

GENDER PECULIARITIES OF DISPLAY OF AGGRESSION OF PRESCHOOLERS

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- gender differences,
- age crisis.

Abstract:

The results of the experimental research of aggressive behavior of preschoolers in the context of their age crisis of 6 years are highlighted in the article. The main attention is given to the peculiarities of gender differences of aggressive children.

INTRODUCTION

Actuality of the problem

Gender differences are laid in children from an early age, particularly active this process begins in the senior preschool age. Moreover, it should be understood that the problem of gender socialization of a child has not only physiological character, but also psychological. Display of aggressive behavior is largely related to the processes of gender role identification of a child, and also to the peculiarities of emotional experience of psychological crisis.

Based on the analysis of a number of experimental studies [8; p.68] it was found that during the first years of life there are no differences in the frequency and duration of negative emotional reactions in boys and girls, but with age the frequency and duration increase in boys and decrease in girls. This can be explained by the fact that girls with the same aggressive tendencies as the boys are afraid of its display through the fear of punishment, while towards the aggression of boys people have more relaxed attitude. With age, these models are fixed and they become less aggressive, even if in early childhood, they were so.

In particular, some studies of R. Loeber, M. Stouthamer-Locher [9] clearly indicate the existence of gender differences in aggressive behavior in the different periods of development of a child (tab. 1).

Table 1. Gender differences in aggressive behavior in childhood and adolescence

Period in individual development	Manifestations	Gender differences
Babyhood	Frustration and anger	No
Early babyish age	Instrumental aggression	Some
Preschool age	Physical aggression	Yes
Younger school age	Indirect aggression	Yes
Adolescence	Group attack. Hard attack. Sexual violence. Murder.	Yes

As it was already mentioned, at the early age in children between boys and girls there are no differences in strength of aggression. And only at the age of 3-4 years, while maintaining the aggressive potential, the differences begin to appear in the forms of aggression – boys give preference to physical aggression and girls – verbal and indirect aggression. At an early age, parents usually do not differentiate children by gender. At the preschool age the situation changes – adults begin to treat boys already as "men" and girls as "women." Moreover, gender and social roles are attached to them, according to which a man is a "warrior", "defender", and a woman is a "mother", "hostess", "homemaker." That's why open displays of aggression of boys society not only support, but also approve. In turn, the manifestations of open aggression of girls are frustrated by rigid social prohibitions and restrictions and sometimes by penalties. Differences in gender expectations of society towards the display or restrain of aggression is the most clearly manifested in the range of toys that are designed for boys and girls.

For example, in his studies R. Sears [10] conducted the monitoring of preschoolers, during their game with dolls, that substitute the members of the family in a typical home setting. He found out that boys not only showed high levels of aggression compared to girls, but also they caused to physical harm while the girls used verbal aggression and other symbolic forms of aggression.

These differences are likely caused by several reasons. Firstly, women are physically weaker, so for them it do not make sense to use direct physical aggression. Although as Ye. Ilyin notes, nothing prevents them to use it in conflicts with members of their gender [5; p.210]. Secondly, the use of direct physical and partly direct verbal aggression, do not fit in with the image of women as delicate and soft creatures. Women feel discomfort from aggression in public.

According to the traditional ideas of the features of male and female aggression in ontogenesis, boys and girls to some extent learn to regulate their aggressive impulses, but the boys still have more opportunities for free aggression. In addition, if during the development the child do not learn to control his aggressive impulses, in the future this will lead to the preferred orientation to peers – in adolescence and inclination to dissolute behavior – in youth. For example, it was found [8; p.165] that spontaneous expression of anger and violence towards others at the age of 8 to 14 leads to the use of physical force to other people, finding pleasure in smoking, drinking and socializing with the opposite gender, and further, to 20 years – to destructive behavior, conflicts with parents, the need for meetings with friends, drinks and sexual relations.

Research in the sphere of gender psychology shows that as a result of learning of sociocultural experience men and women have different models of aggressive behavior. Men prefer to use physical aggression, and women – indirect. Verbal aggression is widely used by men and women. However, significant differences in experiences and evaluation of aggression were detected. Women often consider aggression as a result of excessive stress and loss of self-control. At the same time they use stronger feelings of guilt after the aggressive actions. Men consider aggressive actions as a way to restore the lost control over the other people in case of a threat to their self-esteem, honor and integrity. This aggression is perceived by men as the action of positive and instrumental character.

The most detailed types and dynamics of aggression tested on contingent of adolescence. However, we believe that prevention of aggressive behavior should begin as early as the preschool age, when aggression is not yet formed, and it is in a latent state, that is why we conducted a study with preschoolers.

Analysis of the recent researches. American psychologist E. Maccoby [11] conducted a study of 1600 participants to establish the differences between the genders and concluded that there are only 4 differences that are confirmed empirically: 1) in most age groups verbal

abilities of girls are higher compared to boys; 2) visual and spatial abilities of boys are higher compared to girls, 3) arithmetic abilities of boys are higher compared to girls, but only during adolescence; 4) boys are more aggressive compared to girls in physical and verbal form.

Aggression is defined "as any form of behavior that aims at injuring another living beings or inanimate objects" [2].

Considering the aggressiveness as one of the "anthropological constants" outstanding Swiss psychiatrist A. Guggenbuhl-Craig [4] analyzes the forms of aggression of children and practical ways to manage it, he indicates the most effective methods to reduce tension and prevent conflicts.

I. A. Furmanov [6], based on displays of aggression, identifies *four categories of children*:

1. Children tend to display of physical aggression

They are active and motivated boys that differ by decisiveness, risk appetite, impudence and adventurism. Their extraversion (sociability, emancipation, self-confidence) is combined with ambition and desire for public recognition. Usually it is supported by good leadership qualities, the ability to rally peers and to distribute among the group their roles. At the same time they like to show their strength and power to dominate the others and show sadistic tendencies.

In addition, these children have low prudence and restraint, poor self-control. Usually this is due to the lack of socialization and the inability or unwillingness to restrain or postpone meeting their needs. They are constantly striving to experience the thrill and failing that begins to miss, since they need constant stimulation. Since any delay is not acceptable for them, then their desires they seek to implement immediately, without thinking about the consequences of their actions, even in cases when they realize that it will not end good.

Aggressive children are impulsive and ill-conceived, often do not learn from their mistakes, so they perform them repeatedly. They do not adhere to any ethical standards, moral constraints, usually just ignore them. Therefore, these children are capable of dishonesty, lies, betrayal.

2. Children tend to display of verbal aggression

These children distinguish mental imbalance, constant anxiety, doubts and lack of confidence. They are active and able to work, but inclined in their emotional displays decreasing background mood. Externally often give the impression of dark, inaccessible and arrogant people, but upon closer acquaintance they are not constrained and separated and are very sociable and talkative. They are characterized by continuous intrapersonal conflict that provokes states of tension and excitement.

One more feature of these children is the low frustration tolerance, small trouble knock them from the track. Since they have sensitive composition, even weak stimuli easily cause flashes of irritation, anger and fear. Especially strong these negative emotions appear in any real or imaginary underestimation of their importance, prestige or sense of personal dignity. However, they are not able and / or do not consider it necessary to hide their feelings and attitudes to others and express them in aggressive verbal forms.

3. Children tend to display of indirect aggression

Such children are distinguished by excessive impulsivity, poor self-control, low socialization longing and low awareness of their actions. They rarely think about the reasons for their actions, do not think about the consequences. Children with low spiritual interests have primitive desires.

Indirect character of aggression is a consequence of their dual nature: on the one hand, they characterized by courage, firmness, risk appetite and public recognition, on the other hand – feminine traits: sensitivity, softness, pliability, dependency, narcissism (the desire to attract attention by extravagant behavior).

4. Children tend to display of negativism

Children in this group are distinguished by increased impressionability. Main features are selfishness, complacency, excessive arrogance. Anything that affects their personality evokes the feeling of protest. That's why criticism and indifference of others they perceive as an insult and as they have a low frustration tolerance and are not able to control their emotions, immediately begin to express their negative attitude. At the same time, these children are reasonable, adhere to traditional views, weigh every word, and it often protects them from the unnecessary conflicts and intense experiences. However, they often change the active negativism into passive – keep silence and break contact.

Aggression is distinguished by such peculiarities [8]:

1. By **direction on the object**: **a) heteroaggression** – direction on environment: murder, rape, beatings, threats, insults, profanity, etc.; **b) autoaggression** – direction on oneself, self-destruction, self-destructive behavior, psychosomatic illness.

2. By **the reasons of display**: **a) reactive aggression** – is the reaction in response to the external stimulus (quarrel, conflict, etc.); **b) spontaneous aggression** – appear without any reason, usually under the influence of certain internal impulses (accumulation of negative emotions, unprovoked aggression in mental illness).

3. By **commitment**: **a) instrumental aggression** – is carried out as the means to achieve the result: the athlete that wins; the dentist that removes a tooth; the child who loudly demands the purchase of the new toys, etc.; **b) target (motivational) aggression** – is the planned action in advance, which aims to damage the object.

4. By **openness of display**: **a) direct aggression** – aimed directly at the object, causing irritation, anxiety or excitement: open rudeness, physical violence or reprisals, etc.; **b) indirect aggression** – aimed at objects that did not cause excitement and irritation, but that are convenient for aggression (they are available and the display of aggression towards them is safe).

5. The **form of display**: **a) verbal** – is manifested in verbal form: threats, insults, the contents of which spoke directly about negative emotions and possibilities of applying moral and material damage; **b) expressive** – is shown by non-verbal means, gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, etc.; **c) physical** – the direct use of force to damage the enemy.

As Swiss psychologist A. Guggenbuhl-Craig noted, [4], younger children do not realize their aggressive behavior: during the questioning they actively reproduce repeatedly heard from the adults maxims that "screaming and fighting are not well," but on occasion, do not hesitate to do these things. Unlike adolescents, they easily inject into their conflicts adults and share with them their experiences and secrets, often ask to intervene in disputes and conflicts with their friend, sometimes strongly demand support, and sometimes they even sneak.

The aim of the article: to find out the peculiarities of gender differences in the display of aggressive behavior of preschoolers.

MATERIAL AND METHODS.

Exposition of the main material and full explanation of the received results. The study involved 503 preschoolers, among them 231 girls and 272 boys. According to our research we found that boys and girls have a specific use of aggressive manifestations in their life. We used the method "Wagner's Hand Test", Method of frustration reactions by S. Rosenzweig, aggression scale (R. Orpinas, R. Frankovski).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As the results that are given in table 1 testify, boys often show the displays of physical aggression. This suggests that the social experience of boys and girls differ significantly. Aggressive behavior in boys is often expected and even approved. Regarding the display of

verbal aggression, it is more characteristic of preschool girls. At the same time, girls have higher levels of use of indirect aggression.

Table 2. Distribution of aggression indices of preschoolers (girls and boys) according to the aggression scale, R. Orpinas, R. Frankovski

Type of index	Above the norm (%)**		In the norm (%)		Below the norm (%)	
	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys
Physical aggression	30,30 (70)*	36,02 (98)	52,38 (121)	55,88 (152)	17,40 (40)	8,08 (22)
Verbal Aggression	40,25 (93)	22,05 (60)	47,18 (109)	62,13 (169)	13,41 (31)	15,80 (43)
Indirect aggression	37,66 (87)	29,04 (79)	39,39 (91)	49,63 (135)	22,94 (53)	21,32 (58)
General index of aggression	51,70 (131)	55,14 (150)	12,98 (30)	14,70 (40)	30,30 (70)	29,40 (80)

*- amount of children

**-p<0,05

As it is shown in table 3, 146 children with high levels of aggression and ~ 357 children with low and normal were found in the study. This high level of aggression showed 60 girls and 86 boys, and low – 171 girl and 186 boys. Statistical significance of the results is p <0.05, that indicate the high level of accuracy of the results.

Table 3. Levels of display of aggression (Method "Wagner's Hand Test") *

Levels of display	General amount of children	%	Displays of aggression by gender characteristics			
			girls	%	boys	%
High	146	29	60	41	86	42
Low and within the norm	357	71	171	59	186	58
Σ	503	100	231	100	272	100

*-p<0,05

As a result of conducting the method of frustration study by S.Rosenzweig we conducted the analysis of trends and types of reactions of participants in situations of frustration and aggression rate index, direction of aggression and problem solving. We concluded that (see. tab. 4 and 5), the predominant type of frustration reactions of aggressive preschool boys and girls was the type ("with the fixation on satisfaction of needs» (NP - 43,9% and 41,2% respectively), and by direction of reaction appeared extrapunitive (E - 65.9% and 49.6 respectively), those reactions that are directed to the external environment, but not for himself. At the same time a large number of extrapunitive reactions (34.3% for

boys and 22,4% for girls, respectively) are combined with the type of self-defense (type EP), suggesting that these children often use the behavior of hostility, reproach and do not admit their guilt.

Table 4. Distributions of frustration reactions in aggressive boys in% * (by the method of S. Rosenzweig)

Direction of reaction	Type of reaction			
	OD «with fixation on obstacle»	ED «with fixation on self-defence»	NP «with fixation on need satisfaction»	General amount
E	8,0	34,3	23,6	65,9
I	5,2	2,5	18,4	26,1
M	2,7	3,4	1,9	8,0
General amount	15,9	40,2	43,9	100,0

*-p<0,05

Table 5. Distributions of frustration reactions in aggressive girls in% * (by the method of S. Rosenzweig)

Direction of reaction	Type of reaction			
	OD «with fixation on obstacle»	ED «with fixation on self-defence»	NP «with fixation on need satisfaction»	General amount
E	7,6	22,4	19,6	49,6
I	9,3	5,8	17,4	32,5
M	4,5	9,1	4,2	17,8
General amount	21,4	37,4	41,2	100,0

*-p<0,05

As we can see, using the method of frustration reactions by S. Rosenzweig we did not find significant differences in manifestations of aggressive behavior between boys and girls. In spite of the type of aggressive behavior (physical, verbal, indirect), aggressive children often chose the type of reaction "with fixation on need satisfaction."

Our results are coordinated with findings of other researchers. Thus L. Berkowitz [1], in his studies found that boys are more prone to aggressive behavior than girls. R. Baron and D. Richardson [2] state that girls prefer the use of verbal and indirect aggression, while boys – direct physical forms of aggression.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the results of the study testify that the differences in displays of aggressive behavior between boys and girls of preschool age, depend on the type of aggressive manifestations.

Taking into account the fact that the level of aggression in boys, according to this study is higher compared to girls, it should be noted that situational factors of gender expectations are able to actualize aggressive displays.

In perspective, we plan to continue to explore the psychological peculiarities of aggressive behavior in children depending on the gender of the individual.

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