

# Bullying in Classrooms: The Role of Parental Physical and Psychological Aggression

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To investigate the relation of parental education and their physical and psychological aggression towards children, and to explore the impact of parental aggression (Physical and psychological) on classroom bullying.

**Study Design:** Observational / descriptive study.

**Place and Duration of Study:** This study was conducted at the Secondary schools of Mansehra, Abbotabad, and Haripur Districts of Hazara Division from October, 2013 to March, 2014.

**Materials and Methods:** A sample of 1438 was selected to collect data by using two questionnaires. One questionnaire was about Bullying while the other was about parental aggression. Analysis of collected was done through mean, standard Deviation, and multiple regression model using SPSS 20 version.

**Results:** The mean and standard deviation value of physical aggression of parents was  $(3.96 \pm 1.23)$  while that of psychological aggression was  $(3.97 \pm 1.08)$ . Additionally, the education level of father was negatively correlated with their physical aggression ( $r = -0.29$ ,  $\alpha = 0.000$ ) as well as psychological aggression ( $r = -0.28$ ,  $\alpha = 0.000$ ). Similarly, mothers' level of education was significantly negatively correlated with both physical aggression ( $r = -0.16$ ,  $\alpha = 0.000$ ) and psychological aggression ( $r = -0.14$ ,  $\alpha = 0.000$ ). The results further indicated that parental physical aggression ( $\beta = 0.16$ ,  $t = 5.20$ ,  $\alpha = 0.000$ ) positively predicted classroom bullying.

**Conclusion:** The highly educated parents show less aggression towards their children. Aggressive behavior of parents paves the way for their children to become victims of bullying in classroom.

**Key Words:** Bullying, Physical Aggression, Psychological Aggression, Secondary School Students

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## INTRODUCTION

The multidimensional phenomenon of bullying is commonly observed in quite a few nations of the world<sup>1</sup> and is strongly linked with school environment. It has also links with family environment, relationship with peers, as well as community and culture<sup>2</sup> having many significant effects<sup>3</sup>. Globally, about 32% of the children face bullying<sup>4</sup>. Social skills play important role in dealing with bullying which are acquired in home environment and reflected in their behavior<sup>5</sup>. Further, these skills affect their relation with peers in schools<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, researchers remain interested in effect of family environment and classroom bullying<sup>7</sup>. Usually the victims face aggression from an individual or group among the peers<sup>8</sup>. Those who cause inconvenience to others or become victims are called bully/victim<sup>9</sup>. The victims who become target of bullying<sup>10</sup> usually belong to adverse family environments<sup>11</sup> and from the perspectives of social learning<sup>12</sup> the victims having

unpleasant relations with their peers belong to homes where parents adopt undesirable behaviors towards them in the form of shouts, hitting, and hostility<sup>6</sup>. Consequently they become victims to peer bullying<sup>13</sup>. On the other hand, desirable behaviors of parents help children to avoid such adjustment problems<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, contrary to general parental styles<sup>15</sup>, the individual parental behaviors have found to have their significant effects on children in research studies<sup>16</sup>. Such studies like supervision style of parents<sup>17</sup>, parental warmth<sup>18</sup>, their overprotective behaviors<sup>19</sup>, have been conducted globally to explore their individual effects on children. Studies regarding bully and victims have been conducted in Pakistan as well<sup>20</sup>. But the questions remain in mind that to what extent parental aggression is used and whether such aggression adds to the children to become victims to bullying. To find the answers of these questions, the current study was conducted to investigate the relation of parental education and their physical and psychological aggression towards children, and to explore the impact of parental aggression (Physical and psychological) on classroom bullying.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The following headings represent the aspects of conducting this study.

**Sample:** A sample of 1438 students was randomly selected from tenth class of Hazara Division.

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**Procedure:** The required information was collected from 84 schools of Mansehra, Haripur, and Abbotabad Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by personally visiting the selected schools. The questionnaires regarding bullying and parental aggression were developed after careful review of literature related to the topic. The developed questionnaires were validated experts of the field. A sample of 1438 students was selected through stratified random sampling technique. After receiving formal consent from the heads/ principals of respective schools, the students were approached. After ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality to the selected students, they were requested to respond about the specific behaviors of their parents rating from always (5) to Never (1). Similarly, they were requested to reflect on existence or otherwise of bullying behaviors in the class. Such behaviors were to be rated from always (5) to Never (1) as well.

**Questionnaires:** Two questionnaires were used to conduct this research study. One Questionnaire was about parental physical and psychological aggression while the other was about bullying practices in classroom.

## RESULTS

A pilot study was conducted on hundred students for the purpose of finding the reliability of the questionnaires. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of parental physical and psychological was 0.93 whereas Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of questionnaire about bullying was 0.72.

**Table No. 1: Mean and standard Deviation score of the variables**

Variables	N	Mean	S. D
Physical aggression of parents	1438	3.96	±1.2
Psychological aggression of parents		3.79	±1.1
Bullying in classrooms		3.99	±0.8

**Table No.2: Relationship of parental level of education and their physical and psychological aggression**

		Physical aggression	Psychological aggression
Father's education	Pearson Correlation	-0.293**	-0.276**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
	N	1438	1438
Mother's Education	Pearson Correlation	-0.157**	-0.136**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
	N	1438	1438

The average and standard deviation scores of parental physical aggression, psychological aggression, and bullying in classrooms are highlighted in table 1. The results reflect that parents use physical aggression ( $3.96 \pm 1.2$ ) more towards their children. Similarly, bullying practice in classrooms is high ( $3.99 \pm 0.8$ ). Table 2 highlights the relationship of parental level of education and their physical and psychological aggression. The results depict that there is significant negative relationship ( $r = -0.293$ ,  $\alpha = 0.000$ ) between fathers' level of education and their physical aggression. Similarly, there significant relationship ( $r = -0.276$ ,  $\alpha = 0.000$ ) between fathers' level of education and their level of psychological aggression. These results indicate that the more educated fathers do not use aggression as a tool to regulate the behavior of their children.

Table 2 further elaborates the relationship of mothers' level of education and their use of physical and psychological aggression. The results depict that there is significant negative relationship ( $r = -0.157$ ,  $\alpha = 0.000$ ) between mothers' level of education and their physical aggression. Similarly, there significant relationship ( $r = -0.136$ ,  $\alpha = 0.000$ ) between mothers' level of education and their level of psychological aggression. These results indicate that the more educated mothers do not use aggression as a tool to regulate the behavior of their children.

**Table No. 3: Impact of Parental Aggression on Classroom Bullying**

	B	Standard. Error	t-value	$\alpha$ value
Physical aggression of parents	0.16	0.03	5.20	0.000
Psychological aggression of parents	0.06	0.04	1.70	0.090
R=0.188	R <sup>2</sup> =0.035	Adj. R <sup>2</sup> =0.034	F=26.250	$\alpha = 0.000$

Dependent variable: Classroom bullying

Table 3 highlights the impact of physical aggression and psychological aggression on becoming victim to bullying. The results indicate that parental aggression (both physical and psychological) causes 3.5% changes in classroom bullying. Furthermore, one unit increase in parental physical aggression cause 0.16 units significant increase ( $t = 5.20$ ,  $\alpha = 0.000$ ) classroom bullying. Similarly, one unit increase in parental psychological aggression leads to bring 0.06 units insignificant increase ( $t = 1.70$ ,  $\alpha = 0.090$ ) in classroom bullying.

## DISCUSSION

This research is conducted for the purpose of finding the level of parental use of physical as well as

psychological aggression to their children of secondary level, and to find out their effects on classroom bullying. The results of this research may help to public in general and health practitioners in particular about the effects of parental aggression on social adjustment and developing relationships of children with their peers.

A high parental aggression (both physical and psychological) was highlighted in the results of this study. Same results were produced by Connolly and O'Moore, (2003)<sup>21</sup>. Similarly, results indicated high classroom bullying in the target population. These results are consistent with results of Craig, (1998)<sup>22</sup> who explored that 77% physical, mental, or verbal bullying caused to the victims.

Our results further elaborate that as the parents become more educated, their level of awareness improves and they use less aggression towards their children. Parental education, especially fathers' increase in level of education significantly decreases the chances of children becoming victim to bullying in the classroom. It true that low educated parents are likely to have children having greater risk of becoming victims of violence<sup>23</sup>.

Our results indicate that parental aggression has a profound positive influence on bullying in classroom. It is confirmed that home environment having inconsistent behavior from parents, relying on punishment, and show of hostility towards children creates a chance that they become victims in schools<sup>24</sup> while support and tender feeling from parents towards children help their children to effectively deal with problems<sup>25</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

The highly educated parents show less aggression towards their children. Aggressive behavior of parents paves the way for their children to become victims of bullying in classroom.

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**Conflict of Interest:** The study has no conflict of interest to declare by any author.

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