

## AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN MOSUL

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Aggression is a behavior aimed to injure another person, either directly or indirectly. Most young children learned negative reactions from adults that tend to make the child's behavior worse with time. Imitation was the main way in which children learned to be aggressive. **Objective:** To show aggression rate among adolescents in Mosul city after ISIS crisis. **Materials and methods:** A cross sectional study was conducted in Mosul city including both sides (right and left). The sample was chosen by stratified random sampling. A total of 1000 adolescents aged 11-21 years at secondary schools were involved in the study. Data were collected by face to face interview using Aggression—Problem Behavior Frequency Scale questionnaire. Chi square test was used and P value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant. **Results:** There were 916 (91.6%) aggressive students in the study sample. Physical (555, 85%), verbal (587, 96%), and relational (592, 86.6%) aggression were significantly higher among males than females (p = 0.00). Students aged 10 – 13 years showed significantly more physical (195, 85.9%), verbal (203, 89.4%), and relational (197, 86.8%) aggression than other age groups (p = 0.04, p = 0.00 respectively). Nondisplaced adolescents showed significantly more physical, verbal and social aggressive behavior than displaced ones (446, 448, 398; 89.4%, 89.8%, 79.8% respectively). **Conclusions:** Aggressive behavior was high among Mosul adolescents. Young teens, male gender, and no displacement during ISIS invasion were determinant factors for aggression in Mosul.

### INTRODUCTION

Aggression is a behavior aimed to injure another person, either directly expressed (physical aggression) or indirectly (spreading rumors or psychological insult).<sup>[1]</sup>

Societal modernization leads to considerable increase in aggression rate among adolescents that might be due to perception of aggression.<sup>[2]</sup> It is documented that aggression is a learned trans generation behavior.<sup>[3]</sup> Most young children learned negative reactions from adults that tend to make the child's behavior worse with time. Imitation was the main way in which children learned to be aggressive. Therefore, early exposure to media violence increases the risk for later aggressive behavior.<sup>[4]</sup> Childhood adversity such as maltreatment, trauma (sexual, emotional abuse, etc.) increases the risk for antisocial, violent, impulsive and aggressive behaviors in adulthood.<sup>[5]</sup> Besides, exposure to conflicts and wars may increase the possibility of antisocial behavior.

In Iraq, literature showed a high prevalence rate of aggression among school children.<sup>[6]</sup> In a previous

communication, a high rate of emotional negative attitude was reported.<sup>[7, 8, 9]</sup> Therefore, this work was aimed to show aggression rate among adolescents in Mosul city after ISIS crisis.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross sectional study was conducted in Mosul city including both sides (right and left). The sample was chosen by stratified random sampling. A total of 1000 adolescents aged 11-21 years at secondary schools were involved in the study. Data were collected by face to face interview using Aggression—Problem Behavior Frequency Scale questionnaire.<sup>[10]</sup> Chi square test was used to show the influence of dependent variable (aggressive behaviors) on the independent variables (sociodemographic factors). P value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

### Operational Definitions

**Physical aggression:** A behavior causing or threatening physical harm toward others. It includes hitting, kicking, biting, using weapons, and breaking toys or other possessions.<sup>[11]</sup>

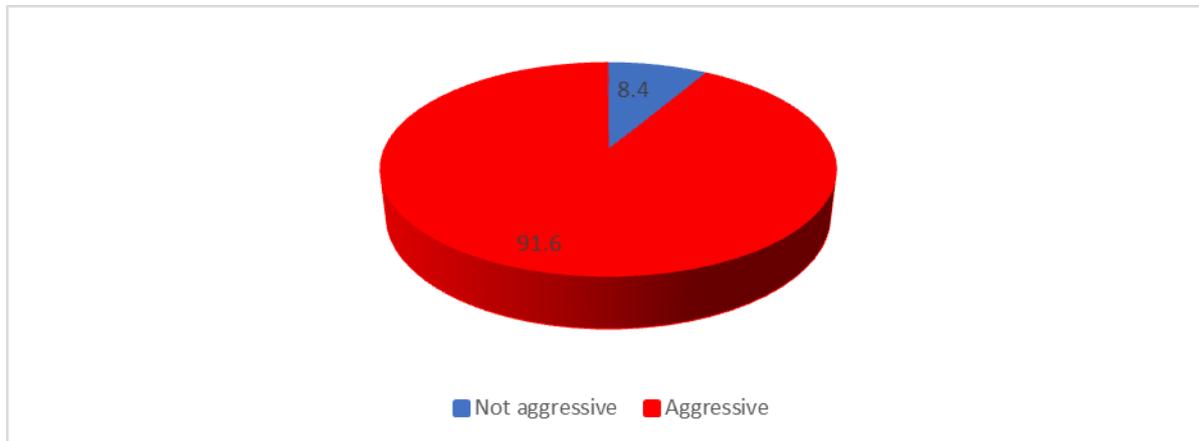
Nonphysical aggression: An aggression without physical harm. It includes verbal and relational aggression.<sup>[12]</sup>

Verbal aggression: Hurting another with spoken words such as screaming, swearing, name calling.<sup>[6]</sup>

Relational (social) aggression: Intentionally harming another person’s social relationships, by gossiping about another person, excluding others from their friendship, etc.<sup>[12]</sup>

**RESULTS**

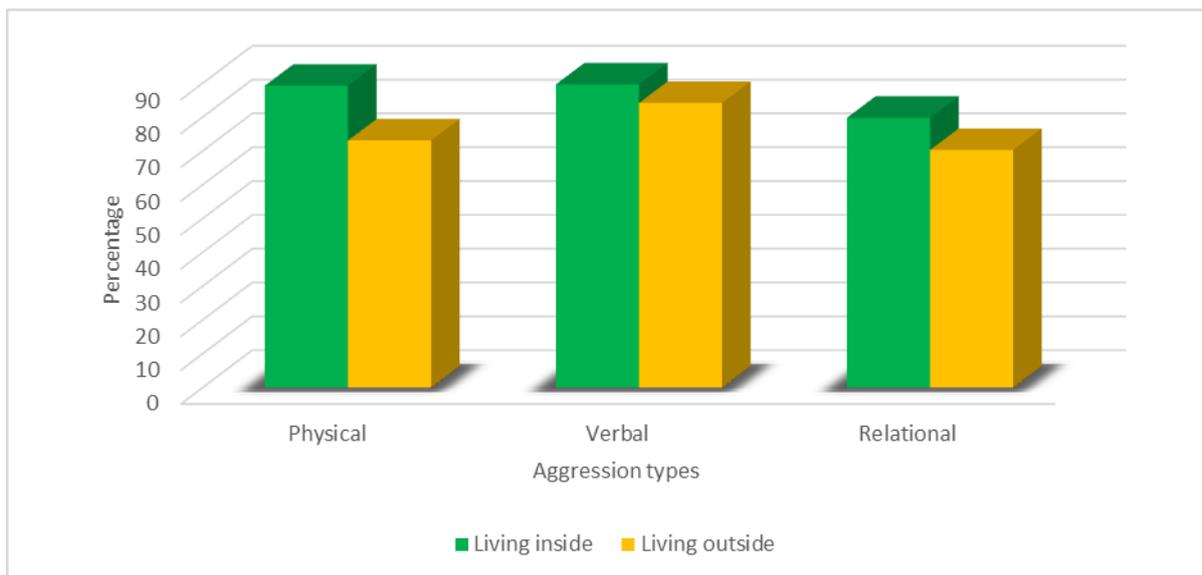
A total of 1000 students was participated in the study. Out of total, 519 participants were from the right side of Mosul. There were 916 (91.6%) aggressive students in the study sample. Figure (1) shows aggression score among studied sample.



**Figure 1: Distribution of aggression among studied adolescents.**

Distribution of aggression types according to area of living during ISIS invasion is shown in figure (2). All aggression types (physical, verbal, and relational) were

higher among those who stayed in Mosul during ISIS invasion than those who left their homes (89.3%, 89.7%, 79.8%, respectively).



**Figure 2: Distribution of aggression types according to area of living during ISIS invasion.**

Table (1) shows distribution of aggression in relation to demographic factors. Physical (555, 85%), verbal (587, 96%), and relational (592, 86.6%) aggression were significantly higher in males than females ( $p = 0.00$ ). Students aged 10 – 13 years showed significantly more physical (195, 85.9%), verbal (203, 89.4%), and relational (197, 86.8%) aggression than other age groups ( $p = 0.04$ ,  $p = 0.00$  respectively). Adolescents stayed in Mosul during ISIS invasion showed significantly more

aggressive behavior than those who left Mosul (physical 446, 448, 398; 89.4%, 89.8%, 79.8% respectively).

**Table (1): Distribution of aggressive behaviors in relation to demographic factors.**

Variables		Total		Physical aggression		Verbal aggression		Relational aggression	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sex	Male	653	65.3	555	85	587	96	529	86.6
	Female	347	34.7	257	74.1	283	92.7	221	72.5
				$\chi^2 = 17.7$ d.f. = 1 P = 0.00		$\chi^2 = 13.9$ d.f. = 1 P = 0.00		$\chi^2 = 36.3$ d.f. = 1 P = 0.00	
Age	10 – 13	227	22.7	195	85.9	203	89.4	197	86.8
	14 – 17	607	60.7	496	81.7	532	87.6	443	73
	18 – 21	166	16.6	121	72.9	135	81.3	110	66.3
				$\chi^2 = 10.9$ d.f. = 2 P = 0.04		$\chi^2 = 6.1$ d.f. = 2 P = 0.04		$\chi^2 = 24.9$ d.f. = 2 P = 0.00	
During ISIS invasion	Stayed	499	49.9	446	89.4	448	89.8	398	79.8
	Left	501	50.1	366	73.1	422	84.2	352	70.3
				$\chi^2 = 43.6$ d.f. = 1 P = 0.00		$\chi^2 = 6.8$ d.f. = 1 P = 0.00		$\chi^2 = 12$ d.f. = 1 P = 0.00	

**DISCUSSION**

Aggression is a disorganizing emotional response. It is due to frustration based on emotional disturbance and hostility. It becomes a way of releasing or showing emotions; one of the most common reasons for referring children and adolescents to mental health consults.<sup>[6,13]</sup> Early aggressive behavior may lead to alcohol and drug abuse, violence, depression, suicide attempts, spouse abuse, and neglectful and abusive parenting.<sup>[14]</sup>

High aggressive behavior was noticed among studied adolescents (91.6%), especially among those who stayed in Mosul during ISIS invasion (94.2%). This figure is much higher than the reported ones in Baghdad.<sup>[6,15]</sup> It might be explained by widespread violence after 2014. Exposure to violence is a determinant factor for aggression.<sup>[16]</sup>

Verbal aggression was the highest among teens than physical and relational aggression (89.7%). It is the easiest form. For teens, it is a way to express their thoughts and emotional disturbance.

Physical, verbal, and relational aggression were significantly higher among males than females (p = 0.00). Males were socialized into roles that encourage higher levels of aggression. This finding is similar to that in Egypt<sup>[17]</sup>, and Qatar.<sup>[18]</sup>

Physical, verbal, and relational aggression were significantly higher among teens aged 10 – 13 years than other age groups (p = 0.004, p = 0.00 respectively). This might be explained by early exposure to violence which in turn affect their behavior and became more aggressive than others. Imitation is a feature of children and young adolescents.<sup>[4]</sup>

The studied aggression forms were found to be significantly higher among those who stayed in Mosul

during ISIS invasion than those who left Mosul (P = 0.00). Violence was everywhere in Mosul. Direct exposure to trauma affect greatly on individuals behavior especially children and adolescents.<sup>[5]</sup>

**CONCLUSIONS**

Aggressive behavior was high among Mosul adolescents. Young teens, male gender, and no displacement during ISIS invasion were determinant factors for aggression in Mosul.

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