

Studying Investigates Methods for Handling Aggressive Behavior in Primary School Students

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Abstract:

Teenage hostility is a prevalent issue, with numerous youngsters asserting they have encountered bullying or mistreatment from others. Cost-effective strategies are essential for addressing this concern. The present investigation examined the influence of playful skirmishes on the perception of violence among elementary school pupils. In a study emulating prior research involving 13-year-old middle schoolers, 68 fourth and fifth-grade students (35 boys and 33 girls, mean age = 9.55 ± 0.5 years) engaged in a regulated play-fighting school intervention twice weekly for four consecutive weeks utilizing a crossover longitudinal approach. On three occasions, subsequent to the play-fighting intervention (A2) and during the baseline period (A0 and A1), participants completed the 12-item abbreviated version of the Aggression Questionnaire. Across the three assessment points, a repeated measures ANOVA revealed significant intra-subject variances ($F=2.91$, $P = 0.003$). Verbal aggression, hostility, and anger exhibited substantial declines at A1, whereas only physical aggression demonstrated a notable decrease post-intervention compared to A1 ($A1 = 5.45 \pm 2.47$; $A2 = 5.04 \pm 2.41$; $F = 5.22$, $p = 0.005$). The results uphold the positive outcomes of earlier investigations in early adolescence and provide initial insights into the potential efficacy of incorporating play fighting within a physical education curriculum to address children's disruptive and aggressive behaviors.

Keywords: handling aggressive, children, primary school, physical education.

1. Introduction

A significant number of young individuals report incidents of harassment or abuse, highlighting that aggressive behavior among youth is a worldwide issue (Carraro A, Gobbi E, 2018). In Vietnam, the focal country of this investigation, approximately 45.5% of girls and 46.7% of boys between the ages of 10 and 16 disclosed experiencing various forms of violence, disrespect, or unpleasant behavior within the previous year.

To combat adolescent aggression and prevent its recurrence, urgent action is imperative, necessitating cost-effective solutions. As per Wilson (2015), there is mounting evidence suggesting that health-oriented interventions such as physical education and organized sports can consistently impact various social and psychological outcomes related to peer hostility. The school setting, particularly physical education classes, presents an ideal milieu for identifying and addressing behavioral and socioemotional issues in children and adolescents (Gobbi & Carraro, 2017; Thuc, D.C, 2017). Research underscores that engagement in organized sports and physical education can positively influence both prosocial and antisocial behaviors (Rutten et al., 2007). Programs emphasizing physical activities with substantial physical contact, like go-fighting, have been found to provide particularly valuable experiences in the social and emotional realms.

Go-fighting is a physically demanding sport characterized by vigorous, intense, and fast-paced play. It encompasses vigorous physical forms of engagement and education, including pursuing, dodging, grappling, striking, grappling, open-hand touching, swinging, and often tumbling over each other (Carraro, Gobbi, 2018). While resembling actual combat, play fighting typically does not result in harm (Schäfer & Smith, 1996). Participants must also alternate roles during play, fostering productive social exchanges that enhance their emotional, cognitive, and social skills (Pellegrini & Smith, 1998; Huynh, T. K, 2003; Dodge, K. A., et al, 2003). Go-fighting represents a structured version of the unstructured rough-and-tumble play engaged in by children (Lillard et al., 2013). Lapierre and Aucouturier (2001) identified struggle as the driving force and primary impulse behind all human behavior, constituting one of the fundamental instincts. While it may be impossible to entirely eradicate innate aggressive tendencies, they can be

managed and redirected towards behaviors acceptable in society (Gobbi & Carraro, 2017; Thuc, D.C, 2017). Players must exhibit inherently fair behavior during playfighting, restraining excessive physical aggression and adhering to respect for opponents and game regulations (Olivier, 1995). By enabling students to express their emotions in a controlled and safe environment, we can facilitate their acquisition of self-control over violent impulses and foster respect for others.

Although there is limited research on the impacts of instructing playful combat, particularly in an academic setting, there are indications suggesting that this type of physical activity could diminish participants' aggressive behaviors (Carraro et al., 2018). The reasoning behind this decrease is that engaging in non-threatening tactile encounters inherent to play-fighting may lower the probability of interpreting ambiguous actions as hostile (Hernandez & Anderson, 2015). Students in fourth and fifth grade at an elementary school were asked to rate their own aggression before and after an eight-session play-fighting program. The study used a crossover longitudinal framework to look at the data.

2. Materials & methods

The research enlisted 39 male and 38 female participants, averaging 9.55 ± 0.5 years in age, from fourth- and fifth-grade classes. Following data cleansing, analysis involved 68 students—35 boys and 33 girls—while 9 were excluded due to incomplete evaluations (missing data on collection day).

Utilizing the Aggression Questionnaire (AQ; Bryant & Smith, 2001), a condensed 12-item version was employed. Derived from the widely used 29-item AQ (Buss & Perry, 1992), the measure consisted of four sets of three items each: physical hostility, verbal hostility, ire, and animosity. Respondents assessed each statement on a spectrum from 1 (not characteristic of me at all) to 5 (entirely characteristic of me), where elevated scores indicated increased levels of self-declared aggression.

Parents were briefed on the study's objective and provided written informed consent before their children's participation, following approval from both the Ethics Committee and school administration. Participants completed the 12-item AQ three times: twice prior to intervention (baseline conditions, A0-A1) and once post-intervention (A2). Students independently filled out the questionnaire under teacher and researcher supervision. Play fighting sessions, led by a professional researcher with classroom instructors' support, were conducted during the planned two-hour physical education classes weekly. Over four weeks (A1–A2) of intervention, eight play fighting lessons were conducted, replicating a prior study involving 13-year-old junior high school students (Carraro et al., 2018). Sessions were conducted on gym mats to prevent fall-related injuries, featuring games and activities progressively escalating physical confrontations through large-body play, exercises, and movement scenarios involving racing, pursuing, escaping, kicking, grappling, and wrestling.

Statistical Examination: Average, deviation from the mean, and Cronbach's alpha were calculated for each of the four AQ subcategories. A t-test with independent samples investigated distinctions between classrooms and genders. For within-participant variances across all AQ subcategories at three assessment points (A0, A1, and A2), a repeated measures ANOVA (RM-ANOVA) was employed, followed by post-hoc multiple comparison analysis. The threshold for significance was established at $p < 0.05$.

3. Results

The Cronbach's alphas for the four subscales were as follows: verbal aggression ($\alpha=.58$), physical aggression ($\alpha=.69$), anger ($\alpha=.61$), and hostility ($\alpha=.69$). The lowest Cronbach's alpha values were observed in verbal aggression and anger, aligning with prior studies on Asian adolescents conducted by Ang R.P. (2007) and Italian young adolescents by Carraro and colleagues (2018).

Across the three assessment intervals, RM-ANOVA indicated significant within-subject differences ($F=2.91$, $p = 0.001$) (refer to Table 1). Multiple comparison tests demonstrated decreased levels of hostility ($p = 0.006$), anger ($p = 0.026$), and verbal aggression ($p = 0.052$) between A0 and A1. While all subscales' mean values exhibited slight declines in the A1-A2 comparison, only physical aggression's mean value showed a notable reduction ($p = 0.025$).

Table 1: illustrates the results for the 12-item AQ subscales across the three assessment periods.

Titles	A0, Mean \pm SD	A1, Mean \pm SD	A2, Mean \pm SD	t	P
Anger	7.70 \pm 2.59	7.08 \pm 2.43	6.82 \pm 2.19	6.01	0.026
Physical Aggression	5.80 \pm 3.00	5.47 \pm 2.49	5.05 \pm 2.42	5.14	0.001
Hostility	8.51 \pm 3.22	7.16 \pm 2.82	7.39 \pm 2.43	5.48	0.006
Verbal Aggression	5.91 \pm 2.02	5.34 \pm 1.95	5.35 \pm 2.09	4.17	0.052

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, 68 pupils in the fourth and fifth grades evaluated the efficacy of a brief martial arts program as an addition to their self-reported physical education regimen. The results indicate that schools can impact distinct facets of self-reported aggression: participants notably reduced their levels of animosity, rage, and aggressiveness, possibly linked to the school's focus on delivering comprehensive education beyond academic accomplishments. However, students only reported a significant reduction in physical violence upon the introduction of the fighting program into the school's physical education syllabus. These results align with prior research by Carraro et al. (2018); Wilson, S. J., & Lipsey, M. W. (2007), supporting the notion that supervised play fighting within an organized school setting can aid students in managing their aggressive tendencies [Kirsh, (2006); Nhambura, M. (2020)]. Through go-fighting, children can gain practical experience in self-restraint and physical prowess management amid potentially risky or unpleasant physical interactions.

Several constraints in this study hinder the generalizability of the findings. These include reliance on self-reported measures, a limited number of participants, a single-group study design, a short 4-week program duration, and the absence of follow-up assessments. Nonetheless, these findings can provide insights for future research with longer durations and larger sample sizes, investigations in schools facing significant peer violence, and studies incorporating structured observation alongside self-report measures. Teaching go-fighting to elementary students requires careful planning, adequate supervision, clear guidelines for gameplay, fostering a positive learning atmosphere, and addressing concerns regarding overly aggressive conduct. Educators, especially those in special and physical education, can benefit from learning about this topic and receiving specialized training to facilitate inclusive activities [Greguol, Gobbi, & Carraro, (2013); Dodge, K. A., et al (1997)]. Engaging in playful combat can positively influence peer aggression and enhance interpersonal bonds beyond the confines of the physical education setting. Such effects can contribute to creating a more welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for learning (Carraro A, Gobbi E, 2018).

There is currently limited research on the effects of go-fighting on youth's violent behaviors [Carraro A, Gobbi E, 2018; Craig, W. M. (1998)]. The present study offers initial insights into the potential effects of integrating such pursuits into a school's physical education curriculum on children's social and emotional development.

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