

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS AND REACTIONS TO AGGRESSIVE BETWEEN SCHOOLS

Comportamentos agressivos e reações à agressividade entre escolares

Comportamiento agresivo y reacciones a la agresividad entre escolares

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to identify aggressive behaviors and reactions to aggression among schoolchildren and to verify if there is an association with the variables age, sex, schooling, parents' marital status and type of school institution. **Method:** descriptive, cross - sectional and quantitative study. A population composed of 492 children, which generated a sample of 26 children from the private school and 86 from the public school, who answered the Questionnaire on Aggressive and Reactive Behaviors among Peers. Data were subjected to descriptive analysis and Fisher's exact test. **Results:** most children presented aggression and aggressive reactions below average. And the most frequent reactions to aggression were the internalized responses. **Conclusion:** the data obtained can guide interventions to combat and prevent school aggression. However, it has become evident that it will be necessary to develop studies with more robust methodological designs.

Descriptors: Child, aggression, Students; Health education, Nursing.

RESUMO

Objetivo: identificar os comportamentos agressivos e as reações à agressão entre escolares e verificar se há associação com as variáveis idade, sexo, escolaridade, situação conjugal dos pais e ao tipo de instituição escolar. **Método:** estudo descritivo, transversal e quantitativo. População composta por 492 crianças, a qual gerou uma amostra de 26 crianças da escola privada e 86 da escola pública, que responderam ao Questionário de Comportamentos Agressivos e Reativos entre Pares. Os dados passaram pela análise descritiva e o teste exato de Fisher. **Resultados:** a maioria das crianças apresentou agressividade e reações agressivas abaixo da média. E no que se refere as reações a agressividade as mais frequentes foram as respostas internalizadas. **Conclusão:** os dados obtidos podem nortear intervenções de combate

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e prevenção da agressividade escolar. Porém, ficou evidente que será necessário desenvolver estudos com designs metodológicos mais robustos.

Descritores: Criança; Agressão; Estudantes; Educação em saúde; Enfermagem.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: identificar los comportamientos agresivos y las reacciones a la agresión entre escolares y verificar si hay asociación con las variables edad, sexo, escolaridad, situación conyugal de los padres y al tipo de institución escolar. Método: estudio descriptivo, transversal y cuantitativo. Población compuesta por 492 niños, la cual generó una muestra de 26 niños de la escuela privada y 86 de la escuela pública, que respondieron al Cuestionario de Comportamientos Agresivos y Reactivos entre Pares. Los datos pasaron por el análisis descriptivo y la prueba exacta de Fisher. **Resultados:** la mayoría de los niños presentó agresividad y reacciones agresivas por debajo de la media. Y en lo que se refiere a las reacciones a agresividad las más frecuentes fueron las respuestas internalizadas. **Conclusión:** los datos obtenidos pueden orientar intervenciones de combate y prevención de la agresividad escolar. Sin embargo, resulta evidente que será necesario desarrollar estudios con diseños metodológicos más robustos.

Descriptor: Niño, Agresión; Estudiantes; Educación en salud; Enfermería.

INTRODUCTION

Aggressive behavior in childhood is identified in several ways, and can be addressed to family members, teachers, peers, animals or objects. When referring to peers they are expressed through physical attitudes like kicking, pushing and hitting and verbal attitudes like offending, shouting and arguing.¹

Aggressiveness can bring great losses, both for those who practice it, such as social problems, isolation, tendency to criminal practices and unemployment in adulthood; as for their victims, for example, anxiety, depression, substance abuse and suicide.²

This behavior is experienced in practically every school and every day. Usually, aggressiveness is used by children as a way to solve their problems. However, it is known that this conduct cannot be accepted, nor neglected, so that it does not become the only way to resolve apprehended conflicts.³

The school phase is a favorable period to carry out interventions that seek to prevent the naturalization of aggressive behavior through knowledge and understanding of its process and manifestations, thus avoiding future losses.⁴

Therefore, the study is justified by the need for research that is concerned with assessing the causes and factors related to aggression in childhood. In addition, it can subsidize health and education professionals so that they are able to work at school with a focus on education actions, so that it will contribute to the quality of life of all those involved, directly or indirectly.

As it is, the objective of this study was to identify aggressive behaviors and reactions to aggression among pairs of students and to measure the association of these behaviors with the variables: age, sex, education, parents'

marital status and the type of school institution; public and private.

METHOD

This is a quantitative study, with a descriptive and transversal approach, developed in two schools in a city in the south of Minas Gerais, chosen for convenience.

The study population consisted of 70 children from the private school and 422 from the public school, which generated a sample of 26 children from the private school and 86 from the public school. The inclusion criteria were: schoolchild with eight to 12 years of age incomplete, according to the reference established by the Statute of the Child and Adolescent 5 and the instrument to be used; be enrolled in school attending elementary school and be present in the classroom at the time of collection. Children who did not present the signed terms of consent and consent were excluded from the research, which hindered data collection. To minimize this problem, a meeting was held with parents and guardians, even so, there was little acceptance.

Data collection took place from November 2016 to April 2017. For this purpose, the Aggressive and Reactive Peer Behavior Questionnaire (Q-CARP) was used, which was translated into Brazil and validated by the authors. It is a self-report questionnaire consisting of two scales (Aggressive Behavior Scale - ECA and Reaction to Aggression Scale - ERA) with a likert type format.¹

It should be noted that, on average, 592 copies of these terms were distributed and that few showed interest in participating. Research points out that one of the great difficulties in conducting research is obtaining authorization from the legal guardians of all children.⁶

Regarding the presentation of the data, a descriptive analysis was performed, with absolute and relative frequency. The association between age, sex, education, parents' marital status and type of educational institution versus the variables inherent in the behaviors and aggressive reactions among students were measured using Fisher's Exact Test using the R program considering the statistically significant association for $p < 0.05$.⁷ The Q-CARP instrument score was obtained through tertiles (below-average, average and above-average aggressiveness).

The project was sent to the University's Ethics Committee and after receiving approval on October 27, 2016 (Opinion No. 1,805,855), a meeting was held with the parents and the Informed Consent Form was delivered. Children whose parents were unable to attend were instructed to hand over the term to them. In addition, each child was consulted about the desire to participate in the study through the Informed Consent Form.

RESULTS

Among the 122 participants, 65 children (58%) were between 10 and 11 years old and 70 children (62.5%) were female. The series with the highest percentage were the fourth

and fifth years with 97 students (86.6%) and the most prevalent type of school was the public school (77%). Regarding the marital status of the parents, it is noticed that 81 couples live together (72%) and the rest (28%) live separately.

Regarding the general classification of aggressiveness, it was found that there was a small index of highly aggressive children, since the vast majority is between the low and medium classification. However, it was found that internalized reactions have the highest percentage with a high rating, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 - Classification of students' aggressiveness. Alfenas, Minas Gerais, Brazil, 2017.

ECA/ERA	Classification of aggressiveness	n=112	%
ECA	Low	85	76
	Average	21	19
	High	06	05
ERA - Aggressive reactions	Low	81	72
	Average	26	23
	High	05	05
ERA - Internalized reactions	Low	41	36
	Average	48	43
	High	23	21

Source: Authors. Alfenas, 2017.

The low frequency of aggressive behaviors in the studied sample is best observed through the responses to the Aggressive Behavior Scale presented in Table 2, since the option "to kick or slap your colleagues never happens" and "to push or scratch your colleagues never happens" were the most chosen.

However, still in relation to the scale of aggressive behaviors, the item "mocking" and "shouting" with colleagues showed higher rates in relation to their occurrence, both on a daily basis and sometimes. Thus, it is noted that verbal aggression was the most recurrent.

Table 2 - Distribution of students' responses regarding the Aggressive Behavior Scale. Alfenas, Minas Gerais, Brazil, 2017.

Questions	Answers	n = 112	%
How often do you happen to kick or slap your colleagues?	Everyday	02	02
	Sometimes	14	12
	Rarely	21	19
	It never happens	75	67

Questions	Answers	n = 112	%
How often do you happen to say bad things to your colleagues?	Everyday	01	01
	Sometimes	19	17
	Rarely	19	17
	It never happens	73	65
How often do you make fun of (laugh at) your colleagues?	Everyday	07	06
	Sometimes	19	17
	Rarely	27	24
	It never happens	59	53
How often do you happen to yell at your colleagues?	Everyday	06	05
	Sometimes	16	15
	Rarely	25	22
	It never happens	65	58
How often do you happen to push or scratch your colleagues?	Everyday	03	03
	Sometimes	08	07
	Rarely	13	12
	It never happens	88	78

Source: Authors. Alfenas, 2017.

Regarding the Scale of Reaction to Aggression, it was concluded that on average 40 participants (35.5%) presented this behavior with varying frequencies (always, sometimes and rarely). In relation to the behavior that always happens in the face of aggression, the most marked responses were "hitting a colleague when he says bad things and making fun", by nine children (8%); and "yelling or mistreating a colleague when he picks up or spoils something of yours", by five children (6%).

Through the Internalized Reactions Scale, the expression "cry or sulk" was issued by 79 children (71%) when a colleague says bad things, laughs or scoffs, by 77 children (69%) when a colleague hits or pushes and 73 children (65%) when a colleague picks up or spoils their belongings.

The search for support from the teacher when the student suffers some type of aggression was evidenced by 44 students (60%) who always look for help. However, an expressive rate of an average of 19 children (17%) was found who never turn to the teacher as a source of support.

Through bivariate analysis, Table 3 shows that the only dimension that showed a statistically significant association ($p < 0.05$) refers to aggressive reactions and gender, of which boys had a higher value. Aggressive behaviors, internalized reactions and the search for support from the teacher were not statistically significant with this variable.

Table 3 - Bivariate analysis between the results of aggressive behaviors, aggressive, internalized reaction and the search for support from the teacher according to the sex of the students. Alfenas, Minas Gerais, Brazil, 2017.

ECA/ERA	Aggressiveness classification	Female (n=70)	%	Male (n=42)	%	p-value
ECA	Low	56	80,0	29	69,0	0,4425
	Average	11	16,0	10	24,0	
	High	3	4,0	03	7,0	
ERA - Aggressive reactions	Low	55	78,5	26	62,0	0,0065
	Average	15	21,5	11	26,0	
	High	0	0,0	05	12,0	
ERA - Internalized reactions	Low	21	30,0	20	48,0	0,1644
	Average	34	48,5	14	33,0	
	High	15	21,5	08	19,0	
ERA - Searched for teacher's support	Low	16	23,0	10	24,0	0,3860
	Average	29	41,5	22	52,0	
	High	25	35,5	10	24,0	

Source: Authors. Alfenas, 2017.

Regarding the differences between the age group and the assessment of aggressive behaviors, internalized reactions and the search for support from the teacher, there was no statistically significant association ($p > 0.05$). Only in the aggressive reaction was there a statistically significant association ($p < 0.05$) in relation to the age group, revealing that the 19 children (40.5%) who presented an aggressive reaction between the medium and high level have between eight and nine years.

The results in Table 4 indicate a statistically significant association between aggressive behaviors ($p < 0.05$) and aggressive reactions ($p < 0.05$) with the educational institution. Public school children had a higher percentage of these behaviors. There was no statistically significant association between internalized reactions and the search for teacher support with the type of educational institution.

Table 4 - Análise bivariada entre os resultados dos comportamentos agressivos, reação agressiva, internalizada e da Searched for teacher's support de acordo com o tipo de escolas dos escolares. Alfenas, Minas Gerais, Brasil, 2017.

ECA/ERA	Aggressiveness classification	Public school (n= 86)	%	Private school (n=26)	%	p-value
ECA	Low	60	70,0	25	96,0	0,0187
	Average	20	23,0	1	4,0	
	High	6	7,0	0	0,0	
ERA - Aggressive reactions	Low	56	65,0	25	96,0	0,0041
	Average	25	29,0	1	4,0	
	High	5	6,0	0	0,0	
ERA - Internalized reactions	Low	28	32,5	13	50,0	0,2679
	Average	40	46,5	8	31,0	
	High	18	21,0	5	19,0	
ERA - Searched for teacher's support	Low	13	15,0	8	31,0	0,1593
	Average	18	21,0	6	23,0	
	High	55	64,0	12	46,0	

Source: Authors. Alfenas, 2017.

The comparison of variables of parents who live together or not and the assessment of behavior and reaction to aggression is shown in Table 5. It was observed that there was no significant association between the variables mentioned. However, it is observed that children who have separated parents have higher percentages for the medium and high classification in all aspects of aggressive behavior.

Tabela 5 - Análise bivariada entre os resultados dos comportamentos agressivos, reação agressiva, internalizada e da Searched for teacher's support de acordo com a situação conjugal dos pais dos escolares. Alfenas, Minas Gerais, Brasil, 2017.

ECA/ERA	Aggressiveness classification	Parents living together (n=81)	%	Parents not living together (n=31)	%	P-value
ECA	Low	64	79,0	21	68,0	0,4244
	Average	13	16,0	08	26,0	
	High	04	5,0	02	6,0	
ERA - Aggressive reactions	Low	60	74,0	21	68,0	0,3014
	Average	19	23,5	07	22,5	
	High	02	2,5	03	9,5	
ERA - Internalized reactions	Low	31	38,0	10	32,0	0,7642
	Average	33	41,0	15	48,5	
	High	17	21,0	06	19,5	
ERA - Searched for teacher's support	Low	19	23,5	02	6,5	0,0810
	Average	15	18,5	09	29,0	
	High	47	58,0	20	64,5	

Source: Authors. Alfenas, 2017.

The school year showed no significant association with aggressive behavior and reaction to aggression ($p > 0.05$). But it is clear that nine children (60%) from the 1st to the 3rd year have an average frequency of internalized reactions and that 39 children (40.2%) from the 4th and 5th year also have these reactions.

DISCUSSION

The study sample was composed mostly of girls. This fact refers to female characteristics, being more collaborative and sensitive to psychological and emotional factors, in addition to cultural aspects that can favor adherence to different proposals, including participation in research.⁸

Within the context of aggressive behaviors and reactions, the present study observed that children had a low frequency. Similar results were detected in a study carried out with 598 elementary school students from three schools in the State of Minas Gerais and São Paulo, which used a self-application instrument that assesses aggressive behaviors in the school situation and in the family context⁹

The literature references that aggressive behavior is the result of social interaction, and that verbal aggression, found more frequently in this study, is a naturalized process at school and in the family, which has important repercussions on child development.¹⁰

As for the internalized reaction, a high index was observed, equivalent to another study carried out in Brazil in municipal public elementary schools. It is necessary to investigate the incidence of this behavior, since they can bring as much suffering as the externalizing ones.¹¹

It was found in the present investigation that some children do not seek the teacher when they suffer aggression, so it is essential that teachers establish open conversations with their students, showing them adaptive behaviors to aggression. However, many of them do not feel prepared for such an action and do not know how to intervene. Therefore, public policies

should be created with an emphasis on training education professionals so that they can identify aggressive behaviors and adopt strategies, making the school a conducive space for child development.¹

Regarding sex, there was a higher proportion of aggressiveness among boys, as in the study by Bolsoni-Silva et al. This may be related to cultural factors that permeate the idea that girls cannot beat or shout, because they have to be "feminine" and that boys must use physical aggression because they are "men".¹¹⁻¹²

Regarding the type of school institution, in the present study, the highest level of aggressiveness was found in public schools. This situation may be associated with the fact that families inserted in this context, most often low-income, use all their resources in the search for survival, not dedicating themselves to building healthy emotional relationships.¹³

It should also be considered that aggression can be used by the child as a means of attracting the attention of the adult, someone he feels affection and who identifies himself, who are usually his parents and teachers. In addition, many aggressive behaviors previously existed for insertion in the school environment. Therefore, the quality of a child's relationship at school is directly related to the behavioral resources acquired in the family setting.¹⁴⁻¹⁵

The study showed that children who have separated parents are more aggressive. Often, during the divorce process, parents are unable to put their parental role above marital conflicts and forget the demands of their children, who still depend on them. The child, defenseless and very sensitive, is intensely involved with the troubled moment and suffers from psychological and behavioral impairments.¹⁶

It can be considered that aggressiveness among schoolchildren is a public health problem, so it is worth emphasizing the importance of the interaction of professionals included in the Family Health Strategy with teachers, in order to know the problem and propose intervention measures that

contribute not only to improve such behaviors, but also to increase the socialization capacity of these children.¹⁷

However, it is known that intervening is not an easy task and will depend on the training of these professionals so that they are able to investigate, diagnose and adopt appropriate practices in situations of aggressiveness.¹¹

CONCLUSION

It is believed that the study presents important contributions in relation to the child's self-assessment regarding his aggressive behavior and his attitudes towards these behaviors. It was found that most children did not show high frequencies of behavior and aggressive reactions. And that the most common reactions to aggression were internalized responses. This data deserves to be better investigated due to the risk it can cause to child development.

It should be noted that the study has limitations in terms of using only the child's self-report regarding behaviors and reactions to aggression, since it may not indicate the reality for fear of being punished, associated with the fact that the sample was small and a greater number of respondents are female.

It will be necessary to develop studies with more robust methodological designs, involving the family and teachers. The evaluation may be conducted by health professionals in the Family Health Strategy, which, perhaps, will facilitate the obtaining of authorizations from their guardians.

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