parenting and child rearing, impact of abuses, discrimination and other environmental issues. Knowledge on such factors helps to prevent and combat the delinquency and aggression at the earliest.

## Methodology

### Statement of the Problem

A study on the effectiveness of eclectic counseling in reducing the aggression level of juvenile delinquents.

### Objectives

- To find out the level of overall aggression of the juvenile delinquents before intervention
- To find out the level of physical aggression of the juvenile delinquents before intervention
- To find out the level of verbal aggression of the juvenile delinquents before intervention
- To find out the level of anger of the juvenile delinquents before intervention
- To find out the level of hostility of the juvenile delinquents before intervention
- To find out the difference in the level of overall

- aggression of the juvenile delinquents after intervention
- To find out the difference in the level of physical aggression of the juvenile delinquents after intervention
- To find out the difference in the level of verbal aggression of the juvenile delinquents after intervention
- To find out the difference in the level of anger of the juvenile delinquents after intervention
- To find out the difference in the level of hostility of the juvenile delinquents after intervention

### Hypothesis

- There will be a high level of overall aggression and its dimensions, that is, physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility, for juvenile delinquents before interventions
- There will be a significant difference in the level of overall aggression and its dimensions, that is, physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility, for juvenile delinquents after interventions

### Samples

Purposive sampling technique was used for the collection of data, as the researcher intended to study the institutionalized juvenile delinquents. Quasi experimental design was used. Size of the sample was 37.

### Inclusion Criteria

- Children who were in conflict with law/Delinquents
- Delinquents who are boys
- Delinquents who were institutionalized or arrested
- Delinquents between the age 15 and 18

### Exclusion Criteria

- Children who were not in conflict with law
- Delinquents who are girls
- Delinquents below the age of 15
- Delinquents who were non-institutionalized

### Tools Used

- A biographic datasheet which includes details of the juvenile like age, educational qualification, type of crime, residence, number of cases, marital status and addiction of the parents and criminal family background were collected
- The aggression scale was developed by Buss & Perry in 1992. It measures an individual's aggressive responses and the individual's ability to channel the responses in a safe and constructive manner. It consists of 29 items and measures 4 dimensions-physical aggression, verbal aggression, hostility and anger. The reliability of the various dimensions of the scale is as follows:

- Physical aggression: 0.85
- Verbal aggression: 0.72
- Hostility: 0.77

- Anger: 0.83
- Overall: 0.89

### Procedure

The study consisted of thirty seven juvenile delinquents. The juvenile delinquents were informed about the research and prior permission was sought. Data was collected from the volunteered juveniles. The participants were the institutionalized juvenile delinquents from Special home where convicted juveniles are placed and observation home where juveniles with pending cases are placed. Only boys participated in the study. The questionnaire was given with necessary instructions. The pre-test responses were scored and tabulated. Results were analyzed and conclusions were drawn. The intervention was designed based on the results and the needs of the participants. It was provided for a period of three months. After the intervention, the same questionnaire was used to collect the data. The results of the post-test were analyzed and compared.

### Intervention

The intervention for the study is eclectic counseling and hence it varies from individual to individual. It was designed based on the individual needs and the results of the assessment.

The general causes of the aggression were found to be faulty learning and poor role modelling from their home (parents, in most cases). Cannabis addiction and alcohol abuse also contributed to the aggressive nature of the delinquents. Addiction was present among all the participants.

Relaxation training, mindfulness training, reinforcement, self-monitoring and group counseling were commonly used.

### Statistical Analysis

Mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage and t test were used. SPSS software and MS Excel were used to do statistical analysis.

### Results

From Table 1, it is evident that most of the participants of the study had high level of physical aggression (45.94%), very high level of verbal aggression (43.24%), high level of anger (45.94%) and high level of hostility (43.24%). The overall aggression level of the subjects was high, with 70.27% of the participants scoring high level of overall aggression. Hence, it can be interpreted that most of the participants are reactive, impulsive and emotionally charged most of the time. Their aggression is reflected in the form of physical fight and verbal exchange of harsh words which fuel the situation further. Most of the participants of the study are hostile and they seem to internalize the anger which is vented out in the form of physical aggression and verbal aggression. Hence, they seem to lack constructive way of externalizing the anger and aggression.

Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage level of aggression of the participants after the intervention had been provided. It can be understood from the table that most of the participants showed improvement in handling their aggression. After intervention, the post-test results shows that the most participants had low level of physical aggression (75.68%), low level of anger (70.27%), low level of hostile feelings (62.16%). However, the participants

continued to possess average level of verbal aggression, with 45.95% of group members exhibiting average level of verbal aggression. On the other side, the overall aggression of the group reduced to low level with 62.16% of the group members having low level of aggression. But 37.84% of group members continued to have average level of aggression.

**Table I. Pre-test Aggression Level of Juvenile Delinquents**

(N=37)

Levels	Physical aggression		Verbal aggression		Anger		Hostility		Overall aggression	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Very high	13	35.13%	16	43.24%	5	13.51%	4	10.81%	3	8.11%
High	17	45.94%	12	32.43%	17	45.94%	16	43.24%	26	70.27%
Average	6	16.22%	7	18.91%	14	37.84%	13	35.13%	7	18.91%
Low	1	2.7%	2	5.41%	1	2.7%	4	10.81%	1	2.7%

**Table 2. Post-Test Aggression Level of Juvenile Delinquents**

(N=37)

Levels	Physical aggression		Verbal aggression		Anger		Hostility		Overall aggression	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Very High	-	-	1	2.7%	-	-	-	-	-	-
High	4	10.81%	6	16.21%	1	2.7%	3	8.1%	-	-
Average	5	13.51%	17	45.95%	10	27.03%	11	29.73%	14	37.84%
Low	28	75.68%	13	35.13%	26	70.27%	23	62.16%	23	62.16%

**Table 3. Mean Difference and t Value in Various Dimensions of Aggression and Overall Aggression**

Dimensions	Conditions	Mean	Standard Deviation	t Value
Physical Aggression	Before Intervention	33.05	7.498	11.976*
	After Intervention	16.05	6.209	
Verbal Aggression	Before Intervention	17.86	4.644	7.942*
	After Intervention	11.40	3.919	
Anger	Before Intervention	21.81	5.597	9.591*
	After Intervention	12.32	4.308	
Hostility	Before Intervention	24.11	6.891	9.101*
	After Intervention	14.76	5.469	
Overall Aggression	Before Intervention	96.84	17.441	14.774*
	After Intervention	54.54	11.650	

This can be interpreted that the participants had considerably reduced their aggression level and managed their anger in a better way after the intervention. Average level of verbal aggression can be interpreted as the participants resort to less violent way, compared to physical aggression, for expressing their anger. However the intervention has worked in different ways for the different participants.

Table 3, shows that the mean values for physical aggression in pre-test and post-test conditions are 33.05 and 16.05, respectively. For the verbal aggression, the mean values stand at 17.86 and 11.40 respectively in the pre-test and post-test scenario. In the case of anger, the corresponding mean values are 21.81 and 12.32. The mean values for hostility are 24.11 and 14.76. The differences in the mean values indicate that there has been a change in all the dimensions, after the intervention was provided. The mean value of the physical aggression, anger and hostility has reduced from high level to low level. The mean value of verbal aggression has changed to moderate from high in the post-test.

The t values for physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility are 11.976, 7.942, 9.591 and 9.101 respectively. Thus, there has been significant difference in the mean values of the four dimensions of aggression.

The mean value of the overall aggression in the pre-test is 96.84 and post-test is 54.54. Low mean value in the post-test implies that the overall aggression level of the participants have reduced considerably. The t value is 14.774 which is significant at 0.000 level, indicates that there has been significant reduction in the aggression level of the participants after the intervention. Thus, it can be concluded that eclectic counseling is effective in reducing the aggression level of the participants of the study.

## Discussion

The subjects were physically and verbally aggressive in nature. Their anger level and hostile feelings are also high. Thus, the group was highly reactive and had difficulty in handling displeasure and conflict situations. The intervention for aggression mainly consisted of relaxation training, self-monitoring and group counselling. The intervention was modified based on the individual needs of the participants. The results were significant reduction in the aggression level of the juvenile delinquents.

The presence of high level of aggression among juvenile Delinquents has been confirmed by various research studies. For example, chronic child neglect might result in aggression and delinquency in adolescence.<sup>9</sup> A longitudinal study was conducted using diverse population. Chronic neglect was divided into two subtypes: failure to provide care and lack of supervision. Chronic failure to provide care between the ages 0-12 years predicted aggression and

delinquency at the age of 14 years after controlling the effects of other maltreatments. Chronic lack of supervision did not have the effect. Males were more likely to react to neglect by aggression and delinquency. Social problems partially mediated for boys and fully mediated for girls, the connections between chronic neglect and aggression and delinquency.

A sample comprising of 140 adolescents was divided into four groups: female juvenile offenders, male juvenile offenders, female non offenders and male non-offenders. Adolescents and caregivers were asked to complete a family discussion task and raters coded relationally aggressive behaviours at the dyadic level. The findings of the study indicated that female juvenile offenders and their mother displayed more relational aggression towards each other than the mother-adolescents dyads in the other groups. Thus, the study concluded that social or relational aggression may be developed or maintained through transactions with family members.<sup>10</sup>

A longitudinal study indicated that child sexual abuse as an independent risk factor for delinquent behaviour and offending. The samples for the study included 38 abused young people and 68 non-abused young people. The samples and their parents were interviewed and assessed. After adjusting the age, sex, socio economic status, presence of child sexual abuse and whether the child living with the biological parent or not, the study concluded that sexual abuse predicted the self-reported criminal behaviour and parent-reported aggressiveness.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the present study has confirmed the presence of aggression among the delinquents in India. Though the above studies have worked on the risk factors of aggression and delinquency in various parts of the world and female delinquency, the present study focused on intervention to treat the aggression of the delinquents.

## Conclusion

The juvenile delinquents who participated in the study had high level of physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, hostility and overall aggression. The overall aggression, physical aggression, anger and hostility reduced to low level and verbal aggression reduced to moderated level after the intervention was provided. Thus, eclectic counselling is effective in the reduction of aggression level of the participants.

## Limitations

The sample size was minimal. Girls were not part of the study. The study was conducted in a restricted environment. Non-institutionalized delinquents were not included in the study.

**Conflict of Interest:** None



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