

The Impact of Aggression Experienced in High School Classes on Aggression Exercised on College Campuses

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the impact of aggression experienced in high school classes on aggression exercised on college campuses. It is based on a study carried out among a sample of 110 students, using two questionnaires. Exposure to high school violence was measured by the "aggressive behaviors in school" questionnaire. Exposure to college aggression was measured by using Buss and Derkee aggression questionnaire. The findings of the study point at three conclusions: First, aggression diminishes in the transition from high school to college. Second, aggression is higher among males than females both in high school and college, and Third aggressiveness seems to be a constant personal characteristic: those who scored high in high school scored high in college too. The overall conclusion is that high school aggression is a significant predictor of college aggression.

INTRODUCTION

Exposure to violence and aggression at school is recognized as a significant problem for children and adolescents alike, although their level has been declining in since the 1990's, as more violence perpetration and victimization occurs away from school than at school. Nevertheless, although rates of victimization from violence at school are declining, exposure to aggression and violence at school remains a serious problem for youth because they spend a large portion of their day among large groups of peers in school. School violence covers incidents of bullying, threats, as well as weapon carrying homicide and spree shootings and fatalities. During the 2000 school year, children between the ages of 12 and 18 were victims of 1.9 million crimes of violence or theft and about 128,000 were victims of serious violent crime at school ^[1].

School violence has gained increased attention as well as widespread concern since the early 1970's it was reflected in reports from the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee and the completion of an American national study of school violence and victimization, violent schools safe schools. It should be noted though that the bulk of the ensuing research on this issue has been initiated and executed by professions other than education. Research articles on school violence began to increase slowly throughout the 1980's, and continued ever since. School aggression was first recorded in the 17th century, yet research started much later, in the second half of the 20th century ^[2-4].

Since the 1990's we have witnessed a global increase in school aggression. A study published in the US in 1978 made it known that that more than 200,000 students and 5,000 high school teachers are attacked each month. Also over 16,000 antisocial acts are committed each school day, which is equivalent to one act every six seconds. During the 1996/1997 school year 57% of the 1234 schools studied in a certain research reported one or more incidences of violence in which police authorities were contacted. Each year approximately 234,000 teachers in the US are victims of school-related violence. Akiba et al. checked the data available in students' questionnaires collected in the TIMMS–International Mathematics and Sciences tests and found out that most of the Hungarian, Rumanian and Philippino students reported they fell victim to school violence during that last month. Students in industrialized countries like Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Spain etc., usually reported higher school violence rates than those reported in less industrialized countries. In recent years school violence has been recognized as a problem in East Asia. Thus Taiwan reported that 71.2% of the male students and 48.5% of the female students were involved in at least one school violence act during the school year. Research traced the influence of aggressive behavior in the elementary school on aggressive behavior in the middle school. Evidence on the impact of high school violence on violence among university students is found in a study.

Two conclusions might be drawn from this data. First, harsh violence is much rarer than light violence. Second, violence is evidently subsiding as student's progress from the lower grades to the upper ones ^[5].

Israel is an industrialized country. No wonder it faces a problem of school violence. In fact, the first important research referring to school violence was published as early as 1981. Several other studies followed suit. Thus, a survey conducted in 1990 reported that 19% of the school students claimed they encountered a lot of violence in their schools; 40% reported moderate violence. Benbenisti et al. carried out a national survey of school violence which confirmed again that violence was recognized as a problem.

The latest survey of school violence had been published in 2011 ^[6]. According to it verbal violence ("Has any student cursed you in order to hurt you during the last month? Has any student mocked you or verbally insulted you during the last month?") has been experienced by 28% of the 10th-11th grades students, 39% of the 7th-9th grades students and 47% of the 4th-6th grades students. Moderate violence ("Has any student threatened to harm you in school or after school?"; "Have you sustained a kick or a fist blow from a student intending to harm you?") has been experienced by 11% of the 10th-11th grades students, 18% of the 7th-9th grades students and 31% of the 4th-6th grades students. Finally, harsh violence ("Has any student hit you very severely?", "Have you been involved in exchange of blows, as a result of which you were injured and needed medical care?", "Has a student squeezed money food or something of value out of you?", "Has any student threatened you with a knife or pocketknife and you saw the knife") has been experienced by 7% of the 10th-11th grades students, 8% of the 7th-9th grades students and 14% of the 4th-6th grades students ^[4].

Following the research by Kellam and his colleagues we decided to study the impact of violence witnessed in high school on violent behavior among Israeli university students ^[7-9].

THE SYSTEM

The following study is based on a survey carried out among a sample of 110 students (62 females and 48 males) put together along the lines of the snowball system using two questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed through the net. In order to measure exposure to violence in the high school the "aggressive behaviors in school" questionnaire was utilized. It contained 25 statements. Each of them had to be graded using a 1-4 scale (1-not characteristic at all, 4-very characteristic), meant to depict the participant's behavior while still a high school student. An exemplary statement is, "Used to curse and use course words" the higher the mean, the higher the aggressive behavior's ^[10].

The current aggression of the students was measured utilizing Buss and Derkee's aggression questionnaire. This well-known and widely used questionnaire contains 75 statements referring to aggression. The participants had to state whether these statements characterized them, by marking them "correct" or "incorrect". An example of such statement is very often I feel like an explosive cask going to explode again, the higher the mean, the higher the aggression. Buss reports a high reliability (alpha=0.82) of this questionnaire ^[11-14].

FINDINGS

Analysis of the findings pointed at three conclusions: First, aggression diminishes in the transition from high school to college. While the high school mean was 2.1, the university mean is 1.9 (**Tables 1 and 2**).

Table 1. Aggression break-down in high school (n=110).

Students	Score
20	1
70	2
10	3
10	4
Mode = 2	Mean = 2.1
Alpha Kronbach= 0.96	

Table 2. Aggression breaks down in college.

Students	Score
25	1
75	2
5	3
5	4
Mode = 2	Mean = 1.9
Alpha Kronbach= 0.94	

It should be noted that exposure to aggression, both in the high school and the college was not very high most of the students were graded beneath the center of the possible range (**Table 3**).

Table 3. Aggression in high school and college break down of various variables.

Variable	Possible range	Mean	SD	Median	Mode	Minimum	Maximum	Alpha
High school aggression	1-4	1.89	0.74	1.48	2	1	4	0.96
College aggression	1-4	1.41	0.19	1.40	2	1	4	0.94

Second, aggression is higher among males than among females both in high school and in college (**Table 4**). This finding is not surprising since many past studies claimed that males are more aggressive than females.

Table 4. Aggression scores of males and females in high school and college.

Variable	Males mean	SD	Females mean	SD
High school aggression	2.15	0.77	1.69	0.64
College aggression	1.45	0.21	1.39	0.17

Third, aggressiveness seems to be a constant personal characteristic; those who scored high in high school went on and scored high in college too. No gender difference was found here. Among the students who scored 4 or 3 college there was not a single one who did not score 4 or 3 in high school.

The main research assumption had been that exposure to aggression in high school is linked to aggression in college. In order to check whether exposure to violence in high school, excluding demographic variables, predicts college aggression hierarchic regression was used [15-18].

CONCLUSION

At the first stage the two demographic variables, age and sex were introduced into the regression as mock variables (1-Male, 2-Female). The second stage the high school aggression variable was introduced.

At the first stage the model did not prove to be statistically significant, $F(2,107)=1.126$, $p=0.32$. Introduction of high school exposure to violence greatly improved the model. $F_{\text{change}}(1,106)=69.20$, $p<0.000$. The three variables put together predicted 39.1% of the aggression variable. At the second stage the high school aggression exposure was the only significant prediction variable $\beta=0.65$, $t=8.82$, $p<0.001$. The overall conclusion is therefore that high school aggression is indeed a significant predictor of college aggression even when the demographic variables are omitted.

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