

Unprototypical forms of aggression among children and adolescents – a meta-analysis

It has often been suggested that males are more aggressive than females. But, in the majority of studies of aggression in children and adolescents only overt (e.g. physical aggression) and/or verbal forms of aggression have been examined. During the last two decades, a discussion emerged concerning gender-specific forms of aggressive behavior: Although boys are more overtly aggressive than girls, it could be, that girls are not less aggressive than boys, but instead express their aggressive behavior in a different way. Several empirical studies differentiated (next to verbal and physical = prototypical forms of aggression) – between indirect (harm delivered circuitously, using social manipulations), social (actions directed at damaging the other's self-esteem, social status or both) and relational aggression/bullying (behavior intended to damage another person's peer relations = unprototypical forms of aggression). The empirical results are somewhat controversial concerning unprototypical aggressive behavior. The purpose of the current, quantitative meta-analysis is to determine whether "unprototypical" aggressors are more likely to be boys or girls or whether similar numbers of boys and girls are classifiable as "unprototypical" aggressors. We identified about 35 primary studies, including many yet unpublished data sets (e.g. conference papers, posters). An estimation of each study's effect size, d_i (the difference between the means of the groups of boys and girls, divided by the pooled standard deviation, according to procedures described in Hedges & Becker, 1986; odds ratios are calculated for simple frequencies and transformed to d , according to procedures described in Haddock et al., 1998) and the composite mean weighted effect size (d_c) are calculated. Important mediators, like age or method of measurement/source of information (e.g. peer-nomination, self-inventory), are supposed to have an impact on the magnitude of the effect sizes. Results concerning age differences (developmental trends) and extreme groups (e.g. scoring 1 SD above group mean) are presented.

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