

Aggressive Behavior in Older Preschoolers: Implications, Causes, and Prevention Strategies

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Abstract: *Aggressive behavior in older preschoolers has long been a nuisance to kindergarten teachers and parents, and it is a common yet difficult problem in society. This study recorded the proportion, context, and reasons for aggressive behavior in older preschoolers at the Tianfu New Area Experimental Kindergarten in Chengdu. Combining the physical and mental development patterns of older preschoolers, methods such as observation records and situational analysis were used. Through real confrontation, observation, analysis, and exploration, effective ways to reduce and correct aggressive behavior in older preschoolers were found, with the aim of helping teachers cope with such behaviors.*

Keywords: Preschool education, Older preschoolers, Aggressive behavior, Intervention strategies.

1. Introduction

Preschool period is the foundational period of life, and education during this period is of significant importance for an individual's lifelong development [1]. However, in kindergartens, we often see children hitting, biting, and other forms of aggressive behavior. Some children exhibit obvious aggressive tendencies, which directly interfere with the normal operation of kindergartens. Especially in older preschool classes, where children's verbal and motor skills have developed to a certain extent but they still lack strong self-regulation skills, they are easily agitated by external factors, leading to aggressive behavior [2]. Based on observations in real life, these forms of aggressive behavior exist in different age groups in kindergartens, but are most prominent in older preschool classes, causing serious physical and even psychological harm to children. It is urgent to correct aggressive behavior. Teachers and parents need to timely discover and intervene in children's aggressive behavior based on appropriate research conclusions, ultimately ensuring that children's social skills improve rapidly.

2. Analysis and Review of the Connotation of Aggressive Behavior in Older Preschoolers

2.1 Analysis of the Connotation of Aggressive Behavior in Older Preschoolers

There has been a large amount of research on aggressive behavior, and scholars have summarized it from different starting points, resulting in different definitions. Domestic researchers often start from the overall process of aggression and define aggressive behavior as intentionally harming others [3-5]. Foreign researchers tend to analyze from the perspective of the subject of the event, focusing on the psychology of the aggressor and the victim defining aggressive behavior as an intentional act of harm that causes the intended victim to want to escape [6-8]. For children aged 3-6, there are many manifestations of aggressive behavior: physical strikes, verbal abuse, nickname-calling, etc., which

can be broadly categorized into physical aggressive behavior, verbal aggressive behavior, and relational aggressive behavior. At the same time, the targets of aggression are mostly others, with a few being themselves. Combining the above definitions, aggressive behavior in children is defined as a problematic behavior where children intentionally target themselves or others with physical, verbal, and relational attacks that cause harm to the victims.

2.2 Related Research Review

Research on children's aggressive behavior in China can be traced back to 1988. As of April 8, 2024, a search on CNKI using "preschoolers" and "aggressive behavior" as keywords retrieved 1,123 related documents. After analysis and summary, it was found that the research scope on children's aggressive behavior in China is relatively narrow, with more studies on why aggressive behavior occurs, correction methods, and influencing factors, while there are fewer studies on understanding, analysis, and prevention.

2.2.1 Research on factors influencing children's aggressive behavior.

Researches have complex explanations for the factors influencing children's aggressive behavior. Biological theory suggests that parents' genetics affect children's nerves, mood, and personality, which can increase or decrease aggressive behavior. Gini Gianluca believes that children with a high probability of aggressive behavior have lower balance and coordination functions between the two hemispheres of the brain, weaker anti-interference ability in the left hemisphere, and weaker gestalt cognitive ability in the right hemisphere [9]. Sociological theory views children's aggressive behavior as a result of observational learning, proposing that most children's aggressive behavior comes from imitating adults, peers, and media such as television. Meyer Eric believes that it is important for a clinician to consider the presence of ADHD symptomatology, even below a diagnosis of ADHD, when a young child exhibits aggressive behaviors and thus take this into account in the therapeutic work undertaken with

the child and his family [10].

2.2.1 Research on correction methods for children's aggressive behavior.

Researchers have relatively rich studies on correction methods for children's aggressive behavior, including behavioral correction, play correction, and experience correction. Researchers such as DiLalla, Lisabeth F. showed that children at genetic risk for early rule-breaking were more likely to have partners who behaved more aggressively, suggesting that this was evoked behavior during play. Some evidence of an early bloomer' phenomenon emerged via early difficult temperament and parent-rated delinquency significantly predicting later delinquency [11]. Ahemaitijiang Nigela showed that for children demonstrating stronger physiological synchrony with their parents, higher levels of parental psychological control and parental emotion dysregulation predicted their more aggressive behavior [12]. In addition, measures such as reading therapy, art therapy, and environmental consequence methods have been used to reduce the occurrence of aggressive behavior and help children control their emotions.

3. The Real Manifestations of Aggressive Behavior in Older Preschoolers

3.1 Research Records of Aggressive Behavior in Older Preschoolers

3.1.1 Different frequencies of aggressive behavior occurrence

This Based on the author's observation of a day's life in a kindergarten senior class, considering the scientific nature and rationality of each link, and according to the educational value, the daily activities of senior class children are divided into the following five types: transition activities, life activities, physical activities, play activities, and learning activities.

After continuous observation and registration for one week, a total of 56 instances of aggressive behavior were recorded. Through statistical analysis of the number of times children exhibited aggressive behavior under different types of activities, it was found that the most frequent occurrences of aggressive behavior in senior class children were during life activities, totaling 25 times, accounting for 44.64% of the total; play activities followed, with a total of 14 times, accounting for 25%; next were physical activities and learning activities, which were recorded 9 times and 5 times respectively, accounting for 16.07% and 8.92% respectively; while the least occurrences of aggressive behavior were during transition activities, with only 3 incidents, accounting for 5.35%. (Table 1)

Table 1: Frequency of Aggressive Behavior under Different Types of Activities

	Occurrence Time	Occurrence Proportion
Transition Activities	3	5.35%
Life Activities	25	44.64%
Physical Activities	9	16.07%
Play Activities	14	25.00%
Learning Activities	5	8.92%

3.1.2 There are different manifestations of children's

aggressive behavior.

During a week's observation in the senior class, 56 instances of aggressive behavior were recorded, which manifested in three ways: verbal aggression, physical aggression, and indirect aggression. Among them, verbal aggression occurred 23 times, accounting for 41.07% of the total; physical aggression occurred 14 times, accounting for 25.00%; indirect aggression occurred 19 times, accounting for 33.93%. (Table 2)

Table 2: Manifestations of Aggressive Behavior

	Occurrence Time	Occurrence Proportion
Verbal Activities	23	41.07%
Physical Activities	14	25.00%
Indirect Activities	19	33.93%

3.1.3 Gender differences in children's aggressive behavior

Observation records found that the proportion of aggressive behavior between the same genders was larger, totaling 33 times, accounting for 58.93%. Among them, the number of times boys attacked each other was 10 times, accounting for 17.86%; the number of times girls attacked each other was 13 times, accounting for 23.21%. Aggressive behavior between different genders totaled 15 times, accounting for 34%. (Table 3)

Table 3: Gender Differences in Aggressive Behavior

	Occurrence Time	Occurrence Proportion
Boys with Boys	33	58.93%
Boys with Girls	10	17.86%
Girls with Girls	13	23.21%

3.2 Children's Aggressive Behavior Caused by Special Periods

The COVID-19 pandemic has isolated children and their parents at home. According to online interviews conducted by the author, children have begun to exhibit aggressive behavior at home. Combining interviews with teachers and parents, specific manifestations of aggressive behavior in senior class children were collected as follows:

3.2.1 Changes in social skills accompanied by aggressive behavior

Before being isolated at home, Child A was cheerful and lively, but became shy and restrained at home, hiding when guests came and accompanied by verbal attacks such as cursing and mockery; Child B complained about wanting to go out to play every day, but suddenly refused to go out one day, and even with repeated explanations that wearing a mask would prevent infection, the child was resistant and exhibited physical attacks such as hitting and scratching family members.

3.2.2 Emotional instability leading to aggressive behavior

After being isolated at home for a week, Child C became very irritable and easily angered, and would use aggressive behavior to demonstrate their "strength." When the parent asked the child why they were unhappy, the child replied that this way they could overcome their inner fear.

3.2.3 Excessive behavior

Child D exhibited behavior that was clearly beyond the norm at home. For example, excessive hand washing and overly supervising the hygiene habits of adults, and if the adults did not "obey," the child would force them to "obey," resulting in aggressive behavior.

3.3 Strategies for Teachers to Deal with Children's Aggressive Behavior

After being recommended by the head teacher, analyzed through interviews by the author, and based on basic observations, a senior class child in the kindergarten—male child Xiao He (pseudonym)—had frequent aggressive behavior, so he was selected as a case study for this research, summarizing different strategies adopted by teachers to deal with various types of aggressive behavior.

3.3.1 Warning and criticism

Case 1: While queuing to wash hands, Xiao He forcefully pulled and squeezed the two children in front of him to the back, wanting to be the first in line. One of the children complained to the teacher, who immediately warned and criticized Xiao He: "You cause trouble every day, it looks like I'll have to invite your mother to the kindergarten to manage you!" After being criticized, Xiao He immediately stopped his aggressive behavior, but started squeezing the children again after the teacher walked away.

In this case, Xiao He's "pulling" and "squeezing" constitute physical aggression, and the teacher used negative vocabulary such as "cause trouble every day" to criticize Xiao He, and threatened with "inviting your mother to the kindergarten" regarding Xiao He's aggressive behavior.

3.3.2 Cold handling

Case 2: During recess exercise time, Xiao He was very active and knocked over a child next to him, who then hit back hard. Xiao Han, not to be outdone, went to push Xiao He, and Xiao He began to scratch Xiao Han's face with his hands, leaving obvious red marks on Xiao Han's face. The teacher and the author separately pulled Xiao Han and Xiao He apart, with the teacher holding Xiao Han, who had already stopped attacking. The author was holding Xiao He, clearly feeling his hands struggling to break free, and saw that his feet were also kicking and he was spitting at Xiao Han. Afterwards, the main class teacher took Xiao He to a corner of the playground to stand alone as punishment. Xiao He was not allowed to return indoors with the other children until all the children had finished their break exercises. After returning to the classroom, Xiao He had a gloomy face. It wasn't until the teacher took Xiao Han to reconcile with Xiao He and praised Xiao He as a generous boy that Xiao He showed a smile.

In this incident, Xiao He exhibited very serious aggressive behaviors: scratching, kicking, and spitting. The teacher adopted a strategy of cold treatment, temporarily ignoring Xiao He, taking him to a secluded place on the playground, and using this indifferent attitude to punish his aggressive behavior until the child calmed down and no longer showed other small actions. Afterwards, the teacher praised Xiao He's prosocial behavior of reconciling with Xiao Han, maintaining

Xiao He's self-esteem. During an interview with the teacher, it was said: 'It is difficult to take a lot of time out of collective teaching activities to instruct individual aggressive children, criticizing one child will disturb the others, which is a waste of the whole class's time.'

3.3.3 Explain negotiation

Case 3: Xiao He and Xiao Yan had a conflict over a fire truck. During the area activity time, Xiao He placed the kindergarten's fire truck toy next to him, and Xiao Yan, who was passing by, squatted down to play with the fire truck toy next to Xiao He. Xiao He noticed that the fire truck was in Xiao Yan's hands, immediately snatched the fire truck away and started shouting: 'Xiao Yan, are you a fool? The fire truck is mine!' Xiao Yan ignored Xiao and walked away with the fire truck, Xiao Yi chased after him to grab the fire truck and even grabbed Xiao Yan's clothes. The teacher came over, first stopped Xiao He and said: 'I know you are very angry because you really want that fire truck.' And verbally warned Xiao He not to use his hands to hit people. Then the teacher asked about the cause of the conflict. Xiao Yan said: 'The fire truck belongs to the kindergarten, I also want to play with it, Xiao He won't give it to me.' Xiao He said: 'That fire truck was mine first.' The teacher said to them: 'So, the problem now is that both of you want this fire truck, but there is only one fire truck, what should we do?' Xiao Yan suggested: 'Xiao He can play with other toy cars.' But Xiao He disagreed. The teacher said: 'Xiao Yan's idea, Xiao He disagrees, does Xiao He have any other solutions?' Xiao He said: 'I'll exchange my toy with Xiao Yan's.' But Xiao Yan also did not agree. After several rounds of negotiation guided by the teacher, Xiao He said: 'I'll let you play with it for a while, and then you can give it back to me.' The negotiation was finally agreed upon.

Aggressive behaviors triggered by conflicts often occur in kindergartens, which are an indispensable part of children's emotional and social development, and also a very good opportunity for children to improve their problem-solving skills.

3.3.4 Warning and criticism

Case 4: Xiao He is particularly naughty in front of the teacher, rarely sleeps obediently at noon, often hits the children sleeping next to him, and disturbs other children's nap time. Once, the teacher quietly took him to an empty dormitory to talk to him, but Xiao He did not respond. During the second nap time, the hitting behavior occurred again, and the teacher spoke to Xiao He alone: 'The teacher likes Xiao He very much, so I believe there is a reason why Xiao He hits other children, Xiao He is not a child who hits people for no reason.' After that conversation, the teacher would pay attention to him during every subsequent nap time. At first, the teacher sat next to him, Xiao He half-closed his eyes, did not look at the teacher, and did not speak when asked questions. The teacher persisted in accompanying him for the next few days, and later, Xiao He began to accept the teacher gently patting his shoulder to coax him to sleep. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the kindergarten delayed its opening, but the teacher and parents kept close communication and exchange about Xiao He's nap behavior. One day, Xiao He's mother suddenly sent a message to the teacher, saying that her

child told her at home: 'Mom, I really miss the teacher to coax me to sleep, can you coax me like she does?' He even imitated it for his mother. Xiao He's mother told the teacher that Xiao He no longer hit people during naps and spoke more boldly.

Teachers directly express trust in children, believe that children hit people for reasons, suggesting that children are a good child who does not hit people.

3.4 Strategies for Teachers to Deal with Children's Aggressive Behavior

After analyzing the survey results of preschoolers in the senior class, it was found that the aggressive behavior of preschoolers in the senior class has the following characteristics:

3.4.1 Aggressive behaviors occur most frequently during life activity segments

The life activities in kindergarten aim to meet the physiological needs of children and improve their self-care abilities. During these segments, children often gather together for short durations with a high degree of spontaneity and less teacher control, which increases the likelihood of aggressive behaviors occurring.

3.4.2 Verbal aggression is the main form of aggressive behavior in senior class preschoolers

Due to the stage-like and continuous nature of psychological development and language ability development in children, senior class preschoolers are in a sensitive period of language development, where their language learning and expression abilities have developed rapidly. Based on observations in the kindergarten, teachers often emphasize the need for children to follow class rules. When kindergarten children are stimulated by external factors and do not act out physically, they initially resort to verbal attacks to express their dissatisfaction with the outside world.

3.4.3 There is a gender difference in the aggressive behavior exhibited by children in the senior kindergarten class

Parents and teachers often educate girls to be gentle and quiet. Slightly more boisterous actions by girls can result in harsher criticism than boys, such as: 'A girl who runs around and makes noise doesn't behave like a lady.' Over time, girls learn to restrain themselves behaviorally and reduce the occurrence of aggressive behavior; whereas boys' 'mischievousness' is often taken for granted as being part of their nature, lacking restraint, which may lead to aggressive behavior if not addressed.

3.4.4 Special periods can cause aggressive behavior in senior kindergarten children

During emergencies, adults can easily overlook the insufficiency of children's cognitive and consciousness abilities. 'It's too scary! A gathering in a certain community has been infected.' 'We can't shop at the mall anymore, even window shopping could lead to infection.' These words are often blurted out by parents during the pandemic. Due to the

impact of the pandemic, parents' emotions inevitably fluctuate, and when they unconsciously vent their emotions while watching news on their phones, the children around them are inevitably affected. The offhand remarks by parents can make children feel that familiar places like kindergartens, shopping malls, and even communities are no longer safe; familiar words like gatherings and playtime are now associated with terrifying diseases. Therefore, during special periods, parents need to consciously create a safe family atmosphere and strengthen their children's psychological resilience to difficulties, so they can accompany their children through this special time safely.

3.4.5 The effectiveness of teachers' strategies in dealing with aggressive behavior in senior kindergarten children varies

The author found that verbal warnings and criticism are commonly used by teachers to stop children's aggressive behavior, but the children's grinning and continuing to grab at girls after the warnings reveal that they have become accustomed to this method, so the warnings and criticism do not have a good effect on their aggressive behavior.

When teachers adopt a cold attitude towards children, the children will understand that their previous behavior could not express their true intentions, and thus they will stop the aggressive behavior. After dealing with the child indifferently, it is important to promptly encourage and acknowledge the child to avoid hurting their self-esteem, to enhance the ability of children with aggressive behavior to think calmly about problems, to learn to actively resolve issues, thereby avoiding aggressive behavior.

By adopting strategies that support children's participation in negotiation and problem-solving on their own, teachers ultimately improve the children's conflict resolution skills, avoid conflicts in the classroom, and reduce aggressive behavior.

When teachers use implied normative strategies, they use a positive attitude to soothe the emotions of children with aggressive behavior, let the children personally experience the teacher's care through practical actions, and combine school and home efforts to jointly reduce aggressive behavior in senior kindergarten children.

4. Effective Paths for Teachers to Resolve the Dilemma of Aggressive Behavior in Senior Kindergarten Children

4.1 Scientific Understanding of Aggressive Behavior in Senior Kindergarten Children

Good cognition guides people's various behaviors. The premise of correcting aggressive behavior in senior kindergarten is to have a scientific understanding of children's aggressive behavior. increases the likelihood of aggressive behaviors occurring.

4.1.1 Understand the causes of aggressive behavior in senior kindergarten children

When senior kindergarten children intentionally attack others

physically, verbally, or relationally, it is necessary to understand the environment and the method of attack at the time of occurrence. Analyze why aggressive behavior occurs by combining the child's own factors and external factors to promote effective correction in the next step.

4.1.2 Clarify the impact of aggressive behavior in senior kindergarten children

According to the records analyzed during the research process, aggressive behavior directly adversely affects both the aggressor and the victim and may be detrimental to the children's future growth. For the aggressor, psychological health development is hindered, social interaction is restricted, etc. For the victim, it causes harm, leading to serious physical or even psychological trauma. In addition, family harmony and social stability may also be affected.

4.2 Complete the Educational Goals for Expected Correction of Aggressive Behavior Results

Referencing Skinner's programmed instruction theory, improving educational goals should highlight expected behavioral outcomes [13]. To correct the aggressive behavior of senior kindergarten children, more specific and precise educational goals are needed.

4.2.1 Establish the theoretical foundation of the new behaviorist learning theory.

To correct the aggressive behavior of senior kindergarten children, it is first necessary to establish correct prosocial behavior. Teachers and parents need to carry out relatively stable and standardized corrective measures under the guidance of behaviorist teaching ideas.

4.2.2 Establish goals for expected behavioral outcomes.

With the goal of correcting aggressive behavior in senior kindergarten children, the goals should be made specific and phased. For example, at the completion stage of correction, senior kindergarten children reduce or eliminate hitting, cursing, and other aggressive behaviors.

Only by combining specific expected behavioral goals can specific stimuli be provided to children with aggressive behavior in senior kindergarten, causing them to produce specific responses, thereby reducing the occurrence of aggressive behavior.

4.3 Prioritize the Implementation of Situational Cultivation Models to Assist Education

The Situational Cultivation Teaching Model was first created by Dr. Lozanov, a Bulgarian psychologist and medical doctor. In this study, teachers achieved significant results in correcting aggressive behavior when using negotiation and suggestive normative strategies.

4.3.1 Create a corrective environment.

Firstly, it is necessary to create a relaxed and pleasant external environment. Whether it is immediate correction during an

aggressive act or correction after the behavior, a relaxed external environment conducive to effective communication and correction with the child must be established.

4.3.2 Use suggestive means.

Through various suggestive methods, such as music, language, and actions, children are involved in various activities, infecting them with these activities and correcting aggressive behavior. Under the Situational Cultivation Model, various suggestive methods can be used to fully mobilize the unconscious psychological activities of children with aggressive behavior in large classes, develop their potential, and block the occurrence of aggressive behavior.

4.3.3 Adult guidance and summary.

Deepen the corrective impact of the Situational Cultivation Model on children with aggressive behavior. Through adults' summaries and inspirations, children internalize good behavior.

4.4 Seize the Opportunity to Rationally Transform Educational Activities

The occurrence of aggressive behavior in young children often creates a tense atmosphere. To alleviate the mood, aggressive behavior can be used as material for diverse educational activities. In these activities, children who exhibit aggressive behavior feel the emotions of others (the attacked children), experience feelings of guilt, and thus restrain their own behavior, effectively correcting the aggressive behavior. At the same time, adults should also pay attention to and protect the attacked children, soothe their emotions, and reduce physical and mental harm.

4.5 Role Model Demonstration

The learning ability of children in large classes has reached a certain level, and they can directly acquire prosocial behavior through imitation, which is very helpful in correcting aggressive behavior in large classes.

Combining the research of Wagenschein, the Exemplary Teaching Model is adopted, focusing on guiding children with aggressive behavior with factual examples. By learning the actions demonstrated by children with good behavior or teachers, children with aggressive behavior master correct interpersonal skills, control their own behavior, achieve the transfer of learned content, and correct aggressive behavior.

4.5.1 Increase contact opportunities.

To enhance learning effects, opportunities for children with aggressive behavior to come into contact with children who exhibit prosocial behavior can be created. In kindergartens, teachers can increase contact by changing seats, etc. Outside of kindergartens, parents can arrange more social interactions.

4.5.2 Timely reinforcement.

Praise prosocial behavior in front of children with aggressive behavior, and after the frequency of aggressive behavior

decreases, give clear encouragement and rewards, etc. Through positive reinforcement, children understand that prosocial actions will be valued, thereby significantly reducing the frequency of aggressive behavior.

4.6 Flexibly Adopt Coping Strategies

According to research results, the scenarios, methods, and targets of aggressive behavior in large classes are uncertain, so coping strategies need to be flexibly adopted. Based on a full understanding of the children, comprehensive judgments are made according to individual differences of different children and the scenarios in which aggressive behavior occurs, adopting appropriate measures to achieve the best corrective effect.

5. Research Reflection

Every action of teachers and parents in life can subtly change the development of children and are directly related to children's education and growth. When children exhibit aggressive behavior, they should face it calmly. While scientifically understanding the aggressive behavior of children in large classes, it is also necessary to analyze the external behavior of children, flexibly choose countermeasures, combine them with activity design, and strive for the best corrective effect.

Moreover, correcting aggressive behavior requires efforts from their immediate contact environment. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, an American psychologist, indicates that the microsystem in which children are located directly affects their behavior. In this dynamic developmental environment, children's behavioral characteristics are directly influenced by family, school, peers, etc. [14]. Therefore, eliminating the appearance of aggressive behavior in the microsystem and forming good prosocial behavior will serve as a good example for children with aggressive behavior.

Combining research results and relevant educational and psychological research theories, correcting aggressive behavior in children in large classes is a necessary measure to shape children's sound personality and ensure their healthy development. It requires educators to master relevant knowledge in psychology, help children form healthy interpersonal skills in educational activities, possess a good personality in the collective, gradually optimize children's self-experience and self-control, and ultimately learn to think and correct.

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