



How is sexual aggression related to nonsexual aggression? A meta-analytic review



Lauren Wilson *, Emily Mouilso, Brittany Gentile, Karen Calhoun, Amos Zeichner

Department of Psychology, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-3013, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 5 April 2014
Received in revised form 12 April 2015
Accepted 23 April 2015
Available online 2 May 2015

Keywords:

Meta-analysis
Sexual aggression
Physical aggression
Verbal aggression

ABSTRACT

To evaluate conflicting theories that perpetration of sexual aggression and perpetration of nonsexual aggression are either manifestations of one another (i.e., derived from the same underlying factors) or completely divergent in origin, we performed a meta-analysis of 68 independent data points that measured perpetration of both forms of aggression. Our findings indicated that research literature only partially supports the view that these aggression forms are similar in origin. While associations of significant magnitude were found between sexual and nonsexual aggression perpetration, they were limited to specific groups of perpetrators (i.e., adult perpetrators, nonincarcerated perpetrators, perpetrators who target adult victims). Important methodological moderators were also identified, including the use of self-report instruments and use of nonaggressive comparison groups, which resulted in stronger associations between sexual and nonsexual aggression. We discuss implications for theory refinement, as well as the identification, treatment, and prevention of sexual aggression.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Contents

1.	Introduction	200
2.	Prevalence of sexual aggression	200
3.	Specialist explanations	201
4.	Generalist explanation	201
5.	Potential moderators	201
6.	The current study	202
7.	Method	202
	7.1. Literature search	202
	7.2. Inclusion criteria	203
	7.3. Coding procedures	203
	7.4. Data analysis	204
8.	Results	204
	8.1. All forms of sexual aggression and nonsexual aggression	204
	8.2. Sexual aggression and type of nonsexual aggression	205
	8.3. Sexual aggression and type of nonsexual aggression, separated by gender	206
9.	Discussion	207
	9.1. Perpetrator age	207
	9.2. Type of comparison group	207
	9.3. Victim age	207
	9.4. Type of nonsexual aggression	208
	9.5. Perpetrator gender	208
	9.6. Study methodology as a moderator	208
	9.7. Moderators that demonstrated nonsignificant effects	208
	9.8. Limitations	209

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 706 542 1173; fax: +1 706 542 3275.
E-mail address: lauren.fay.wilson@gmail.com (L. Wilson).

9.9.	Implications and future directions	209
9.9.1.	Prevention and risk assessment	209
9.9.2.	Intervention	210
9.9.3.	Research	210
9.9.4.	Conclusions	210
	Acknowledgments	210
	Appendix A. Supplementary data	210
	References	210

1. Introduction

Aggression is a multi-faceted social behavior commonly defined in the research literature as any action undertaken with the intention of inflicting pain and suffering on another individual against his or her will (Baron & Richardson, 1994; Berkowitz, 1993). Although much is known about the prevalence, causes, and consequences of aggressive behavior, important gaps in our understanding of this phenomenon remain owing to the “fractionated” nature of research in this area (Cook & Parrott, 2009, p. 463). In the field of aggression research, aggressive behavior is known deeply but not broadly; subfields and niche specialties have resulted in a great deal of understanding within specified areas, but connections among these areas of interest are less well understood. That is, the field of aggression research has placed great emphasis on how levels of aggression perpetration and victimization vary depending on the context of the behavior and the subfield of interest. These subfields are based on a multitude of criteria, including victim characteristics (e.g., age and gender of victims), relationship context (e.g., strangers, intimate partners, acquaintances), setting (e.g., home, college, school), perpetrator age (e.g., juvenile, adult), and type of aggressive behavior. Subfields of aggression also focus on methodological issues, including whether social desirability impacts reporting of aggressive behavior, and, as such, whether aggression is best measured via methods apart from self-report.

While there has been in-depth exploration within the multitude of specialty fields, less is known about the co-occurrence of aggressive behavior across subfields. Understanding the broader connections between specific niches could potentially illuminate important patterns and provide insight into factors that maintain or reinforce aggression. The current study attempted to address this gap in the literature by quantifying the magnitude of the association between sexual aggression and nonsexual aggression (i.e., physical, psychological, verbal aggression) both broadly (i.e., the overall relationship without moderators) and with an eye to important contexts (i.e., across perpetrator and victim groups, relationship context, and developmental period). Specifically, the goal of this meta-analytic review was to both quantify the relationship between sexual and nonsexual aggression and determine how this relationship is moderated by sample population (e.g., age of perpetrator, age of victim, incarcerated versus community perpetrators) and by measurement method (e.g., self-report, file review, comparison group).

2. Prevalence of sexual aggression

Aggressive behavior can manifest in a multitude of ways, including physical, relational, verbal, and sexual variants. Sexual aggression is a relatively common type of aggressive behavior that results in particularly negative outcomes for victims (e.g., Briere, Woo, McRae, Foltz, & Sitzman, 1997; Wingood, DiClemente, & Raj, 2000). Sexual aggression comprises a myriad of behaviors that range in severity, including fondling, sexual coercion, rape, molestation, voyeurism, and similar behaviors. For the purposes of this review, we define sexual aggression broadly as any aggressive act in which a perpetrator is inflicting or demanding receipt of a sexual act. Defining sexual aggression so broadly fits the purpose of the current review in that its goal is to understand the

relationship between nonsexual and sexual aggression broadly; however, a second goal of this review is to understand how moderators affect this relationship. Hence, specific definitions related to sexual aggression (e.g., rape, child sexual abuse) will be discussed separately.

Uniform crime reports define rape as “the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will,” and most jurisdictions in the US employ some variation of this definition (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010). For the purposes of the current review, rape is defined as a subtype of sexual aggression that consists of sexual acts (e.g., vaginal, anal, or oral sex) obtained by force or threat of force. Large and well-replicated prevalence studies report that approximately 15–20% of women have experienced sexual victimization that meets the legal definition of rape (e.g., Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). Men consistently report committing acts that meet the legal definition of rape at a rate of 8–14%, and they report committing less severe acts of sexual aggression (i.e., unwanted sexual contact that does not meet the definition of rape) at a rate of 25–60% (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Koss et al., 1987; Loh, Gidycz, Lobo, & Luthra, 2005; White & Smith, 2004).

In addition to sexual aggression directed toward adults, child sexual abuse (CSA) is also a major problem in our society. CSA can include a range of behaviors from fondling, genital exposure, and intimate kissing to oral, anal, or vaginal penetration (Briggs, Thompson, Ostrowski, & Lekwauwa, 2011). Two meta-analyses estimated that 25–40% of girls and 8–13% of boys experience CSA (Andrews, Corry, Slade, Issakidis, & Swanston, 2004; Bolen & Scannapieco, 1999). According to the U.S. Department of Justice (1996), 65% of inmates incarcerated for rape committed the crime against a child, and 67% of all inmates incarcerated for victimizing children did so sexually. Although less is known about nonincarcerated perpetrators of CSA, approximately 20% of men from college and community samples report some level of sexual attraction to children (Hall, Hirschman, & Oliver, 1995). In addition, Fromuth, Burkhart, and Jones (1991) found that 3% of college men reported having had at least one sexual experience with a child when the respondent was age 16 or older. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that CSA is a relatively common form of sexual aggression.

Less is known about female perpetration of sexual aggression and adult male sexual victimization (Davies, 2002; Duncan, 2010; Harris, 2010; Stuckman-Johnson & Anderson, 1998). A recent review concluded that approximately 5% of individuals convicted of sex offenses against children are female (Cortoni & Hanson, 2005), while self-report studies with adult survivors of CSA indicate that between 4–60% of perpetrators were female (Kaplan & Green, 1995). Although very few adult male victims appear in police files or other official records, between 7–16% of men report a history of adult sexual victimization (Davies, Pollard, & Archer, 2001; Hines & Saudion, 2003). The study of female perpetration of sexually aggressive behavior has been hindered by several factors, including the myth that women do not engage in sexual aggression and the tendency of researchers to ask women only about victimization and men only about perpetration (Stuckman-Johnson & Anderson, 1998). Although the literature on female perpetration and male victimization is relatively underdeveloped (Harris, 2010), it would be a mistake to ignore the existence of these phenomena.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/94487>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/94487>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)