

Agressivity in Adolescence and its Connection to Attachment

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Abstract

Aim: The present research is to explore the manifestation of aggressive behaviors in the years of adolescence and its relation to the type of attachment a with caregivers such as the mother and father, starting from the teenage point of view. The study was conducted during the 2016-2017 in 6 high schools of the city of Tirana. The sample included 693 teenagers aged 16-20 years old. We used the Parent's Attachment Inventory (IPPA) (Armsden, Greenberg, 1987) that consists of 50 questions and the Questionnaire on Aggression (Buss, Perry, 1992) with 12 Likert-type questions exploring four dimensions of aggressiveness.

Results: The study revealed that it is of great importance in the way of communication with parents and the connection with the emergence of some aggressive behaviors. There are obvious differences between males and females regarding aggressive behavior.

Conclusion: We could refer that the linkage of parental figures with two forms of aggression emphasizes the significance of creating safe communication bridges throughout their development as a basis for adaptation with a positive approach to the environment.

Keywords: Attachment; Mother; Father; Adolescent; Agressivity

Introduction

Adolescence is described by researchers and mental health professionals dedicated to clinical practice [1] as an overly delicate age to be managed by their legal caregivers. For parents, it is difficult to understand and control the sudden psycho-emotional and aggressive outbreaks [2]. According to the theory of attachment [3], the personal experiences of a child with his primary caretaker are the basis for the continuous modeling of his social and personality development. It has been revealed that a positive relationship with primary caretakers characterized by a positive cohesion between parent and adolescent, support, trust between them, open and emotional communication, favors its psycho-emotional development. While the context in which the teenager is not paid attention, he/she is abandoned of his destiny and is seen as a direct risk factor related to the problem of aggressive behaviors, early school drop-out, substance abuse and possible involvement in criminal activities [4] etc.

Secure attachment [5] of primary caretakers with the teenager is a greater chance of being able to continue to positively influence the way the adolescent is capable of giving a meaning to his existence [6]. But it also serves as a strong point in how he manages himself in different social contexts [5], as a responsible person. On the way of development, the teenager goes through, he has learned and will display those forms of communication that have been installed earlier [7] and that in adolescence are consolidated by being more firmly, stable and merged with his personality traits [8]. A more open communication helps and can be seen as an important factor in passing this time of transition and changes [9] in terms of accepting new needs and adolescent wishes. It has been noted that families that have a better communication [10], have a pattern and order in the way they function and are more able to cope with adolescent transitions. This means that the better the communication with parents in the teens, the more clear the positions and the rules over time, the greater the feeling of security in the passage of stages. The easier it is to manage anxiety and the uncertainty that comes from everything that happens inside the teen, but that calms down when the family offers her a well-established and well-known

routine to him. In such a way, it can be created a basis for better communication with others throughout life. The lack of communication between mother and adolescent seems to be related to the display of forms of anger as a response to a lack of security [11].

Meanwhile, on the other hand, the lack of an open communication with father appears as an important indicator of adolescent verbal aggressiveness. Coupling parental figures with two forms of aggressiveness [12] emphasizes the importance of creating safe communication bridges throughout the whole development [13] as a base for adaptation with a positive approach towards the environment. Thus, adolescents who had a positive communication with their parents were less inclined to engage in behaviors with a tendency of verbal aggression and anger [14] and rage. The society nowadays has the same expectations regarding two parental roles, based on the significance of both figures mother and father in attachment, but it does not always have the same expectations for the devotion the roles have towards the family. There seems to be a connection between parents and aggressiveness, but obviously clear conclusions about the size of this relationship are difficult to draw. An important reason for this difficulty is the heterogeneity of studies and findings in this area of research. Research varies from aggressive types, racial or criminal behaviors to parents' dimensions that have been examined, on how these constructions are measured and the populations from which are drawn samples. Men tend to be more aggressive compared to women in the adolescence times [15].

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Men are more involved in aggressive risk-taking behaviors than women not only when it comes to physical aggression but also in verbal one [16] such as in the actual case. Men may be more vulnerable to risk factors of displaying aggressive behavior related to the inappropriate parenting pattern [17] compared to women. Another point of view is that the risk factors for the types of aggression are the same, but that men are more exposed to risk factors than women. These negative children's transactions increase the risk of being exposed on a path of early-teen risky behaviors [18] and involves many of the adolescent's risk-taking behaviors leading to criminality and going on through adulthood.

This approach of aggressive behaviors at the onset of adolescence emphasizes the significance of studying a particular sample, as in the case (teenagers aged 16-20), pointing to average aggressive tendencies that tend to increase with the growth of age. Many parents feel that they have little or no influence on the lives of their teenage children [19] and they are disturbed by the fact that their child's destiny lies outside their hands. It is important that the myth of separating adolescents from parents to be conceived as a natural and necessary process for the teenager who begins to create independence and other attaching relations outside the family.

As it is suggested, parents are the main source of socialization and moral development [20] of youth during childhood. Adolescents who feel understood by their parents and believe in their commitment to established relationships move with confidence and safety [21] towards early adulthood. Teenagers with bad connections avoid conflict, exploration and individualization [22] are beforehand to be independent either without the support of their parents, internalizing their aggressiveness as part of their behavior.

Method

This is a correlational descriptive research which aims to explore the connection between adolescent attachment dimensions to parents with aggressive aspects through self-reporting, as well as the evaluation of the impact of factors such as age or gender on adolescent perceptions about attachment dimensions and types and aggressiveness.

Insecure attachment to primary caretakers relates to high levels of adolescent aggressiveness. Gender is seen as a risk factor for aggressive behavior. The sample consisted of 693 (N=693) students in four High Schools of Tirana, who were asked to participate voluntarily in the study. It has been conducted a selection with the convenience of all schools in Tirana, given the limited opportunities for access to other schools. The total sample number is 693, while the whole population of the school is approximately 3150 students.

The instruments used in this study were: Parental Attachment Inventory (IPPA). Each adolescent was asked to complete the IPPA, a self-report questionnaire that includes 50 items designed to assess the adolescent's general attachment to the parents. In the questionnaire, the first 25 statements assess the maternal attachment and make up the first part of the questionnaire, while the other 25 statements assess the paternal attachment and make up the second part of the questionnaire on the Likert scale. The Aggression Questionnaire was analyzed in 2001 and brought to a shortened form with 12 questions selected by Bryant and Smith at Loyola University in Chicago, while the original version contains 29 questions [23-25]. To examine the reliability of the instruments used for this mini-study, the Crombach Alpha coefficient was used which scored these values $\alpha=0.870$ in total for attachment and $\alpha=0.799$ for aggressiveness.

Results and Discussion

There was a marked tendency of participation of 17 and 18 groupage. The age seems to be varied, although the questionnaire was completed only in the second and third grades of the High Schools, as in the third grade there were students who could not close the study cycle at the age due to underachievement results.

The age of participants in this study varies from 16 to 20 years old. Descriptive statistics showed that 3.1% of subjects were 16 years old, 45.1% of subjects were 17 years old, 46.6% of subjects were 18 years old, 4.1% of subjects were 16 years old and 1% of subjects were 20 years old. The data revealed that 427 subjects were females or 65.8% and 266 subjects were males or 34.2% of the total participants. This data points to higher female participation in the research as a result of completing the questionnaire that coincided with the end of the school and as a result most of the boys were absent on the day of completion of the questionnaire. The attachment relationship with the mother resulted to be (=89), with the father resulted to be (= 85), data that could be interpreted as the average attachment level referring to the IPPA questionnaire scores (60-90 point- average level of attachment). It seems that the attachment to the mother is more confident (=89) compared to the father's attachment (=85), although with a small difference between them. The table of correlations show that adolescent attachment dimensions with mothers correlate negatively with the aggression dimensions but the values of (rho) as noted in the table do not indicate high figures which indicates a low link between both dimensions (Tables 1-3).

Among the highest scores in the table we have the correlation of the dimension of confidence to mother with the dimension of

| Communication | Rho | P |
|--|--------|-------|
| Trust in mother-Hostility | -0.048 | 0.509 |
| Communication to mother-Hostility | -0.062 | 0.390 |
| Rage to mother-Hostility | -0.136 | 0.059 |
| Trust in mother-Verbal Aggressivity | -0.149 | 0.038 |
| Communication to mother-Physical Aggressivity | -0.153 | 0.034 |
| Rage to mother-Verbal Aggressivity | -0.097 | 0.179 |
| Trust in mother- Physical Aggressivity | -0.195 | 0.004 |
| Communication to mother- Physical Aggressivity | -0.142 | 0.049 |
| Rage to mother-Physical Aggressivity | 0.102 | 0.157 |
| Trust in mother- Anger | -0.108 | 0.136 |
| Communication to mother-Anger | -0.192 | 0.008 |
| Rage to mother-Anger | -0.102 | 0.157 |

Table 1: Correlation of dimensions of attachment to mother with the dimensions of aggressivity (N=693).

| Communication | rho | P |
|---|--------|-------|
| Trust in father-Hostility | -0.119 | 0.099 |
| Communication to father-Hostility | -0.066 | 0.359 |
| Rage to father-Hostility | -0.174 | 0.016 |
| Trust in father-Verbal Aggressivity | -0.215 | 0.003 |
| Trust in father -Physical Aggressivity | -0.109 | 0.130 |
| Rage to father-Physical Aggressivity | -0.164 | 0.023 |
| Trust in father -Physical Aggressivity | -0.208 | 0.004 |
| Communication to father-Physical Aggressivity | -0.055 | 0.445 |
| Rage to father-Physical Aggressivity | 0.003 | 0.962 |
| Trust in father-Anger | -0.133 | 0.064 |
| Communication to father-Anger | -0.055 | 0.451 |
| Rage to father-Anger | -0.198 | 0.006 |

Table 2: Correlations of dimensions of attachment of father with the dimensions of aggressivity (N=693)

| Gender | No | Median | Standard Deviation | Mean |
|----------------------|-----|---------|--------------------|---------|
| Aggressivity-females | 427 | 28.2205 | 8.46178 | 26.0000 |
| Aggressivity-males | 266 | 29.8636 | 9.07725 | 28.0000 |

Table 3: Descriptive statistics on gender differences in aggressivity (N=693)

| No | Median | St. Deviation | Mean | No |
|--------------------------------|--------|---------------|---------|--------|
| Hostility- females | 427 | 7.8268 | 2.76915 | 7.0000 |
| Anger- females | 427 | 7.5039 | 3.03125 | 7.0000 |
| Physical Aggressivity- females | 427 | 5.3858 | 2.47863 | 5.0000 |
| Verbal Aggressivity females | 427 | 7.5039 | 2.57236 | 7.0000 |
| Hostility-males | 266 | 7.1970 | 2.75245 | 7.0000 |
| Anger-males | 266 | 7.7576 | 2.71781 | 7.0000 |
| Physical Aggressivity-males | 266 | 7.0000 | 3.39683 | 6.0000 |
| Verbal Aggressivity- males | 266 | 7.9091 | 2.58235 | 8.0000 |

Table 4: Descriptive statistics on gender differences in aggressiveness dimensions (N=693).

physical aggressiveness in adolescents ($r=-.195$, $p=0.004$, $N=193$), which is interpreted with the presence of a low negative correlation between the two dimensions. So, this relation is statistically significant since ($p>0.005$). Meanwhile, in the lower scores, is the size of the confidence of adolescent to mother with the dimension of hostility in teenagers ($r=-.048$, $p=0.509$, $n=193$) which can be interpreted due to lack of correlation between the two dimensions. So, this relation is not statistically significant ($p>0.005$).

Referring either to various studies, it has been concluded that positive family ties are characterized by a positive cohesion between parent and child, support, trust between them, open and empathic communication, that favors the emotional development of child psychology and otherwise the negative family tie is a context where no such component exists and which is seen as one of the most direct risk factors associated with the problem on children and adolescents.

The table of correlations shows that the attachment dimensions of a father in adolescents correlate negatively with the dimensions of aggression, despite the dimension of rage on the father with physical aggression where the relation is positive ($r=0.003$). Also the scores of (ρ) as seen in the above table do not rate high figures which shows a low link between the two dimensions. Among the highest scores in the table we have the correlation of the dimension of trust to the father with the verbal aggressiveness dimension to adolescents ($r=-.0215$, $p=0.003$, $n=193$), which is interpreted with the presence of a low negative correlation between the two dimensions ($p<0.005$). So, it results, that this relation is statistically significant as $p<.005$. Whilst among the lower scores, it is the “father’s frustration” dimension with the physical aggressiveness dimension of adolescents ($r=-.0003$, $p=.962$, $n=193$) which is interpreted with the lack of relation between the two dimensions. So, it results that this relation is not statistically significant ($p>0.005$).

Data derived from correlational analysis provides a clearer picture of the connection between the three dimensions of attachment with the mother and father with the four dimensions of aggression among adolescents. Of course, there is a negative relation of dimensions to each other as in the attachment with the mother as in the attachment with father, which shows the apparent similarities between the two parental figures as well as the important fact that despite that the connection which exists is low, it shows a negative association of the above dimensions. Teenagers who had positive relationships with their parents were less inclined to engage in aggressive tendencies and at the same time risk-taking behaviors while those who had a problematic

relationship with their parents were more likely to react through delinquent and non adaptive behaviors.

As the table reveals, there is a participation i of 427 females and 266 males in the study, of whom, on average, males show higher aggression (=28) compared to females of the present study, who exhibit lower aggressiveness values (=26). This data provided by the statistical analysis confirms the last hypothesis that men tend to be more aggressive compared to women in the adolescent period. Meanwhile, in the study of gender difference analysis (Kevin, Simons, Paternite, Shore, 2001) with the same scale AQ of Buss and Perry (1992) in the perception of aggressive tendencies, men describe themselves as more aggressive than women ($p<0.001$), results that are in line with the perception of male adolescents in this research.

The above table details the relation of gender of the participants with specific dimensions of aggressiveness to find out in which forms of aggressiveness change women from men in the study. The physical aggressiveness that women show results on average lower (=5) compared with the average levels of aggressiveness that men show (=6). Meanwhile, women’s verbal aggressiveness results in an average lower score (=7) compared to the average aggressive values that men show in the study (=8). From the study, as ti could be referred, men exhibit higher levels of average of aggression specifically in forms of physical and verbal aggressiveness, while in terms of types of aggression such as anger or hostility, we notice that on average both sexes exhibit the same values as indicated in table above.

Based on the analysis, there have been some gender differences (Table 4) in the study participants regarding the perception of aggressiveness, but of course what it is worth noting is that the differences for both sexes in the aggression on the basis of adolescent self-reports are low and as a matter of discussion on how participants perceive themselves. It should also be mentioned that confronting the term aggressiveness can affect the development of tendencies self-exclusion and ego links with it.

Conclusion

It has been referred that a positive attachment between parent and adolescent based on unconditional support, climate of trust that should characterize the relationship between them, open and honest communication, favors the psycho-emotional development of the child and, in turn, neglect and suffocating control in comorbidity with isolation, is seen as one of the direct risk factors related to the issue of the onset of aggressive behavior among adolescents. The ability of parents and children to communicate with each other is related to a secure attachment. Communication between parents and children changes as children pass at different stages of development. A more open communication helps in understanding during this time the transition and change, in terms of accepting new needs and adolescent desires. Safe family climate helps adolescents face aging transition. This means that the better the communication with the parents in the teens, the greater the feeling of security in passing the stages. That creates a basis for better communication with others throughout life. The lack of communication between mother and teenager seems to be related to the appearance of forms of anger as a response to a lack of security

Meanwhile, on the other hand, the lack of an open communication with the father appears as an significant indicator of adolescent verbal aggressiveness. The connection of parental figures to two forms of aggression emphasizes the importance of creating safe communications bridges throughout their development as a base for adaptation with a

positive approach to the environment. Thus adolescents who will have a positive communication with their parents will be less inclined to engage in behaviors with aggressive tendencies and risky behaviors.

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