

**Aggressive behaviour in preschool boys and girls:  
Differential rearing practices or result of ADHD?**

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Evidence exists that aggressive behaviour is more common in boys than girls. Moreover, children with Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) are usually more aggressive than their peers.

This study aimed to investigate jointly the effect of AD/HD and the child's gender on the development of aggression in preschool boys and girls.

The nursery teachers of 925 boys and girls (mean age=56.01 months, s.d.=8.9 months), enrolled in kindergartens in Athens, completed two questionnaires for each child: a) the "SDQ" for the investigation of ADHD symptoms, and b) a questionnaire constructed by the authors for the investigation of several forms of aggressive behaviour.

The results revealed that 14% of the children scored highly on the hyperactivity subscale of the SDQ. Male to female ratio was 2,5:1. Boys were found to be aggressive more often than girls [ $\chi^2(2,915)=58.7, p<.001$ ]. Moreover, AD/HD was positively correlated with aggression for the whole sample ( $r=.51, p<.01$ ). However aggressive girls were significantly more likely to present AD/HD (77.8%) than aggressive boys (58.7%).

It appears that AD/HD and aggressive behaviour are more closely related in girls than boys. In girls, aggressive behaviour is more likely the result of AD/HD whereas in boys, aggressive behaviour might also be attributed to other reasons. Girls may exert more self-control and, therefore, aggression may appear only when self-control capacities are deficient, as in the case of AD/HD. This finding could be utilized in differentiating the norms used in rating scales and screening tests for AD/HD.