

## **Peer Attachment and Intention of Aggressive Behavior among School Children**

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to ascertain the relationship between peer attachment and intention of aggressive behavior amongst school children. There are literatures related to peer attachment quality and its effects on adjustment and development. However, relatively little attention has been paid to the relationship between peer attachments and intention of aggressive behavior. Positive peer attachment, respectively, have been viewed as protective factors, that prevent peers from engaging in intention of aggressive behaviors, like violence, risky sexual behavior, and bullying. While the negative aspect of peer insecure attachment from the school which is associated with more problematic functioning including higher rates of emotional problems, substance use, aggression and delinquency. In this study, respondents were 426 school children (males 199 and females 227) between 13-17 years old. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation and t-test for student's age groups. Peer attachment was measured using inventory of parents and peer attachment (IPPA) with respect to peer attachment and adolescent intention of aggressive behaviour. Findings have revealed that over all respondents show that there is a significant positive relationship between peer influences on intention of aggressive behaviour. And there is no significant difference in age group of the respondents and intention of aggressive behaviour. Peer influence on intention of aggressive behaviour is high which is peer to peer aggressive act within the school environment which the harm that is always intention to cause injuries, and destroy. Thus, expressive support and attention should be extended not just to the victims of intention of aggressive behaviour cases, but also to intimidators. Recommendation of the study centers on the need to examine the reports from school counselors and peers that engage in intention of aggressive behaviour.

**Keywords:** Aggressive behavior, Influence, Intention, Peer attachment.

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### **I. Introduction**

Aggressive behavior is a matter of concern to the public, particularly, aggressive behavior among adolescence (Bushman & Huesmann, 2001; Werner & Crick, 2004). Moreover, a growing body of research in psychology, sociology and education has generated new insight on understanding development of peers within various social environments. Currently, research has shown that peer social attachments and related experiences contributed to the explanation of intention to engage in aggressive behaviour (Murray & Greenberg, 2006). More sure, intention to engage in aggressive behaviour may be caused by a number of factors like teachers style which is inconsistent or contradictory, family problems, child neglect, separation or bereavement, injury or chronic illness and greed (Giannakopoulos, Mihas & Dimitrakaki, et al, 2009; Stadelmann, Perren & Groeben, et al., 2010). Intention to engage in aggressive behaviour among peers are often multi-factorial and the manner in which they are expressed may be influenced by a variety of problems such as developmental stage, temperament, adaptive and coping abilities of school and family as well as the nature of their stress. In addition, peers may show attachment disturbances with friends, school, family, poor school performance and behavioural worsening to an earlier stage of development, and psychological disorders like phobia (Dogan-Ates, 2010; Dufton, Dunn & Compas, 2009).

Moreover, researchers from many disciplines such as sociology and psychology have expressed fear concerning the consequences of intention of aggressive behaviour exhibited by student's attachment (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Specifically, peers intention to engage in aggressive behaviour is influenced with subsequent problems in socialization, school adjustment, school success and vocational adaptation in children (Campbell, 1995). According to Smith and Fox (2003) intention of aggressive behavior is "any repeated pattern of behaviour, or perception of behaviour, that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with optimal learning or engagement in pro-social interactions with peers. In western nations, intention of aggressive behaviour largely involves older pupils victimising younger children, mainly by physical and verbal means (Smith, 2004). Moreover, research has shown that social exclusion by large groups of students, peer acceptance/influence, popularity, and "fitting in" in the new social environment with influence of many school

children may relate to engage in intention of aggressive behaviour (Kanetsuna and Smith, 2002; Koo et al, 2008; Juvonen & Ho, 2009).

It is also clear to note that peers attachment and their intention to involve in aggressive behaviour may be as well cause by peers merely witnessing any attacks can be negatively influenced and as well as harsh punishment (Nishina & Juvonen, 2005; Pepler et al, 2008). Research also suggests that when peers behave aggressively towards others, using harsh physical discipline with friends and then their friends are more likely to involve in intention of aggressive behaviour (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Moreover, peer's reactions on intention of aggressive behaviour, and their perceptions of themselves and of their own safety, are influenced by others (Salmivalli et al, 1998; Gini et al, 2008). In the other hand, the social environment of individual classes or year groups can also influence peers to intention of aggressive behaviour (Sharp, 1996; Karna et al, in press). Clearly, peers/school children always have reasons to believe that their behavior helps enhance their peer status, and studies have shown that intention of aggressive behaviour among peers/school children can be perceived as cool, powerful, and popular even in mainstream peer groups (Caravita, DiBlasio & Salmivalli, 2009; Rodkin, Farmer, Pearl & Van Acker, 2006).

Meanwhile, intention of aggressive behaviour and real aggressive behaviour are closely related. This assertion was supported by work of (Alikasifoglu et al., 2004; Eke & Ogel, 2006) who argued that higher rates of aggressive behaviour among school children is mainly on involving in beating someone, hitting after being hit is retaliatory, whereas hitting someone you were hit is initiated aggressive behaviour. Similarly, numerous studies show that the reasons for intention of aggressive behavior during this period are multifactorial like being victim of aggressive acts, television viewing, gender, and environmental (Horman, Hansen, Cochain, & Lindsey, 2005; Ozmen, 2006; Valk, Spruijt, Goede, Maas, & Meus, 2005). In another study (Eke & Ogel, 2006), argued that the rate of getting involved in at least one physical fight was 68.8% among boys and 29.7% among girls. Another work similar to the above related literature was also digested. The work of Turkish Grand National Assembly, 2008) shows that the most frequent involvement in intention of aggressive behaviour among school children is for physical harm, bullying, threatening, interference, nicknaming, hurt and gossiping.

## **II. Statement Of Problem**

The researcher found it useful to conduct a research in the area of peer attachment/ influence of school children and intention of aggressive behaviour in Selangor state, Malaysia. The issues which attract the researcher to conduct research work on this topic is due to how peers influence one to engage in aggressive behaviour. Meanwhile the problem of adolescence school children was also observed among the others.

### **Objective of the research**

Three main objectives were outline by the researcher to solve the above traceable problems observed in the districts.

- To describe the level of peer attachment and intention of aggressive behavior in Selangor state, Malaysia.
- To examine the difference between age group and intention of aggressive behaviour.
- To identify the relationship between peers attachment and intention of aggressive behaviour

## **III. Methodology**

### **3.1 Population and Sample**

The current study focused mainly on peer attachment and intention of aggressive behaviour and utilized data from selected daily secondary school children in Selangor, Malaysia. The sample of the study was 426 respondents which involves male and female with age 13 to 17 years old. From the daily secondary schools, three schools were randomly selected from the rural areas of Selangor. Three schools were selected from the urban areas of the state. The total number of schools sampled for the current study amounted to six schools from the state. Within the schools the students were selected using stratified random sampling. The method employed by the researcher to work out this research objectives successfully were through the use of an instrument that was tested its reliability and validity in the pilot study before the real application for the main data collection. This instrument used was the structured designed questionnaire which was administered to collect information from 426 population sample sizes, in Petaling Perdana, Hulu langkat, Gombak, and Klang in Selangor state, Malaysia. The research used descriptive statistics to find out the level of peer attachment and intention of aggressive behaviour. And Pearson correlation analysis was run to find the strength of the relationship among school children and intention of aggressive behaviour in the districts. Lastly t-test analysis was also done to find out the age groups differences among school children that contribute to intention of aggressive behaviour. The objective of the study is to determine the relationship between peer attachment and intention of aggressive behavior amongst secondary school children.

### 3.2 Instrumentation

#### 3.2.1 Peer Attachment

Peer attachment was measured with the Inventory of Peer Attachment (IPPA) developed by Armsden and Greenberg's (1987). The scale consists of 25 items, scored on a 4-point scale ranging from 1= always true; 2= sometimes true; 3= not very true; and 4= never true. Examples of questions include "My friends can tell when I'm upset about something", "When we discuss things, my friends care about my point of view", "When I discuss things, my friends care about my point of view", "I wish I had different friends", "My friends help me to talk about my difficulties". The IPPA assesses peers' perceptions of the positive and negative affective/cognitive dimension of attachment with their fellow peers in accordance with attachment theory. The scale had a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.757, indicating that it had a high degree of reliability. According to Garousifarshi and Soufiyani (2008) and Tabachnick and Fidell, (2007) for good reliability test the Cronbach's alpha is expected to be the point above and peer attachment has acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .75 and has been used with a number of samples both clinical and non clinical. In the current study, the Cronbach alpha was .78.

#### 3.2.2 Intention of aggressive behavior:

Aggressive behavior questionnaire was used to measure the intention of aggressive behavior. The scale was originally developed by Buss & Perry (1992). This instrument comprises 34 items referring to different types of intention of aggressive behavior. It assesses some aspects of aggressive behavior: ( my friends say that I argue a lot, At times I can't control the urge to hit someone, I get into fights more than most people, other people always seem to get the breaks, I flare up quickly, but get over it quickly, I often find myself disagreeing with people, I can't help getting into argument when people disagree with me, I have threatened people I know, I wonder why sometimes I feel so bitter about things, I let my anger show when I do not get what I want etc). The 34 items in the questionnaire for this study were measured using the Likert scale. They are as follows: 1=strongly agree; 2=agree; 3= strongly disagree; and 4= agree. In this study the internal consistence of the intention of aggressive behaviour scale was found to be acceptable (Cronbach alpha =.78), indicating that it had a high degree of reliability.

#### 3.2 Data Analyses

SPSS programme was used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics was used to describe the background information of the respondents and the main variables of the study. Pearson correlation was used to examine the association between peer attachment and intention of aggressive behaviour. While Independent sample t-test was used to examine age differences in intention of aggressive behaviour among school children.

### 3.3 Results

Descriptive analysis was conducted on the variables of the study. The finding of the study shows that greater percentages of the respondents for the current study range in age group of 13-14 are more than half which constitutes 58.9% of the respondents based on the Mean = 14.38 years and SD = 1.48, followed by 15-16 which constitutes 41.1%, which comprise of 46.7 % males, and 53.3% females which mean they have higher intention to involve in aggressive behaviour. Therefore, the findings show that greater percentage of the respondents by age revealed higher likelihood to involve in intention of aggressive behaviour. In addition, majority of the respondents were Malays (86.6%) and Muslims (87.1%), and 55.2% of whom were from rural areas. moreover, majority of the respondents came from married parents that are living together (88.0%). While 44.8 % of the school children were from urban schools, while 55.2% were from rural schools. In addition, this implied that most of the respondents are female which means they have higher intention to engage in aggressive behaviour.

## IV. Result Finding And Discussion

**Table 1: Personal profile of respondents (N= 426)**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Age				
13 – 14 years	251	58.9	14.38	1.48
15 – 16 years	175	41.1		

**Table 2** The level of intention of aggressive behaviour of Respondents N=426

Variable	Mean	S.D	Min	Max	N	%
<b>Intention of Aggressive behaviour</b>	98.66.	12.41	177	249		
Low (Scores 34 - 68)					79	18.5
Medium (Scores 69- 102)					249	58.5
High (Scores 105 - 136)					98	23.0

**Table 3** The level of peer attachment of Respondents N=426

Variable	Mean	S.D	Min	Max	N	%
<b>Peer attachment</b>	52.77.	6.65	98	328		
Low (Scores 23 - 46)					92	21.6
Medium (Scores 47- 69)					328	76.9
High (Scores 70 - 92)					6	1.4

Source: Field work, 2014

Table 2 and 3 indicates score of the respondent’s base on low, Medium, and high score in peer attachment. According to the samples, obtained scores low, Medium and high categories was suggested, as shown in Table 3, more than (76.9%) of the respondents reported mild level in peer attachment and also (21.6%) of respondents reported low peer attachment, and only (1.4%) reported high level in peer attachment. Table 2 indicated score of the respondents base on low, medium, and high score of intention of aggressive behaviour. Based on samples obtained from scores, low, medium and high categories was suggested as shown in table 2, shows that (58.5%) of the respondent reported mild level in intention of aggressive behaviour, also (18.5%) respondents reported low peer attachment, and only (23.0%) reported high level in intention of aggressive behaviour. The summary of this results shows that there was moderate level peer attachment to influence one on intention of aggressive behaviour among the respondents in the districts selected in Selangor state, Malaysia. The general overview of the results analysis shows that, there was moderate level of peer attachment to influence others to engage in intention of aggressive behaviour which consequently yield the resulted out comes to appear moderate to influence one to involve in intention of aggressive behaviour in and outside the school environment in Selangor state, Malaysia.

**Table 4** Significant difference in intention of aggressive behaviour based on age group

Variable	Frequency	Mean	SD	t	Sig
<b>Age group</b>					
13-14	251	99.16	11.55	1.016	0.310
15-16	175	97.93	13.55		

The result of the t-test analysis which was employed to investigate the difference among respondents’ age groups on the intention of aggressive behavior further discovered there is no significant difference ( $t = 1.016$ ,  $p = 0.310$ ) in intention of aggressive behaviour scores for age group 13-14 ( $M=99.16$ ,  $SD = 11.55$ ) and 15-16, ( $M = 97.93$ ,  $SD = 13.55$ ). Interestingly, Chauhan & Reppucci (2009) revealed that age directly influenced intention of aggressive behavior among children. Similarly, Burton (2007) found that 13-18 years old is the peak stage for school children to engage in intention of aggressive behaviour. In support of this, Breet, Myburgh & Poggenpoel (2010) revealed that all school children irrespective of their age or culture always express intention to engage in aggressive behaviour in any environment.

**Table 5: Relationship between Peer attachment and Intention of aggressive behaviour**

Variable		
Intention of aggressive behaviour	1	
Peer attachment	0.143*	1

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Meanwhile, the data collected was also use to find the strength of relationship between peer attachment and intention of aggressive behavior among secondary school children. The Pearson correlation analysis was

done and the result findings reflect that, there is a significant positive relationship between peer attachment and intention of aggressive behaviour ( $r = 0.143$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This result was supported by finding from many scholars; among them include the work of Burton's (2007) whose findings shows that there positive and significant correlation between peer influence and selection to contribute to the explanation of intention of aggressive behavior. Adding also that self-selection of peer influence has been known as the idea that adolescent school children who want to engage in intention of aggressive behavior may seek out a peer group that facilitates that aggressive behavior. Though, peer influence has been recognized as a causal factor. Another finding by Salmivalli, Ojanen, Haanpaa&Peets (2005) shows that peer influence in the attachment differ in the virtual status they attach to mutual such as making friends, being prosocial, feeling close to others and agentic such as being visible, influential, and admired goals.

## **V. Discussion**

Result from this empirical research shows that the level at which peers influences one in the school environment studies serve as a medium to school children and their intention to engage in aggressive behaviour was moderate, because the analysis indicated that the level of intention of aggressive behaviour is moderate at 328 (76.9%) out of 426 total respondent and (mean 52.77,  $SD=6.65$ ). the finding of study illustrates that there was no significant different between male and female involvement in intention of aggressive behaviour. Interestingly, there was also no significant difference in age of the respondent intention to engage in aggressive behaviour. Therefore, majority of these school children came from urban and rural areas and their parents are living together. The current study therefore revealed that self socialization of peer attachment, influence, peer interaction, peer group and environment may contribute immensely in turning school children to enage in intention of aggressive behaviour. The present finding on intention of aggressive behaviour among school children was consistent with the study conducted by NyiNyiNaing, Zulkifli Ahmad &Razlan Musa, (2004) in Malaysia and with other studies Stewart-Knox, Sittlington, Rugkasa, Harrisson, Treacy&Abaunza, (2005) and Burk, Steglich&Snijders,(2007). Moreover, involvement with deviant peers results in the development of intention of aggressive behaviour (Chapman & Werner-Wilson, 2008). The finding of this study may be explained within the purview of social learning theory by Bandura (1977) which emphasized changes in the socialization process between males and females in the society. This socialization process may account for behavior modeling which explains why more peers and school children were involved in intention of aggressive.

## **VI. Summary And Conclusion**

Finally, the research has come to it achievement in which all the designed objectives were completed successfully. The level at which peer attachment and their intention to involve in aggressive behaviour was analyzed through descriptive statistics and the results shows moderate level. Secondly the strength of the relationship was also examined through Pearson correlation analysis and result confirmed that there is a significant relationship between peer attachment and intention of aggressive behaviour. Finally the correlation analysis was used to find how peer influence can contribute to intention of aggressive behaviour. The t-test analysis was conducted and it proved that age group of the school children can contribute significantly to peers involvement in intention of aggressive behaviour in the state of Selangor, Malaysia. Moreover, recently emerging studies suggest otherwise (Anonymous,2003) including the current study that peers involvement in intention of aggressive behaviour occurs globally and it happens in all secondary school at all grade levels. It should be acknowledged that there are alternative explanations for some of the findings. For example, it could be that shared environmental factors between peers and school children support to explain some of the observed associations. Environmental and influential factors might be passed directly from peers to peers. Likewise, socialization influenced individual differences of peers and adolescent school children might cause certain kinds of peer's practices thereby changing the direction of influence. According to Witvliet et al. (2009) peers and other school children might engage in intention of aggressive behaviour in order to enhance their own social standing in the school environment, rather than because they are involved to peers of such groups.

## **VII. Recommendation**

The researcher is positively recommending that experts in primary care, teachers, counselors and friends of victims of aggressive behaviour are therefore enjoined to report cases of aggressive behaviour to necessary government agencies in their respective states as a way to ensure that school children who were been victimized receive suitable care and support before they cause pain and agony to themselves. Findings of this study were limited to the self report of intention of aggressive behaviour by the respondents of the study. The study thus suggests that future studies should survey the report from school counselors and children in secondary school who are been injured to facilitate the possible solution to put a stop to it and to enable them receive medical care on time.

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