

## *Original Paper*

# Qualitative Study Models in Understanding of Aggression, Bullying, and Violence

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Received: April 30, 2020

Accepted: May 11, 2020

Online Published: May 18, 2020

doi:10.22158/eshs.v1n1p55

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/eshs.v1n1p55>

### **Abstract**

*Aggression in humans is characterised under two categories a) physical and b) Mental aggression. Physical aggression is the Psychological as well as Social behaviour in which an individual literally causes physical harm leading to pain on another individual, whereas mental aggression is the one in which an individual causes emotional pain verbally on another individual. Both the types of aggression damages social well-being of the individuals involved in it. This scenario is similar to the outbreak of Tsunami followed by an Earth quake. In both the situation the consequence is damage. Bullying is a psychological act of provocation as the result of distress by the individuals exhibiting their power on others. Though bullying is very common in school environment, it also occurs in office environment etc. Bullying causes emotional damage to a greater extent compared to physical damage. Violence is the product of aggression and bullying resulting in physical injury as well as emotional break down. The present chapter discusses in detail a qualitative model in understanding of the acts of aggression and bullying resulting in violence as well as suggestions controlling the act of aggression and bullying.*

### **Keywords**

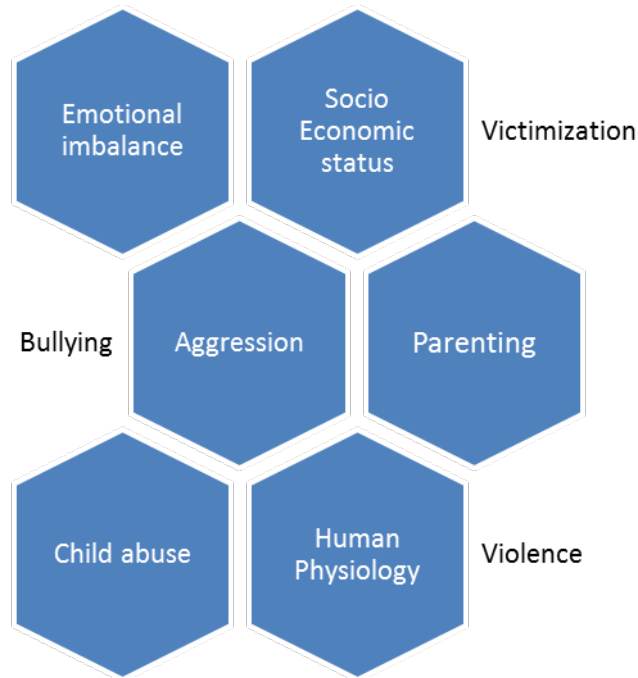
*aggression, bullying, psychological act, provocation and damage*

### **1. Introduction**

Aggression is a negative feeling that occurs when an individual experiences rejection from whom they are closely associated with (Downey, Irwin, Ramsay, & Ayduk, 2004). It is also seen in individuals having a false feeling of threat from others (Crick & Dodge, 1994). People who tend to be aggressive in nature believe in adopting violence as a strategy to solve interpersonal conflicts (Anderson, 1997; Dill, Anderson, & Deuser, 1997). In general youth take shelter in adopting violence to solve social situations (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Research studies have proven that people with low self-esteem

are more aggressive than people with high self-esteem. Individuals with low self-esteem have a feel of insecurity and prone to anger as their self-image is threatened (Kernis, Brockner, & Frankel, 1989; Baumeister et al., 1996). For example, students who tend to bully others are those who always want to be the centre of attention, selfish, and who cannot take criticism (Salmivalli & Nieminen, 2002). It appears that these people are highly motivated to protect their inflated self-concepts and react with anger and aggression when it is threatened. In a study conducted by Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haanpaa, and Peets (2005), on a group of fifth and sixth grade children asking them to fill a series of questions regarding describing themselves, their relationship with others, children whose concern about themselves are rated as aggressive and those who care for others are rated as altruistic. Several studies have shown that gender plays an important role in aggression (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Crick & Nelson, 2002). Men are found to be more aggressive in comparison to women. Aggressive women and girls indulge in shouting, insulting, spreading rumours, abstaining others from activities. Whereas, men indulge in physical violence such as hitting, pushing, tripping and kicking (Österman et al., 1998). World-wide the data shows that 99% of rapes are committed by men, as are about 90% of robberies, assaults, and murders (Graham & Wells, 2001). Among children, boys show higher rates of physical aggression than girls do (Loeber & Hay, 1997), and even infants differ, such that infant boys tend to show more anger and poorer emotional regulation in comparison to infant girls. The reason probably is men desire to grab more attention among peers compared to women. This does not mean that women are not aggressive, both men and women become provocative as well as aggressive as they encounter insults. This gender difference in aggressiveness among men and women can also be related to their individual hormone levels. Testosterone, which exists at higher levels in boys and men, plays a significant role in aggression, and this is in part responsible for these differences. Another contributing factor to gender differences is evolutionary pattern. In olden days women used to do cooking and take care of children on contrary men do hunting, fighting etc which symbolically represented them to be more aggressive. In addition to this, men are generally competitive to each other in gaining status in turn is related to attract women (Buss & Shackelford, 1997).

According to Eagly (1987) and her colleagues, social norms and expectations contribute to gender differences. According to Eagly (1987) in many Nations women are expected to be humble, friendly and emotionally balanced. When they express anger and distress, they are considered aggressive. On the other hand, Men show independence, assertiveness, aggressiveness if it is related to their social or material rewards. The following model depicts the link between Aggression, Bullying, Violence and Victimization.



**Figure 1. Aggression Model: The Model Explains Aggressive Behaviour Arises due to the above Five Factors Leading to Bullying, Victimization and Violence**

## 2. Aggression and Violence

There is strong evidence that aggression leads to violence. Research studies have shown that one of reasons for aggression is the socioeconomic status. Children with low socioeconomic status are found to be more aggressive compared to their peers with moderate and high socio-economic status, the reason being children with low socioeconomic status are vulnerable child abuse affecting their psychological well-being (Caspi et al., 2002). Though aggression mainly depends on biological factors, low socio-economic status acts as a trigger, Zigler, Taussig and Black (1992) suggested that aggressive behaviour leading to violence can be changed with improving cognition and emotion. Therefore, children in their formative years to be targeted to bring in effective change in behaviour having a check of their thoughts and feelings. Many attempts world-wide to check aggressive behaviour leading to violence through “boot camps,” individual and group therapy, and “scared straight” programs in rehabilitation centre proved to be unsuccessful unless it is addressed at grass root level by personal interventions by teachers and parents at a tender age. In order to prevent aggressive behaviour among children is to prevent them from exposure to violence in day to day life as well as discouraging them watching violent films, playing violent video games, having a close monitor on children’s activities. Children behaving aggressively are to be diverted with laughter which drastically brings change in their behaviour rather than encountering with aggression. It is necessary to have a check on emotions, otherwise leads to negative behaviour of arousal. Therefore, children are to be trained to think about

their feelings, learn the ways to respond negative emotions depending on the situations to find most effective solution to overcome frustration or anger (Berkowitz, 1993).

In most of the cultures world-wide Parents send their children to schools at a very tender age thinking that the school is the best place for their children safety. Whereas, a few children aggressive in nature, have shown violent behaviour indulging themselves in shooting incidents due to the free availability of hand guns and other violent materials. Therefore, school systems must strictly enforce laws to prevent the students from teasing, threatening or any kind of mistreat on fellow students. Countries like Canada, New Zealand and United States have recently passed a legislation to stop cyberbullying. The following are a few suggestions to overcome aggressive behaviour leading to bullying among children and adolescents.

- By reducing the gap in the socio- economic status between rich and poor sections of the society which in turn reduce upward comparison by the poverty-stricken society leading to frustration, aggression eventually to violence.
- By educating Children and adolescents the causes of violence might result in less aggressiveness.
- By giving support and rehabilitation of young adults under the influence of drugs and alcohol as well as making them understand that substance abuse lead to aggressive behaviour.
- By counselling the children to reduce violence who grow up in abusive homes having the opinion aggressiveness is considered as normal behaviour.
- By encouraging the children to think positively and develop concern about other from young age, might result in increase in positive feeling about themselves as well as with others helping them to communicate better, reducing violence and aggression.

### **3. Some of the Qualitative Methods on Bullying, Aggression and Violence**

Several research studies have been published about Bullying, Aggression and violence for the past three decades in international journals (Bjorqvist, 1994; Hawker & Boulton 2000; Rigby, 2003; Salmon et al., 2000; Smith, 2004; Smith & Brain, 2000). World-wide out of 75 research studies conducted so far 7 are found to be based on qualitative methods and the rest are either quantitative or mixed research. According to Torrance (2000), qualitative research on Bullying gives implicit understanding as the participants victimized by bullying narrates their personal experiences. This is also supported by Stewin and Mah (2001). According to Yauch and Steudel (2003) quantitative and qualitative methods differ in their approach based on the fact that the quantitative research method involves the collection of the data by survey or other measurement techniques. Whereas the qualitative research involves the collection of the data through interviews, focus groups and participants observation. Smircich (1980) suggested that the researcher has to decide to choose the appropriate method based on the assumptions and nature of the social phenomenon under investigation. Therefore, it is suggested that a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods is recommended to understand the assumptions thoroughly. However,

Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) confirmed that there are three main reasons for combining the quantitative and qualitative methods.

- 1) Triangulation for supporting data and obtaining the convergent validity.
- 2) Complementarity for fully explaining the results of data analysis.
- 3) Guiding for further data collection, sampling or analysis.

Yauch and Steudel (2003) Mentioned that on overall basis, mixed methods have the potential to enhance the understanding of the problem. Nearly 25 mixed research studies published in academic journals on Bullying, Aggression, Violence as the main area of focus revealed new insights, complimentary and divergent findings. DeLara (2000) findings based on a research study involving High School students on sense of safety and the variables contributing to bullying. The research study involved mixed methods that is exploratory case study, quantitatively examining the student's perception about safety of their school through survey and qualitatively through focus groups as well as individual interviews with students, teachers and school administrators regarding methodologies adopted to prevent bullying. The findings of her study from qualitative data revealed that the girls believe in seeking conflict resolution among their peers compared to boys. The findings from the focus groups and interviews revealed that the students expressed the need for adult supervision and intervention in bullying incidents. Though DeLara (2000) findings are contradicting to earlier research findings on bullying where students hesitate to report the incidents of bullying to adults. The qualitative research findings are found to be in agreement with the survey findings. The findings of the study added much depth in understanding the student's perception about the school environment. Another research study based on mixed methods was conducted by Kulig, Hall and Kalischunk (2008) on student's perceptions and experiences in bullying, victimization, the study involved a self rep-report questionnaire administered to a total of 180 students and in-depth interviews with 52 students. The results of both the qualitative and quantitate were complimentary revealing the validity of the research report. Similarly, researches conducted by journal entries, participatory field observations which are qualitative in nature are fond to increase the validity of the study as the results were trustworthy with survey. Another study conducted by Pelligrini, Long (2002) and Varjas et al. (2006) on students transiting from elementary to middle school on bullying. In this study the researchers used multi-informant mixed methods to provide acceptable definition on bullying behaviour of both accused as well as victims. The study involved 421 participants moving from fifth grade to seventh grade. The participants are instructed to make dairy entries regarding experiences and observation on bullying recollecting the incidents within 24 hours once in a month through the academic year followed by peer nominations and self-reports. The results revealed increase in the validity of the constructs of bullying using mixed methods reducing the type I error. Vajras et al. (2006) studied the bullying victimization on urban students to evaluate an intervention strategy using mixed methods approach by means of group interviews, curriculum worksheets, acceptability measures namely: evaluation of participant's feeling about the session by listening to audiotapes. Quantitative measurement

involved assessment of a questionnaire from Behaviour Assessment system for Children and Revised Child Self-Report Post Traumatic Stress Reaction Index. Findings from qualitative data revealed that some of the indicators of bullying are racial minority status based on skin colour, Physical differences, perceived sexual differences that is labelled as gay or lesbian by peers and a new student in the school. The qualitative research findings were complementary to quantitative analyses. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative research methods to understand in depth about aggression, bullying and violence are proved to be effective in data collection, analysis and interpretation. They are several research studies carried out by mixed methods reported divergent findings posing certain limitations, Linkrooms (2006) examined the coping mechanism of coping bullying among 213 African American middle school students who were randomly selected by administering a questionnaire to find out their experiences in bullying, semi structured interviews were conducted on 80 students qualitatively to know about their coping strategies. The findings showed 15 coping strategies, 13 strategies out of 15 were found to form a social cluster. However, the regression model derived from quantitative data was found to be not in agreement with the responses obtained from interview qualitatively. Divergence in findings reported from Self-report and interview considered as the limitations of the mixed methods. Another research study by Cowie and Olafsson (2000) reported divergence in qualitative and quantitative data findings. They examined the impact peer support services program adopted by a high school with high rate of bullying to reduce the aggressive behaviour. The program consisted of students serving as peer supporters meeting the other students during lunch and instructing them to be vigilant on incidences of bullying and to intervene appropriately. The researchers conducted evaluation administering the questionnaire quantitatively twice to collect pre-test and post-test data. The result of the analysis showed insignificant differences between pre-test and post-test showing that the peer support service program did not reduce bullying. Whereas, qualitative research conducted by taking interviews with peer supporters, students and the students who received interventions (victims). The results showed that the incidents of bullying reduced by adopting peer support services and the students who are victims felt that peer supporters were helpful with timely intervention. Therefore, the rich qualitative data proved the strength of peer student support service program in reducing the incidents of bullying, otherwise merely going by the results of quantitative data one would infer that peer student support service program as ineffective in reducing bullying. Pool et al. (2010) suggested that mixed methods often lead to inconsistency involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, no attempt has been made to find out the reasons for such inconsistencies in research findings. Though there is lots of scope for research on bullying the methods adopted, mixed methods are widely used in the research on bullying. Another study by Swearer and Esplelage (2011) focused to find how technology is used in bullying and violence by students used mixed methods. This type of bullying is referred as cyber bullying, digital harassment. Therefore, more mixed method research is necessary to find the loop holes in networking sites, blogging communities, virtual communities. There is strong evidence to show why mixed methods are recommended in the studies

involving aggression , bullying, violence considering the inconsistent results shown by 16 quantitative studies involving meta-analysis on 15,000 students (from kindergarten to twelfth grades) in Europe, Canada, and United States revealed positive effects in bullying for about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the studies, while no changes were found in rest of the studies. Swedish council for crime prevention evaluated 44 research studies on effectiveness preventing bullying by adopting Olweus Program in schools were found to effective in Europe compared to USA when the same was adopted. Therefore, the inconsistency in the findings could had been refined had the studies involved the collection of the data by interviews, observations and focus groups. It can be concluded that mixed methods of research on bullying provides new insights to researchers to re-conceptualize the research questions as well as hypothesis based on the problem to investigate. The lives of children and adolescents are influenced by the updated technologies which are changing to new dimensions. Henceforth, a researcher involved in studies on bullying to understand it root causes, prevention has to use mixed methods of research.

#### Lesson Plan: Aggression, Bullying, Violence and Victimization

##### Learning objectives

- To understand the explicit meaning of Aggression, Bullying, Violence and victimization.
- To reason out the causes of Aggression.
- To interpret why people involve themselves Bullying others.
- To analyse the consequences of Bullying.
- To list out different types of violence noticed as the result of Bullying.
- To find out the strategies to reform aggressive behaviour.
- To feel the pain of victimization.

**Table 1. To Explain What Is Meant by Aggression, Bullying Leading to Violence and Victimization**

Objectives	Content	Learning Experiences	Evaluation
Understand	The definition of Aggression, Bullying and Victimization	Is Aggression an animal behaviour? How do you compare the Aggressive behaviour animals and Humans? Is Bullying	Present a case study on each of the following: Aggression, Bullying, Violence, Victimization.

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		wright or wrong? Can you give one example of Bullying leading to disaster? What are the consequences of violence due to bullying? Can you measure the pain of victimization?	
Reasoning	Biological, Social, Economic, Parenting reasons of Aggression How to control Aggression at family level, school level and societal level.	Is there a link between Physiology of human body with the exhibition of Aggression? Is the Aggressive behaviour is the parent of bullying, violence and victimization?	List out the facts showing the Biological link between Human Physiology and Aggression. List out a few incidents of Aggressive behaviour leading to bullying, violence and victimization.
Analysis	Carrying out research studies focusing on main objective either understanding	What are the factors responsible for exhibiting Aggression? What is the	Finding the root causes for showing Aggressive behaviour and its relationship

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	the root causes of Aggression and to propose strategies to identify the incidents as well as prevention of bullying, violence and victimization as the result of aggression. Drafting a research design based on the objective of the study.	relationship between Aggression with bullying and violence? Does gender play a role in exhibiting Aggression? Does age, socio economic status play a role in exhibition of Aggressive behaviour?	gender, age, socio economic status etc.
Interpretation	Collecting data from various resources by suitable protocol to understand thoroughly about Aggression, Bullying, Violence and Victimization.	Applying suitable methods for analysing the data collected from various resources. Discussing as well as validating the research findings.	Interpretation of the research findings with suitable examples.

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