The Relationship between Parental Aggression and Female High School Students’ Depression

Alma Azarian
MA in general psychology, Payame Noor University, Rezvanshahr, Iran

Sanaz Aghakhani
MA in clinical psychology, Department of Psychology, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Khomein, Iran

Zohreh Abedi
BA in general psychology, Payame Noor University, Rezvanshahr, Iran

Abstract

**Background and Purpose:** Parental aggression is among unhealthy relationships to which the child’s exposure can have very serious effects on his mood and behavior. The aim of this study was to investigate whether parental aggression has a significant relationship with child depression or not.

**Method:** The research method is descriptive – correlational. The population under study includes all 1200 high school students of Bandar Anzali city among whom 100 subjects were selected through simple random sampling method and Beck Depression Inventory was distributed among the students and Aggression Questionnaire of Buss and Perry was distributed among their parents. The data were analyzed by Pearson correlation coefficient.

**Results:** The results showed that there is a statistically significant relationship between parental aggression and children’s depression.

**Conclusion:** Disagreements and aggression between parents lead to insecurity and damage to children’s emotions and feelings and provides the context for depression.

**Keywords:** Aggression, Parent, Depression, Student.
Introduction

Anger is one of the most complex human emotions and is a natural reaction to frustration and ill-treatment. All of us have encountered with some situations in our lives that have aroused our anger (Glick & Gibbs 2011).

Parental aggression is among unhealthy relationships to which the child's exposure can have very serious effects on his mood and behavior and heavily affect the adult human personality that they should have in future. The research results on the individuals who have witnessed parental aggression indicate that a large percentage of these individuals will present violent behavior in their relations in puberty and older ages and psychological problems, helplessness and self harming (depression, committing suicide and addiction) are higher among them (Hirshfeld-Becker et al, 2012).

Contrary to popular belief that home is a safe environment; “home” can be dangerous to children more than any other location. Evidence shows that children are exposed to violence in their homes more than anywhere else. They become direct victims of home violence or damaged by observing the violence between their parents. Even the presence of verbal violence about the issues related to children can awaken agitation and anxiety in him and cause the sense of insecurity. If in such cases a child feels that he is the reason of disparity and therefore the source of violence, the potential of damage is greater and there is a higher chance of low self-esteem and signs of depression (Lieberman et al, 2005).

The results of the evaluation of the researchers show that children who witness home violence particularly between with their parents are not only exposed to violence more than other children but also develop serious psychological problems more than other children and compared to their peer groups who did not witness parental violence had higher incidence of violence, aggression and depression behaviors and their diseases and disorders are higher (Schiff et al, 2014).

Depression is defined as "a natural response to the life pressures and this disorder is a reaction to an internal conflict against an external factor presented in depression, change of mood, perceptions and physiological functions” (Ganji et al, 1997: 74).

Children who are exposed to violence or witnessed parental aggression may show their depression in larger scales with different symptoms. Children and adolescents might be sad or angry most of the day. They might present the lack of interest in activities that caused their happiness before, if they make a mistake they blame themselves and feel guilty without any reason (Stuhrmann et al, 2011).

Now with regard to the contents mentioned in this study we examine the relationship between parental violence and depression in children.

Method

Depending on the purpose and subject, this study examines the relationship between parental aggression and children’s’ depression. The present study is a descriptive and correlational
research. The study population included all female high school students of Bandar Anzali city. In the present study 100 of second grade students in Kosar high school were selected by random sampling method.

Research Tools

A) **AGQ Aggression questionnaire:** it is a paper and pencil self-report scale. The questionnaire is designed by Arnold H. Buss in 1992. The questionnaire has 30 questions 14 questions of which examine “anger”, 8 items examine “aggression”, and 8 items examine “hostility”. In this questionnaire the participants choose one of the options never, rarely, sometimes or always and the scores of 0, 1, 2 and 3 are considered for the each option. Except for Article 18 that has a negative loading factor and it is inversely scored, the total score of this questionnaire is between 0-90 obtained by the sum of the questions. The individuals who obtain scores lower than the average, they have lower aggression and as the score in this test increases, the person’s aggression increases (Allahyari, 1998).

The retest coefficients between the scores of the tests in two replications (test and retest) for all subjects was $r = 0.79$

Also in AGQ scale internal consistency Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all subjects was $\alpha = 0.874$.

B) **Beck Depression Inventory (BDI):** Beck Depression Inventory is one of the most suitable tools to reflect the moods of depression. The questionnaire contained 21 items that measure physical, cognitive and behavioral symptoms. Each item had 4 options pointed between 0 and 3 and presents the levels of mild to severe depression. The maximum score in this test is 63 and the minimum point is 0 (Ashtiani et al., 2009). According to conducted researches this test had the validity of 67% and the reliability of 75%. And it is performed both in groups and individually (Delavar, 2000).

Results

Descriptive results (mean and standard deviation) of the research variables are presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of samples</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children's Depression</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>7.864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental aggression</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>48.96</td>
<td>11.958</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 presents the results of Pearson correlation test for parental aggression and children’s depression.
Table 2- correlation coefficient of cognitive emotion and aggression regulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parental aggression and children’s depression</td>
<td>0.309</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that there is a positive correlation between the variables of depression in children and parental aggression because the calculated significance level (0.002) is lower than 1% (selected level of significance), i.e. by increasing parental aggression, depression in children increases.

Conclusion

The results of the present study showed a relationship between parental aggression and depression in children. The results of the present study are consistent with the results of Bahramnezhad 1991 on the comparison of depression in 1st grade high school students with aggressive parents in Natanz City and the results of which indicate that depression can appear in children with aggressive parents.

Also the study is consistent with Mansouri (1990) research titled “the relationship between aggression and nervous moods among 5th grade students of Noshahr City” the results of which indicate that there is a relationship between aggression and nervous moods.

Parental aggression has a negative impact on child’s mental characteristics and if this relationship is hostile, it provides many different contexts to destruct child life and undermines his peace and security of life. Disagreements and aggression between parents lead to insecurity and damage to children’s emotions and feelings and provides the context for depression.

If the family environment is not friendly, children, especially girls, are subject to psychological crises in critical situations and they cannot share their problems with family and thus the risk of mental and psychological disorders is institutionalized in them. When the parents fight with each other over the smallest issues in the presence of their children and make family situation tense, it leads to negative effects on their children. One of the earliest signs is disrespect for parents that appear in different forms in society over time.

A child who witnesses parents’ fights develops behavior problems such as aggression. The damaging effects of hard and serious disputes are even more persistent than divorce. On the other hand the results of an academic study have shown men and women that have witnessed their parents’ fight or were victims of their abuse will present these behaviors to their spouse because children repeat such behaviors involuntary by observing their parents’ behaviors as their role models.
References:


