

Adolescent Conflict with Parents and its Effect on Aggression

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ABSTRACT

The changes wrought on Indian society have created a huge generation gap. Parents who have been nurtured on traditional customs and mores, both religious and social, are now confronted by a posterity which thinks and acts differently. Quite understandably, clashes emanate between adolescents and their parents. A cogent consequence of conflict is often aggression. Objective of the study is to investigate whether conflict between young adults and their parents increases aggression among young adults. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. Sample for quantitative phase consisted of 545 students of Plus 2 and 1st year of college. Sample for qualitative phase consisted of 30 students. Tools used were Conflict Scale developed by the investigator and State Trait Anger Expression Inventory developed by Spielberger 1988. Descriptive Statistics was calculated. Correlation was calculated using Spearman's rho. Correlation was found to be significant at 1% level. In the qualitative phase 30 young adults were interviewed. They are of the view that parents are illogical, dominating and do not give them space to breathe. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis showed that conflict between parents and young adults increases aggression among young adults. The findings though indicative of Indian society, can be partially detected in almost all societies of the world (Bush, Peterson and Chung, 2013).

Keywords: Adolescent Conflict with Parents, Violence, Aggression, State Anger, Trait Anger, Anger Expression

INTRODUCTION

The changes wrought on Indian society have created a huge generation gap. At no point of life is this more apparent than that between parents and their children who are stepping or are already into adult life. Parents who have been nurtured on traditional customs and mores, both religious and social, are now confronted by a posterity which thinks and acts differently. These differences often create clashes between parents and their newly grown up children (Collins and Laursen, 1998; Serra, 1971). Quite understandably, clashes emanate between adolescents and their parents. During adolescence conflict often takes the form of silent resentments and at other times it may peak to more assertive or violent behaviour (Navis, 2012; Laursen and Collins, 2004). In this process both sides are shackled, the adolescent by his/her economic dependence and parents who find their dreams vanishing. Conflict creates sorrow and anguish in both generations. But what is of extreme concern is that it has the potential of ravaging young minds and making them into a hostile and antagonistic generation (Ibabe, Jaireguizar and Oscar, 2009). Contreras and Cano (2016) for example found that Spanish adolescents who showed violence were themselves exposed to violence at home.

Aggression and conflict- A cogent consequence of conflict is often aggression. Aggression can take the form of angry expression often resulting in violence. Aggression can also be stored up in the mind of the individual and result in sudden bursts of angry expressions; or it can grow within the mind and erode the wellbeing of the individual. This can be the outcome of conflict between parents and their young adult children as well. Research has shown that adolescents who are aggressive have been victims of aggression by parents themselves (Gabriel et al., 2018). In fact, research confirms that corporal punishment at home cultivates the code of aggressive behaviour in the adolescent (Del, Gamez and Calvete, 2018).

Definition of Aggression

- ❖ Aggression is “Any behaviour that harms another individual who is motivated to avoid such harm” (Benjamin, 2016).
- ❖ Aggression is a behaviour that is directed towards causing harm or injury to another person (Shaffer, 1979).
- ❖ Aggression in an individual is manifested by quarrels, revenge taking and reactionary attitudes and beliefs. It can originate from frustration and can eventually end with injury to others (Singh, 1999).

Theories of Aggression

- **Instinct Theory**-Freud views that there are 2 basic instincts- the Eros or life instinct and Thanatos or death instinct. Freud viewed that aggression originates from the tension between Eros and Thanatos. He viewed that aggression originates from the redirection of the death instinct towards others to safeguard one's self (Bjorkly, 2006).
- **Frustration Aggression Hypothesis**- Dollard and Miller, (1939) stated that when our goals are thwarted, we become frustrated and react aggressively (Bjorkly, 2006).
- **Social Learning Theory**- Bandura stated that observation learning occurs through the following steps:
 - ❖ Attention is paid to the modelled event
 - ❖ Observations are encoded as memory representations
 - ❖
 - ❖ Cognitive processes are changed into imitative response patterns

With appropriate incentive modelled behaviour is performed (Bjorkly, 2006).

Studies on Aggression of Adolescents

Klahr et al. (2011) conducted this study to find out the relationship between parent adolescent conflict and antisocial behaviour among adolescents. Sample consisted of 1199 adolescents from 610 families. Tool used is the Sibling Interaction and Behaviour Study. Results indicated that conflict between parents and their children is a strong indicator of adolescent behaviour. This was noted both in case of biological and adopted children.

Johal and Kaur (2015) conducted a study to find out the relation between aggression among adolescents and parental behaviour. Sample consisted of 155 adolescent students from different senior secondary schools of Gurdaspur. Results showed that positive correlation exists between aggression of adolescents and deviant parental behaviour. It further pointed out that more deviant parenting is shown by parents towards girls than boys.

Changes in Adolescence and Anger of Adolescents

Navis (2012) opined that various changes occur during adolescence. When adolescents are unable to adjust to these changes they express anger. Though anger is not always negative some young adults may express anger in maladaptive ways leading to suicide, depression and aggression

Adolescence and Violence

Contreras and Cano (2016) conducted this study in Spain. The main objective of this study was to find out whether adolescents' expression to violence has relation to exposure to violence within the family, school, community etc. The sample consisted of 90 adolescents,

- 30 juvenile delinquents who have committed violence against their parents
- 30 juveniles who have committed other offence and
- 30 adolescents who did not commit any criminal activity

Tool used consisted of

- ❖ Exposure to Violence Scale (EVS, Orue and Calvete (2010)
- ❖ Adolescent's perception of rejection was studied with the help of Warmth Scale (Fuentes, Motrico and Bersabe, 1999)
- ❖ The third scale consisted of attitudes and Social Cognitive Strategies Questionnaire (Moraleda, Gonzalez Galan and Garica Galo, 1918) was used. Results showed that those who showed violence were themselves exposed to violence at home.

Gabriel et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study to examine adolescents' aggression and violence towards their parents in UK. Data was obtained through semi-structured interview with parents. The sample consisted of 18 participants of which 3 were parents, 5 were practitioners and 8 were practitioner focus group and 2 were young people. Interview and focus group meeting was undertaken. Findings showed that adolescents who were aggressive with their parents are often victims themselves.

Ibabe, Jaureguizar and Scar (2009) conducted this study in Spain. The main objective of this study was to study the psychological profile of juveniles who have been violent towards their parents. The sample selected for the study consisted of 103 juveniles. The researchers analyzed 413 files from the Public Prosecutor for Juveniles offices at Spain. Results showed that those juveniles who showed violence against their parents had a specific profile.

Objectives of the study

To investigate whether conflict between young adults and their parents increases aggression among young adults.

The variables of the study are as follows:

Independent Variable

Conflict Score – It is the extent of conflict (Banerjee and Ghose, 2012)

Dependent Variables

Aggression- Aggression is “Any behaviour that harms another individual who is motivated to avoid such harm” (Benjamin, 2016).

Aggression related variables-

- S Anger– Measures the intensity of angry feelings at a particular time. (Spielberger,1988)
- T Anger- Measures individual differences in the disposition to experience anger. (Spielberger,1988)
- Anger Expression- Index of the frequency with which anger is expressed regardless of the direction of expression. (Spielberger,1988)

Hypotheses of the study

H_{OCSSA} -There is no significant correlation between Conflict Score and S Anger.

H_{OCSTA} -There is no significant correlation between Conflict Score and T Anger.

$H_{OCSAXEX}$ - There is no significant correlation between Conflict Score and Anger Expression

Sample

Quantitative phase - 545 students of Plus 2 and 1st year of college.

Qualitative phase - 30 students were selected based on their Conflict Score

Tools

Quantitative Phase

- Conflict Scale: Questionnaire titled “Young Adults’ Conflict with Parents” constructed by the investigator
- State Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI) (Spielberger, 1988)

Qualitative Phase

- Interview Schedule

Data Analysis

The scale Young Adults’ Conflict with Parents was administered on the sample and Conflict Score was calculated for each participant.

The State Trait Anger Expression inventory was administered on the sample and S Anger, T Anger and Anger Expression was calculated (Spielberger, 1988)

The following is a table showing descriptive statistics for Conflict Score, S-Anger, T-Anger and AX/ EX.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of the variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
ConflictScore	545	7	219	97.13	43.490	.278	.105	-.567	.209
SAnger	545	10	40	13.44	4.525	1.969	.105	4.775	.209
TAnger	545	2	37	20.38	5.490	.329	.105	-.180	.209
AXEX	545	1	48	24.24	7.444	-.130	.105	.017	.209
Valid N (list-wise)	545								

With the exception of Conflict Score, none of these distributions are normal. The relationship between Conflict Score and each of these variables were calculated.

Whole Sample

The Null Hypotheses are

H_{OCSSA}- There is no significant correlation between Conflict Score and S Anger.

H_{OCSTA}- There is no significant correlation between Conflict Score and T Anger

H_{OCSAXEX}- There is no significant correlation between Conflict Score and Anger Expression

Table 2 Correlation Table

			Conflict Score	S Anger	T Anger	AxEx
Spearman's rho	Conflict Score	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.200**	.270**	.189**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	545	545	545	545

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Adolescents feel that

- ❖ Parents are very dominating. They keep on nagging and shouting
- ❖ If they argue with one of their parents, both will join together and snub them
- ❖ Both boys and girls feel that they will do whatever they want to do without arguing
- ❖ Boys and girls hinted at shouting matches with their parents in which they won.
- ❖ They also feel that parents deliberately ignore their view points, even when they are right.
- ❖ Most importantly they feel parents keep on intruding into their privacy (like asking them as to whom they are talking to over the phone and checking their activities all the time. In one word parents do not give them the space they need.

Excessive interference, dominance, over protectiveness and nagging on the part of parents leads to angry outburst from adolescents. Both the genders believe that parents are illogical and unwilling to understand logic and do not give them space to breathe.

Due to anger, irritation, disgust, depression and frustration adolescents often throw things around. A girl, unable to bear the domination, felt like killing somebody, and a boy felt like running away from home to get rid of family restrictions.

Comprehensive Outcomes of the Qualitative Process

- ❖ Both boys and girls feel that they will do whatever they want to do in spite of parental disapproval.
- ❖ Both the genders feel that parents are illogical.
- ❖ They said that they desperately want to break the shackles of parental domination and for that they need economic independence.
- ❖ Some said that they want to run away from home or even kill somebody.

DISCUSSION

Aggression arises due to pent up anger resentment and hostility. When the pent up anger bursts, it destroys the adolescent and others related to them (Navis, 2012). Conflict generates hostility and destroys tranquillity. During and after clashes with parents adolescents may not express their aggression overtly. Nevertheless, the pent up anger within them makes them want to give vent to their feeling, not always in the most pacifist ways. Yet they are dominated by their parents socially and financially. To the youngster who is subject to much conflict with his/ her parents aggression is a potential catharsis waiting to happen. This investigation too, has noted that conflict does increase aggression among adolescents (Johal and Kaur, 2015). This aggression is further exacerbated by the parents' aggression caused by the conflicts. Parents too have their own stressful issues emanating from finances, career and other sources. Aggression from parents mirror on the adolescent through conflict. In fact, research confirms that corporal punishment and violence at home or school increases conflict between adolescents and their parents (Peterson, Bush and Chung, 2013). Dissipation of aggression required to be managed, particularly by parents. They need to form a realistic perspective of contemporary youth and reason with their wards in a calm and loving manner.

The findings though indicative of Indian society, can be partially detected in almost all societies of the world (Bush, Peterson and Chung, 2013).

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