

Effect of Family Communication Pattern on Aggressive Behavior of Preschool Children in Zagazig City

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Abstract

Background: Aggressive behavior is one of the most common behavioral issues. The family is a child's central and essential living environment. Furthermore, child's development is greatly influenced by the communication patterns of their family, especially during the critical preschool years.

Aim of the study: was to explore the effect of family communication pattern on aggressive behavior of preschool children in Zagazig city.

Subjects and Methods: Research design: A cross - sectional descriptive research design was used to carry out this study.

Setting: This study was carried out at four governmental nursery schools in Zagazig city.

Subjects: The study sample was consisted of 365caregivers and their preschool children selected randomly by using a stratified multistage sampling technique.

Tool of data collection: Data was collected by using three tools: Tool (I): An interview questionnaire. Tool (II): aggressive behavior scale. Tool (III): family communication pattern instrument.

Results: more than half of the preschool children had high level of aggressive behavior, and the most common type was physical, followed by verbal aggression. Additionally, more than sixty percent of the preschool children had poor level of family communication pattern.

Conclusion: Poor communication pattern has adversely impact on children behavior and increase their aggression. Moreover, parents' age, and mother work were negative predictors of aggressive behavior of children,

while father education, residence in rural, family size, and income were positive predictors of aggression among them.

Recommendation: Behavioral skills training programs to preschool children to prevent aggressive behavior. Health education interventions and counseling sessions directed to parents about behavioral modification, appropriate parenting practices, and how to manage aggressive behavior of their children.

Key words: *Aggressive Behavior, Family Communication, Preschool Children.*

Introduction

Preschool is regarded as laying the foundation for future academic success, social interaction, and emotional development ⁽¹⁾.

Aggressive behavior is a common disorder that manifests as unpleasant childhood experiences, but if it persists, it will negatively impact children's life in the future ⁽²⁾.

According to data on aggression and violence in early life, 25% of children between the ages of 17- and 30-months bite other children regularly or occasionally, and 70% of children between the ages of two and three beat other children. Similar to this, a different study found that among the most prevalent aggressive behaviors in young toddlers and preschoolers are persistent violent behaviors like temper tantrums ⁽³⁾.

Children that exhibit aggressive and disruptive behaviors in preschool struggle to follow classroom rules, are unable to collaborate during play, are maladaptive and restless, and may experience social exclusion in kindergarten or nursery school as a result of these issues ⁽⁴⁾.

A child's development is greatly influenced by the communication patterns of their family, especially during the critical preschool years. In addition to providing children with the fundamental life skills required for their overall development, effective family communication promotes emotional stability. The verbal and nonverbal exchanges between family members are included in family communication patterns. These patterns fall into a number of styles, including permissive, authoritative, authoritarian, and neglectful. Warmth, support, and open communication are traits of authoritative communication, which is frequently linked to favorable results including improved emotional health and cognitive growth. On the other hand, inattentive and authoritarian communication methods might impede a child's emotional development and the acquisition of important life skills ⁽⁵⁾.

The emergence of mental health illnesses can be prevented by having family members communicate openly about their feelings, worries, and disagreements. High levels of conflict and inadequate communication, on the other hand, are linked to a number of detrimental consequences. Positive Interaction families that communicate openly and supportively enable their children to express their feelings and ask for assistance when necessary. Children who grow up in emotionally supportive environments with appropriate communication patterns are

better able to learn coping mechanisms and emotional control. Children from such households are less prone to suffer from depression or anxiety. Family Dispute Conversely, there is a persistent correlation between children's poor mental health and high levels of family conflict ⁽⁶⁾.

Significance of the study:

Aggressive behavior among children has many effects. These include discipline problems, poor academic performance, and a lack of respect for others. Children who experience physical threats or aggressive behaviors from those taking care of them develop post-traumatic stress reactions, which may even result in several psychological problems ⁽⁷⁾. Positive family relationships and effective communication between parents and children have been associated with reduced social difficulties and aggressive behaviors ⁽⁸⁾.

Aim of the study:

The aim of the study was:

To explore the effect of family communication pattern on aggressive behavior of preschool children in Zagazig city.

Research objectives:

- Determine the prevalence of aggressive behavior among the preschool children.
- Determine the effect of the child characteristics on aggressive behavior of preschool children.
- Explore the relationship between family communication patterns and aggressive behavior of preschool children.

Subjects and methods:

Research design:

A cross - sectional descriptive research design was used to carry out this study.

Study setting:

The study was conducted in four governmental nursery schools in Zagazig city. These were namely Abdel-Lateef Hassanein, Experimental modern teacher, Om-Elmomenien, and Abdelaziz Aly nursery schools. These were randomly selected from two educational directorates available in Zagazig city.

Study subjects: A stratified multi-stage sample was selected from four governmental nursery schools in Zagazig city (n= 365). Represented by 91caregivers and their preschool children selected randomly from each nursery.

Tools of data collection:

Three tools were used to collect necessary data.

Tool I: Socio-demographic data It consists of three parts as follows:

Part I: Personal data of the studied sample such as; child's age, gender, residence, birth order.

Part II: Family data such as; parents' age, educational level, occupation.

Part III: Socio-economic data such as; family size, family income, mass media, number of rooms, physical environment (present as water, sewage dispose ...etc), and crowding index.

Tool II: Aggressive behavior scale. This tool was developed by **Amayreh**⁽⁹⁾ which is adopted by the American Association Scale for Adoptive Behavior. It includes 27 items and measures the degree of aggressive behavior. It deals with the following domains (Physical aggression, Verbal aggression, Aggression toward property).

Scoring system:

The scoring system of aggressive behavior scale depended on summing up the score of all scale items. Aggressive behavior scale used close-ended questions and response choices ranged from 'never' (2), 'sometimes' (1) and 'always' (0). Total grade = 54 point, the scale identified three main scores:

- Low aggressive behavior (13.5)
- Moderate aggressive behavior (13.5-18.8)
- High aggressive behavior (18.8-27)

Tool III: Family Communication Pattern Instrument. This tool was adopted from **Ritchie and Fitzpatrick**⁽¹⁰⁾ and consists of 26 items with 3 Likert responses measuring two underlying dimensions of family communication patterns (Conversation orientation is made up of 15 items, and Conformity orientation is made up of 11 items).

Scoring system:

The scoring system of family communication pattern depended on summing up the score of all scale items. The potential range for the scale items is (75%). communication pattern instrument used close-ended questions and response choices ranged from Agree (1), Sometimes (2), and Disagree (3). Total grade = 78 point, the scale identified two main scores: Good communication pattern: ($\geq 75\%$), and Poor communication pattern: ($< 75\%$).

Content validity& Reliability:

The tool was revised by a panel of 3 experts from the department of community health medicine, and community health nursing, who conducted content validity of all the items of the tool for relevance, clarity, comprehensiveness and understandability. All recommended modifications were made. Tool III: revised family communication patterns were translated into Arabic using the translate back translate technique to ensure their original validity. The reliability of the following parts of the tool was tested through measuring its internal consistency by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Reliability proved to be satisfactory as shown by the values of Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Tool II: Reliability for aggressive behavior scale was (0.962). Tool III: Reliability for family communication pattern scale was (0.870)

Fieldwork

After securing the official approvals for conducting the study, the researcher visited the selected nursery schools and met with each director of the five nurseries to explain the aim of the study and data collection procedure then, the researcher asked the directors to seek the permission of the parents of the selected children to participate in the study. The researcher met about 20-30 parents each time. The researcher started by introducing herself to parents, who were reassured that information obtained is strictly confidential. Once parents' consents were secured orally, the researcher asked them to fill in the questionnaire under her guidance who was available for any clarifications. The time needed to fill out the questionnaires ranged from 15-25minutes. The researcher stayed with the parents to answer any specific questions that arose during completing the data. The researcher checked it for their completeness. The researcher went to the selected nurseries 4 days per week from 8 AM to 1 PM. The duration of data collection lasted 2 months and started from beginning of October 2024 to the end of November 2024.

Pilot study:

A pilot study was carried out on 10% of the calculated total sample size to test clarity and applicability of the tools, the format of the questionnaire, comprehension of the items, and to estimate the exact time required for filling in the questionnaire sheet. No modification was recommended, so the participants involved in the pilot study were included from the main study sample.

Administrative and ethical considerations:

The study protocol was approved by the Nursing Research Ethics committee in the Faculty of Nursing, Zagazig University. Agreement for participation was taken from participants after full explanation of the aim of the study, as well as its procedures. They were given the opportunity to refuse participation, and they were notified that they can withdraw at any phase if they want without giving any reasons. As well they were assured that the information given would remain confidential and would be used for research purposes only. Official letters were issued from the dean of the faculty of nursing, Zagazig university to the Directorate of Education in Sharqia, then official letters sent to East and West educational administration, then letters sent to headmaster of the nursery to get their permission to conduct the study. The purpose of the study and its procedures was explained to them to get their agreement and cooperation. The researcher gave the headmaster of each nursery a copy of the formal letters. Then meetings and discussions were held between the researcher and the participants to obtain the data necessary to conduct the study.

Statistical analysis:

All data were collected, tabulated and statistically analyzed using SPSS 20.0 for windows (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA2011). Spearman correlation coefficient was calculated to assess relationship between study variables. Best fitting multiple linear regression was also used to predict factors which affect total scores of knowledges, related factors and adverse outcomes.

Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated to assess the reliability of the scales through their internal consistency

Results:

Table (1): clarifies that, 75.6% of the studied children were female, and the mean age of them was 4.26 ± 0.81 , Additionally, 92.6 % of the studied children were from urban origin, Furthermore, 46.0 % of them ranked first birth order.

Table (2): demonstrates personal and family characteristics of the studied parents. The mean age of the children's fathers were 35.36 ± 3.91 years and 73.4% of them had University and more education, While, 43.3% of them were Employees. on the other hand, the mean age of the children's mothers were 31.50 ± 3.87 years, 64.4 % of them had University and more education, and, 52.6% of them were working. Additionally, 50.4% of family's member were 3-4 persons, and 67.7% of families had sufficient income. While the majority 90.7% of the all studied sample had social media.

Figure (1): clears that; 58.6% of the preschool children had high level of aggressive behavior. Also, 27.7% of them had moderate level, and 13.7% of them had low level of aggressive behavior.

Figure (2): clears that; 65.8% of the preschool children had poor level of family communication pattern. And, 34.2% of them had good level.

Table (3): indicates that; 78.5% of the children with high level of aggressive behavior had poor communication pattern among their families, while the majority of children with low level of aggressive behavior 90.0% had good communication pattern. These differences were statistically highly significant ($P < 0.001$).

Table (4): illustrated presents statistically significant relation between all items of child characteristics and level of aggressive behavior ($P < 0.001$).

Table (5): shows that, parents' age and work were negative predictors of aggressive behavior among the preschool children. Meanwhile, residence, number of family members and income were positive predictors of aggressive behavior among them ($p < .001$).

Discussion:

Childhood aggression, especially in recent years, is a major health problem around the world. children's behavior and emotional problems has been the focus of research at home and abroad, and its main externalized behavioral problems such as aggressive behavior ⁽¹¹⁾.

Concerning the prevalence of aggressive behavior among the study sample, the current study results revealed that more than half of the studied children had high aggressive behavior. This might be related to the fact that preschool children characterized by intense activity and attributed to harsh over-controlling parenting or lack of parental warmth and positive encouragement during the preschool years.

In the same vein, a study conducted by **Aziz and Elsayedouda**⁽¹²⁾ in Egypt presented that more than half of children had aggression. This was supported by **Shokry, Mohamed and**

Hashem ⁽¹³⁾ in Egypt about externalizing behavioral problem of early children indicated that more than half of children had high aggressive behavior. Also, a study conducted by **Salaveraetal**⁽¹⁴⁾ in Spain indicated that more than half of children suffering from aggression.

On the contrary **Abdalla, Eldakhakhany and Mohamed** ⁽¹⁵⁾ in Egypt found that one fifth of children suffering from aggression. And, a study conducted by **Navitha etal**⁽¹⁶⁾ in India reported quarter of children with moderate level of hostile and aggressive problems. Also, a study by **Salimi et al**⁽¹⁷⁾ in Iran demonstrated that less than quarter of children suffering from aggression. It may be due to differences in the economic status or environment surrounding of the children.

Regarding the effect of the child characteristics on aggressive behavior, the current study results clarified that female sex were statistically significant negative predictors of aggressive behavior. This might due to this age of preschoolers, including females, may not have fully developed language skills, when they struggle to express their needs or desires verbally, frustration can turn into physical aggression like hitting, biting, or yelling. And girls may experience heightened stress to conform to gender expectations, and this tension could manifest as aggression. this study supported by **Kotb and Ahmed** ⁽¹⁸⁾. in Egypt revealed that about two-thirds of the sample were girls and more than half of them had high levels of aggression. Similarly, a study conducted by **González, del, and Abril** ⁽¹⁹⁾ in Spain indicated that no significant differences were found between gender but girls are inclined to bullying more often than boys. Similarly, **Safitri** ⁽²⁰⁾. is a study in Yogyakarta indicated that girls often show more aggression in the form of relational or verbal aggression, such as isolating friends, spreading gossip, or engaging in manipulative behavior.

On the contrary, a study conducted by **Assaf** ⁽²¹⁾. in Egypt revealed that Aggression was found to be significantly more among male children than female. Also, a study conducted by **Mouratidou etal** ⁽²²⁾. in Germany revealed that the boys in the kindergarten are more aggressive than the girls. Similarly, **Víllora etal** ⁽²³⁾ revealed significant differences between boys and girls in terms of overt aggressive behavior, with boys exhibiting more overt aggression. This might due to societal norms, which may be more accepting of such behavior from boys compared with girls. And boys often engage in more physical and rough play (wrestling, fighting) as part of their natural development which this type of play may lead to aggression.

In the light of the current study, the results revealed that the preschool children aged five and more years are suffering from aggression. this might due to their strong body building and violent media. A study agreed with **Nguyen and Truong** ⁽²⁴⁾ in Vietnam revealed that aggressive behavior is common in 5-year-old children. Also, a study conducted by **Acland et al.** ⁽²⁵⁾. in Canada demonstrated that increased proactive aggression, especially in middle childhood. Similarly, a study conducted by **Fields, Keller and El-Sheikh** ⁽²⁶⁾ in Greece revealed that aggression increased among children more than four years old.

Furthermore, results of the current study showed that first birth children are characterized by aggression more than those of middle and last ranks. This might due to that children learn to be aggressive from all those around them as parents and peers. And the first child gets all

the care, love and attention and all his needs are met. When another child comes, the child feels jealous and lacks attention, which draws the parents' attention to him so becomes more aggressive. This study supported by **Kadry, Ali, and Sorour (2017)** ⁽²⁷⁾. showed that first birth children are suffering from aggression more than middle and last children.

Concerning the family communication pattern among the study sample, the current study results clarified that nearly two third of children had poor family communication pattern. This might due to increase screen time, children or parents are often more engaged with their phones and computers than interacting with family, some parents might not have been taught effective communication or emotional expression themselves making it harder for them to model healthy communication for their children. this study agreed with **Su-Russell e tal** ⁽²⁸⁾. in USA revealed that two-thirds of the families had low family communication patterns. Also, a study conducted by **Sawitri** ⁽²⁹⁾. in Malaysia, demonstrated family communication was low in more than two third of the study sample.

On the contrary, another study conducted by **Merina** ⁽³⁰⁾ in Indonesia revealed that in the majority of the sample, family communication was moderate to high. It may be due to stronger emotional bonds as open and honest communication helps family members understand each other's emotions, needs and perspectives. And these families address disagreements and misunderstanding constructively.

Concerning the relation between family communication pattern and child's aggressive behavior, the current study showed that there was a statistically significant relation between communication pattern and child's aggressive behavior. The most of the study sample characterized by low aggressive behavior had good family communication pattern. This might be due to families that communicate effectively teach children how to manage and resolve conflicts in non-violent way, open and positive communication in families fosters emotional support and strong emotional bond between parents and children as when child feel heard, understood and valued they become less aggressiveness to seek attention.

Conclusion:

Based on the findings of the current study, it can be concluded that Aggressive behavior is a common behavioral problem among children, more than half of them exhibited high aggressive behavior and the most common type was physical, followed by verbal aggression. Also, the child sex (female) and the ranking of the child (first) were negative predictors of the aggressive behavior among the children. Furthermore, Poor family communication pattern has adversely impact on children behavior and increase their aggression.

Recommendation:

In view of the main results of the study the following recommendations were derived and suggested:

- Behavioral skills training programs to preschool children to prevent aggressive behavior.

- Health education interventions and counseling sessions directed to parents about behavioral modification, appropriate parenting practices, and how to manage aggressive behavior of their children.
- Health education program to improving communication style among families.
- Further research studies concerning the topic of aggression in Egypt to explore the other risk factors.

Results:

Table 1: frequency distribution of pre-school children by their personal characteristics (n=365).

personal characteristics	No.	%
Child sex		
Male	89	24.4
Female	276	75.6
Age		
3 yrs	62	17.0
4 yrs	168	46.0
5 and more	135	37.0
Mean ±SD	4.26±0.81years	
Ranking		
First	168	46.0
Second	79	21.6
Third	118	32.3

Table (2): Frequency distribution of preschool children by their family data (n=365).

Family data	No.	%
Father age		
<30	50	13.7
30-<35	44	12.1
35-<40	229	62.7
40+	42	11.5
Mean $\pm$SD	35.36$\pm$3.91years	
Father education		

Secondary education	97	26.6
University and more	268	73.4
Job		
Employee	158	43.3
Professional	91	24.9
Free worker	116	31.8
Mother age		
<30	120	32.9
30-<35	117	32.1
35+	128	35.1
Mean ±SD	31.50±3.87years	
Mother education		
Primary education	16	4.4
Secondary education	114	31.2
University and more	235	64.4
Job		
Working	192	52.6
Not working	174	47.4
Family member		
3-4	184	50.4
5-6	181	49.6
Income		
Sufficient	247	67.7
Insufficient	89	24.4
Sufficient and save	29	7.9
Residence		
Rural	27	7.4
Urban	338	92.6

Figure (1): Percentage distribution of study preschool children by their total aggressive behavior level (n=365).

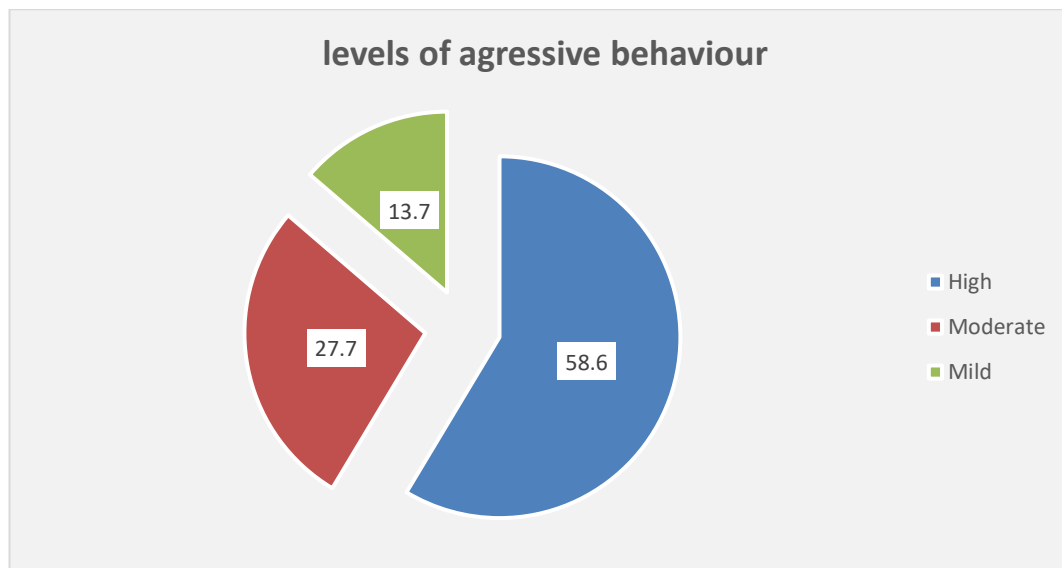


Figure (2): Percentage distribution of preschool children by their levels of family communication pattern (n=365).

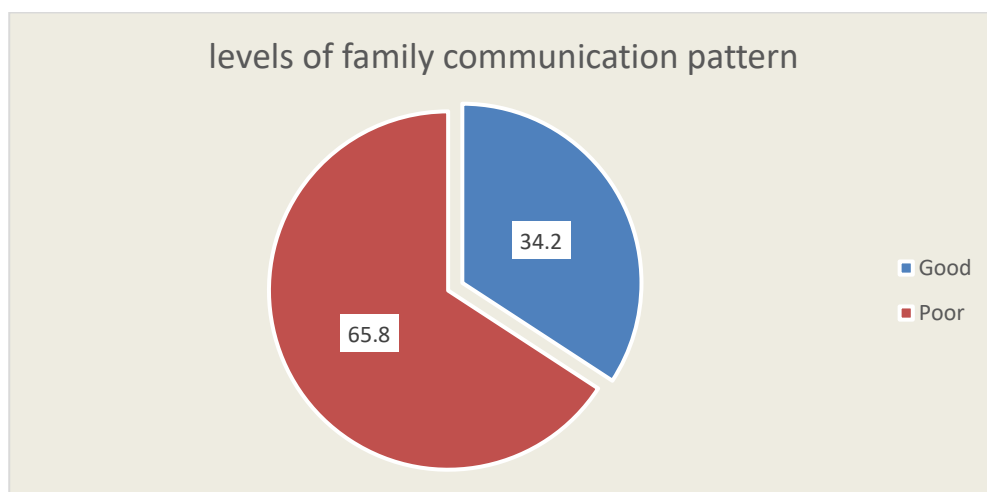


Table (3): Relationship between family communication pattern and aggressive behavior among the preschool children.

Total communication pattern	Total aggressive behavior							
	Low (n=50)		Moderate (n=101)		High (n=214)		X ²	P-value
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
▪ Poor	5	10.0	67	66.3	168	78.5	84.48	.000**
▪ Good	45	90.0	34	33.7	46	21.5		

Table (4): Relationship between aggressive behavior level and child characteristics.

Child characteristics	Aggressive behavior						X ²	P-value
	Mild (n=50)		Moderate (n=101)		High (n=214)			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Child sex								
Male	0	0.0	2	2.0	87	40.7	74.34	.000**
Female	50	100.0	99	98.0	127	59.3		
Age								
3 yrs	0	0.0	9	8.9	53	24.8	127.17	.000**
4 yrs	24	48.0	90	89.1	54	25.2		
5 and more	26	52.0	2	2.0	107	50.0		
Ranking								
First	0	0.0	44	43.6	124	57.9	68.73	.000**
Second	26	52.0	29	28.7	24	11.2		
Third	24	48.0	28	27.7	66	30.8		

Table (5): linear regression between child characteristics and total aggressive behavior.

Child characteristics	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	82.784	8.926		9.275	.000
Child sex	-12.207	.828	-.416	-14.743	.000**
Age	-.439	.447	-.028	-.984	.326
Ranking	-5.936	.627	-.412	-9.463	.000**

Dependent Variable: total aggressive behavior score

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