

# The Effectiveness of Aggression Control Skill Training in Male Students' Aggression

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## Abstract

The present research aimed to determine the effectiveness of aggression control skill training in male students' aggression studying in the art schools located in the 4th borough of Tehran in the school year ran from 2014 to 2015. The research employed semi-experimental method with pretest, posttest and control group design. First, one art school was randomly selected from among the art schools located in the 4th borough of Tehran and its students filled out the aggression questionnaire. Then, the individuals who rated higher than average were diagnosed, out of which 50 individuals were randomly selected and assigned into the experimental (N=25) and control groups (N=25). Aggression questionnaire by Buss and Perry (1992) including twenty nine items and scored on 5-point Likert scale with four subscales of physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility was used as the research tool. The independent variable (anger control skill training) was administered for fourteen 90-minute sessions and responded to the aggression questionnaire in the post-test. Data were investigated using between-group covariance analysis. Results indicated that, aggression control skill training was effective in the decrease of students' aggression.

**Keywords:** Aggression Control Skill Training, Aggression, Physical and Verbal Aggression, Anger, Hostility

## 1. Introduction

A review of the plethora of studies carried out in the realm of aggression during the last years indicate that, the experience of aggression either in childhood or adolescence is related to significant problems. Excessive aggression exposes children and adolescents to the risk of being rejected by peers that can eventually lead to poor levels of adjustment at schools, drop out, poor problem-solving skills and higher rates of referral for psychological and aggressive problems (Stiffler, 2008). Aggression is an important determinant of aggressive behavior; in addition, it's a common individual distressing characteristic which is strongly related to psychological health problems particularly adjustment (Bleil et al, 2004). It's worth mentioning that, in social training of children and adolescents, both in terms of individual or social adjustment, no behavioral pattern is as important as aggression and if not treated in childhood, it can turn into antisocial or other chronic psychiatric disorders (Maleki and Falahi Khoshknab, 2011). A review of the literature indicates that, one of the methods to increase aggression is aggression control skill training which has exerted positive effect on behavioral issues and the delinquency of aggressive adolescents. Moreover, it decreases the use of alcohol and drug and increases the self-esteem and behavioral problems at home and schools (Maleki and Fallahi Khoshknab, 2011).

Aggression is experienced as a transient emotion which is not a problem to be demonstrated enforcedly and involuntarily but a part of human personality's structure. Triggering aggression in a repeated manner can be problematic because it can activate aggressive behavior and endamage psychological adjustment and individual health (Zangeneh and Malek Pour, 2010). Moreover, aggression is a double-edged sword. It means that, the demonstration of anger leads to the destruction of objects and harming people indicating the crucial importance of anger control (Wheatley et al, 2009). What have attracted the attention of researchers to the subject of aggressive behavior are its adverse effect on interpersonal behavior and also its undesirable effects on internal and psychological states. Lack of control over aggressive behavior can give rise to interpersonal problems, crime, delinquency and violation of others right. Moreover, it can get internalized and lead to psychosomatic problems such as stomach ulcer, depression and migraine. Aggressive behaviors and actions have always been prevalent in human societies. The statistics in articles and other scientific disorders indicate the high rate of aggression and hostility which has given rise to the high prevalence of murders and

suicides (the most severe type of internal and external aggression).

In the developmental process of human kind from childhood till seniority, the highest rate of aggression is seen during adolescence. Aggression is a disorder that is demonstrated in different forms in children and adolescents and is a growing problem among the adolescents (Maleki and Khoshknab, 2011). In fact, anger is an emotion, hostility is an attitude and aggression is a behavior. In summary, it can be concluded that, hostility is related to the cognitive element or feedbacks and can be the basis of increase in the anger and aggression of individuals. Anger is an affective or emotional state from mild agitation to brutal anger and when demonstrated, it creates a formidable barrier to the achievement of individuals' needs and goals. Finally, aggression is defined as inflicting apparent harm or punitive behaviors upon the individuals or objects (Dortaj and Masaebi, 2009).

Therefore, and based on the above-mentioned literature, the present research aims to determine whether or not aggression control skill training is effective in the decrease of aggression.

## 2. Method and Material

The present research employed semi-experimental method with pretest, posttest and control group design.

**Table 1.** Research design with pretest, posttest and control group design

Group stage	Pre-test stage	Independent variable	Post-test stage
Experimental group	Tb	X	Ta
Control group	Tb	-	Ta
	Before		after

The research population included all the male students studying in the art schools located in the 4<sup>th</sup> region of Tehran city in the school year of 2014-2015. The research sample was determined based on Cochran formula (N=43). In order to prevent the drop out effect, 7 more individuals were selected and the sample was increased to 50 individuals.

Simple random sampling was used in this research. First, one art schools was randomly selected from among the art schools located in the 4<sup>th</sup> borough of Tehran and its students filled out the aggression questionnaire. Then, the individuals who rated higher than average were diagnosed, out of which 50 individuals were randomly selected and assigned into the experimental (N=25) and control groups (N=25). The independent variable (anger control skill training) was administered for fourteen 90-minute sessions and responded to the aggression questionnaire in the post-test.

The research tool was Aggression questionnaire by Buss and Perry (1992) including twenty nine items and scored on 5-point Likert scale with four subscales of physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger and hostility was used as the research tool. In order to determine the validity coefficient, some of the professors specialized and expert in the research area were asked to judge the contents of the items and its congruence with the research hypotheses and goals. Their opinions were then sought and the questionnaire was altered according to their viewpoints prior to the administration. To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, 50 students were randomly selected, on whom the questionnaire was administered and the Cronbach was obtained to be .90. Aggression control skill training

The training work shop of aggression control training was administered for fourteen, 90-minute sessions.

**Table 2.** Aggression control skill training's protocol

Sessions	Goal	Content
First session	1-All the group members make a proper and short introduction. 2- The general goal of the aggression control skill training is stated. 3- The group's rules and general expectations of the program are stated. 4-The concept of aggression is defined and the synonymous concepts are mentioned.	Introduction and stating the general expectations
Second session	1- The concept of aggression and other related concepts are defined and the differences are discussed in a simple language. 2- The relation between aggression, anger and hostility is explained in a simple language. 3- By referring to real examples and instances are stated, the destructive consequences of uncontrolled aggression are stated.	Anger and its consequences
Third session	1-Concept of "triggering factors of aggression" or "causing factors of aggression is explained and refers to aggression-filled events and situations using proper examples. 2- the advantages and disadvantages of aggression are explained in summary referring to the distinction between justified and unjustified aggression. 3-physical signs describe thoughts and behaviors that are experienced while having the arousal of aggression.	Driving forces of aggression and common responses
Fourth session	1- Reporting his/her experience of aggression. 2- Explaining his/her personal patterns of aggression. 3- Stating the behaviors that are demonstrated while expressing anger. 4-	Personal patterns of experiencing aggression and

Sessions	Goal	Content
Fifth session	describing the general changes in body while angry and aggressive. 1-Comparing being relaxed or being tense in body and the feelings dominating these two states and explaining the difference. 2- Reporting the experience of aggression in framework of 'report of aggression-related events'. 3- Doing the exercises related to the strategy of relaxation.	behavior Monitoring alarming signs of aggression, relaxation and decrease of tension
Sixth session	1-Explaining the concepts of holding a viewpoint and phenomenological perception of stimuli. 2- Explaining the role of personal perception of situations in triggering and intensifying the aggression along with proper examples. 3- Referring to several events that their aggressive characteristics are related to their personal perception and interpretation.	Holding a viewpoint, phenomenological perception of stimuli and experience of aggression
Seventh session	1- Explaining the role of negative self-talks and non-beneficial thoughts. 2- Preparing a list of beneficial and constructive thoughts, beliefs and expectations in anger management. 3- Explaining the concept of aggression-filled thoughts, beliefs and expectations using proper examples.	The role of negative thoughts in experiencing the aggression
Eighth session	1-Explaining the mutual effect of negative thoughts and the experience of anger using proper examples. 2- Preparing and presenting a list of beneficial thoughts as appropriate alternatives for negative thoughts. 3- Role playing and showing the effective ways for coping with negative thoughts.	Changing the negative thoughts and aggression control
Ninth session	1-Explaining the concept of "ordering the self" using proper examples. 2- Having proper reminder for necessary situations. 3- Using these reminders to stop aggressive thoughts, diverting the attention from aggressive situation and challenging the thoughts and decisions.	Ordering the self for anger control
Tenth session	1-Explaining the concept of assertiveness and the importance of behaving assertively by referring to proper examples. 2- Comparing the assertiveness, passivity and aggression and stating the features of each of these behaviors. 3- Explaining the role of effective interpersonal relationships specially, assertiveness in anger control. 4- Role playing the assertiveness in stage plays. 5- Being more prepared to use assertiveness in real aggression-filled situations.	Assertive training and relational skills
eleventh session	After the session and doing the related assignments, each of the group members should be able: 1- To play assertiveness in a role play. 2- To be more prepared to use assertiveness in real aggression-filled situations.	Continuing assertive training and relational skills
Twelfth session	1-explaining the problem-solving with regard to its components (issue, solutions, options and consequences). 2- The necessity and importance of problem-solving strategy in aggression control using proper examples. 3- Using problem-solving strategy correctly after reading or hearing a description of a fake or real event. 4- Playing the employment of a problem-solving strategy in an aggression-filled situation and in an experimental setting.	Problem-solving strategies training
Thirteenth session	1-Using problem-solving strategy effectively after reading or hearing a description of a fake or real event. 2- Playing the employment of problem-solving strategy in an aggression-filled situation and in an experimental setting.	Continuing problem-solving strategies training
fourteenth session	1- Explaining the utilization of stress immunization training for controlling the anger. 2- Explaining the utilization of imaginary confrontation and response inhibition referring to its stages. 3- Preparing a hierarchy of aggression-filled situations for eventual confrontation. 4- Doing the instructions of imaginary confrontation and response control in an experimental situation.	Stress immunization training for controlling the anger

Data were investigated using descriptive statistics and the research hypotheses were investigated using between-group covariance analysis.

### 3. Results and Findings

**Table 3.** Mean and standard deviation of aggression and its aspects in the experimental and control groups and in the pre-test and post-test stages

Aggression and its Aspects	Experimental Group				Control Group			
	Pretest		Posttest		Pretest		Posttest	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Physical aggression	31.96	6.59	25.72	8.23	27.92	9.10	26.92	6.90
Verbal aggression	15.80	3.55	14.44	3.80	15.24	4.50	14.44	4.55
anger	23.16	5.38	17.76	6.39	19.32	6.62	19.40	5.84
hostility	25.84	6.34	20.48	6.23	21.64	6.12	23.08	6.76
Aggression	96.76	17.21	78.40	20.99	94.12	21.66	93.84	19.29

The results of table 3 indicate that, there is no between-group difference on aggression and its aspects in the pretest. The total scores of subjects' aggression in the pretest and in the experimental and control groups are equal to 96.7 and 94.1, respectively. However, there is significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the post-test. The mean scores of aggression in the experimental group decreased from 96.7 to 78.4. Totally, the score has decreased on an average of 18.

The research findings were analyzed based on the research hypothesis. Between-group covariance analysis was used to analyze the research hypotheses. But first, Levene's test was used to test the presumption of variances' equality.

**Table 4.** the results of Levene's test on the presumption of the variances' equality of the subjects' scores

Test variable	F coefficient	p coefficient
aggression	0.912	0.221

The results of table 4 indicate that, the f value is not significant at .05 ( $p > .05$ ). Therefore, the assumption of variances' equality is confirmed. Moreover, other assumptions (being linear and slopes' homogeneity) are also observed and hence, between-group covariance analysis can be employed.

First hypothesis: group aggression control skill training is effective in the decrease of aggression.

**Table 5.** covariance analysis of the effectiveness of group aggression control skill training in the decrease of aggression

Index Source of change	SS	df	MS	F coefficient	P Sig.	Eta square	Statistical power
Aggression (pretest)	9199.011	1	9199.011	41.934	-	-	-
group	2332.775	1	2332.775	10.634	0.002	0.185	0.891
error	10310.349	47	219.369				
total	348902.000	50					

With regard to the results of table 5 and based on the results of covariance analysis test, group aggression control skill training was effective in the decrease of aggression among the students ( $P = .002$  and  $F = 10.63$ ). Moreover, the degree of this difference (Eta square) was equal to .185 and the statistical power equaled .891. Therefore, the results indicate that, group aggression control skill training was effective in the decrease of students' aggression and this difference is significant ( $P < .05$ ). Therefore, the first hypothesis is confirmed.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the present research indicated that, group aggression control skill training decreases the degree of aggression among the students. The results of this section is in line with the results of the research by the researchers in Iran such as Tafreshi and Amir Majd (2013), Maleki and Khoshknab (2011), Zangeneh and Malek Pour (2010), Abouei and Tahmasebi (2010), Akbari Zardkhaneh (2010), Baghayi and Khalatbari (2010), Shokouhi Yekta et al (2008), Shakibayi et al (2004). Moreover, this finding is in harmony with the studies carried out abroad such as Wheatley et al (2009), (2008), (2007) and (2007). These researchers concluded that, group trainings and interventions such as group aggression control skill training can exert positive effect on behaviors and constructs such as the degree of students' aggression, external pressure, frustration and family aggression. Moreover, it can also positively affect other behavioral disorders and problems such as mental pressure, maladjustment, anger self-regulation and parent-adolescent conflicts. They have also concluded that, such training can eventually lead to higher levels of individuals' mental health.

In the interpretation of the results in terms of group aggression control skill training and its positive and constructive role on behavioral disorders of individuals especially adolescents, it can be concluded that, what has attracted the attention of the researchers to the subject of aggressive behavior is its undesirable effect on interpersonal behavior and adverse influence on internal and mental state of individuals particularly male adolescents. It seems that, lack of control over aggressive behavior among the adolescents and young individuals can cause interpersonal problems, crime, delinquency and violation of other individuals' right. Moreover, it can get internalized and lead to psychosomatic problems such as stomach ulcer, depression and migraine. Aggressive behaviors and actions have always been prevalent in human societies. The statistics in articles and other scientific disorders indicate the high rate of aggression and hostility which has given rise to the high prevalence of murders and suicides (the most severe type of internal and external

aggression).

In the developmental process of human kind from childhood till seniority, the highest rate of aggression is seen during adolescence. Aggression is a disorder that is demonstrated in different forms in children and adolescents and is a growing problem among the adolescents (Maleki and Khoshknab, 2011).

Aggression affects adolescents' growth and health in all aspects. Physical growth is negatively affected due to excessive stress and distress which may then decline individuals' mental or cognitive growth. On one hand, adolescence is a period of life in which all kinds of changes in physical, mental, affective, psychological and social aspects occur in the individual. The adolescents' and all the significant others' acquaintance with the standards of growth and health leads to the creation of healthy and rejuvenated life. On the other hand, adolescents are the future investment of each society and their share of health would guarantee the society's growth and development. Moreover, this point should be considered that, life in personal, family and social aspect is always associated with different problems and aggression is not a proper way for decreasing them and it can even lead to other sorts of difficulty. Aggression stands amongst the emotions that exist in all the individuals and the human learns or should learn to control his/her emotions or keep them in a moderate level.

Teaching children the accurate ways of expressing the emotions during childhood through modeling and identification can surely prevent the demonstration of aggression in the future and minimize harming the self and others to the least degree. Group aggression control skill training is in fact an organized psychological intervention that is employed in a group format to increase aggression control skills and decrease the vulnerability of healthy individuals or a special group under the treatment. In fact, the main goal of group aggression control training is to prevent anger, achieve peace and desirable performance. These are actions that can enhance life, increase mental and psychological health of adolescents and even some significant others such as friends, peers, classmates and family members. Along with all the advantages of the interventions based on the psychology of coping with anger, these interventions can exert positive effects on the behaviors of adolescent and therefore, such interventions are of crucial importance.

Moreover, shaping and developing the personality in the adolescents can both directly and indirectly help them to decrease their pain and suffering and increase their joy and happiness. Regarding the role of trainings based on decreasing the aggression among the adolescents and young individuals, we can refer to this point that, individuals who benefit the highest from such educational programs are those who have used non-aggressive and kind behaviors to change their aggressive behaviors and feedbacks. Hence, individuals can have their roles in the creation of peaceful, tranquil and relaxing environments through enriching behavioral and personal virtues, establishing and enhancing healthy family and healthy educational environment far from emotions such as aggression.

Along with the results of the present research, it can be concluded that, the authorities and managers in the educational settings should lay the foundation for such trainings in all the educational boroughs of Tehran city through the cooperation of other institutions such as health offices and public call for the participation of all the students and their parents.

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