

## **A Comparison of Emotional Verbal, Physical Social and Destructive Modes of Aggression among Tribal and Non-Tribal Young Adults of Assam**

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### **Abstract:**

The population of Assam comprises of various tribes with their varied customs and beliefs. The current research study investigates the patterns of aggression and its different modes among tribal and non-tribal young adults of Assam residing in Guwahati city. The sample consisted of 240 young adults (120 tribal and 120 non-tribal) ranging from 18 to 24 years of age, 60 males and 60 females for both tribal and non-tribals. Attempts were made to include all the prominent tribes of Assam viz. Bodo-Kachari, Karbi, Miri, Lalung, Dimasa-Kachari and Rabha tribes. Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) and a semi-structured interview schedule were the tools adopted for collecting information about their family types, parental deprivation, parental relation, drug abuse in the family, settlement pattern. Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test were the statistical measures adopted in this 2x2 factorial design study. In addition to this, discriminant analysis ( $n$ -aggression= 0.001) has been worked out to strengthen the predictive validity of the obtained data. Results from the TAT scores reveal no significant difference among the two cultures on  $n$ -aggression. Both the tribal and non-tribals were found to have high aggression and further, both tribal as well as non-tribal young adults show no difference in  $n$ -aggression when compared in modes such as emotional verbal, physical social and destructive. In addition to that the study yielded an interesting finding that, no gender difference on  $n$ -aggression was found for both the cultures.

**Keywords:** Aggression, Emotional Verbal, Physical Social, Destructive, Culture, Tribal, Gender, Discriminant Analysis.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Aggression is a form of human behaviour which is intended towards harming another individual. Bandura (1973) states that aggression is a complex event and it involves injurious intent as well as social judgments, where an injury must be judged as injurious according to social judgment. Baron (1977) has defined aggression as "any form of behaviour directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment". The essential properties of aggression involve:

- Aggression is an interpersonal concept and is social in nature.
- It is intended to harm another person in a direct or indirect way.
- It can violate a social norm.

Personality in terms of need is the potentiality or readiness to respond in a particular manner under certain given circumstances (Murray, 1938). One of these needs in human beings is the need for aggression which entails behaviors shown to overcome, take control of or punish one's opponent or enemy. The different modes are:

- Emotional and Verbal: someone hates the hero or gets angry with him. He is criticised, ridiculed, threatened or there is a verbal quarrel.
- Physical and Social: the hero is in the wrong. Someone defends him, attacks the hero or punishes the hero.
- Destructive: destructive refers to a person who damages or destroys another's possession.

Aggression is one of the dimensions in which gender differences are seen among males and females. Males are believed to be more aggressive than females (Macobi&Jacklin, 1974). Males have also been found to resort to aggression quickly and engage in more physical forms of aggression as compared to females (Bjorkqvist et.al, 1994; Frey et.al., 2003). It has also been observed that gender differences in case of physical aggression is more than verbal or psychological aggression (Knight et al., 1996 ) However, there seems to be a lack of data with regard to gender differences on aggression in the north-eastern part of India.

Culture (a distinctive part of a race) may lead to the development of various types of aggression and there seems to be cultural differences in levels of aggression (Ahmed &Haque, 2007). Southern Americans have been reported to respond more aggressively and have a higher homicide rate than Northern Americans (Bowdle et al., 1996; Nisbett, 1993). The tribals of Chittagong Hill Tracts were found to show higher rates of aggression than non-tribals (Ahmed &Haque, 2007).

Assam has a number of tribal groups among its inhabitants and these groups have been "agitated to preserve their identity and protect their rights" (George, 1994, p. 878). Assam has experienced inter-ethnic disputes and conflicts, the settlement of which has not been possible without violent activities (Barbora, 2008). Demand for tribal states and states based on language, feelings of injustice and exploitation led to violence and armed militancy by both tribal and non-tribals. Insurgency in the form of attacks on innocent

citizens with bombs and firearms and full-scale guerilla wars have been prevalent in the state of Assam (Gohain, 1997).

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS/HYPOTHESIS

The basic question of research looks at (a) the difference between n-aggression among tribal and non-tribal young adults of Assam, (b) gender difference on n-aggression within and between cultures i.e. tribal male versus tribal female, non-tribal male versus non-tribal female, tribal male versus non-tribal female, non-tribal male versus tribal female and (c) the difference in emotional verbal, physical social and destructive modes of aggression among all the groups.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this research project are:

- To find out the differentiating cultural elements prevalent among tribals.
- To assess the aggression drive among tribals viz. emotional verbal, physical social and destructive modes in young adults of Assam

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The results of the analysis will be helpful in

- Finding out the different modes of aggression in tribals,
- understanding the reasons behind their violent behavior,
- will also help the Government in sorting out terrorism and violence in the state and
- Planning programs to sensitize and manage aggression in terms of emotional verbal, physical social and destructive modes for their upliftment and growth.

### JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The growth and development of the state of Assam as compared with the rest of India has been poor, even though Assam is rich in natural resources as well as culturally. Could be because of the terrorist acts and violent 5130 behavior among tribal, who are an inevitable part of the

Assamese civilization? It will be of immense significance to know if their aggression is a cause of their slow progress.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Design

In the present investigation 2×2 factorial design has been adopted. Two main independent variables are investigated having two different factors. The independent variables and their factors are:

Culture- Tribal vs. Non-tribal

Sex- Male vs. Female

### 2.2 Sample

The sample will include 120 tribal college students and 120 non-tribal students i.e. 240 altogether with their age ranging from 18 to 24 years, out of which 60 students are male and 60 are female in each group. Tribal college students were from popular tribes of Assam viz. BodoKachari, Karbi, Miris, Lalung, DimasaKachari, Rabha etc.

### 2.3 Procedure/Method

Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test the hypotheses or answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. Descriptive data are typically collected through questionnaires, interview or observation. Thus the current research will involve a descriptive method undergoing the procedure of (1) selecting sample of a population, (2) collecting information through questionnaires, (3) synthesizing findings based on collected data in order to gauge the pattern of aggression of the tribal and non-tribal students.

### 2.4 Data Collection

#### 2.1.1 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique adopted for this study is that of purposive sampling method as the researcher has some belief that the sample being handpicked is typical of the population.

#### 2.1.2 Research Tools

This research will be conducted using two major tools of research to assess aggression and its different modes of the students and exploring the cultural components. 1) Interview Schedule, 2) Thematic Apperception Test.

##### 2.1.2.1 The Interview Schedule

The Interview Schedule is one of the important sources of data collection. This schedule included 15 items. The items are taken from the following category:

- Demographic: It consists of items like age, sex and education.
- Home environment: it consists of items related to home conditions and parental relationships.
- Cultural variables: the items related to settlement pattern and social and political belonging are taken as investigating factors.

All questions included were close ended.

##### 2.1.2.2 Thematic Apperception Test

Thematic Apperception Test, also known as TAT, is a widely used projective technique used in both clinical and non-clinical settings. It was developed by Murray in 1935. According to Murray, the purpose of TAT is to reveal "some dominant drives, emotions, sentiments, complexes and conflicts of personality". This test consists of a series of ambiguous pictures. Persons taking the test are asked to make up stories about them. These are then scored by psychologically trained researcher. However, as TAT is administered on the Indian sample, the Indian adaptation of this test by Dr. Uma Choudhury is administered.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Data Analysis of Interview Schedule

240 students were given the schedule and the response rate was 100%. The first five questions which were based upon demographic information, shows that the mean age of the tribal and non-tribal young adults was 21.08 and 21.06 respectively. Again with regard to education,

students with different educational status viz. graduation and post-graduation were matched. Number of students in graduation was 20 males and 20 females for both tribal and non-tribal groups. While in post-graduation, number of students was again 40 males and 36 females among tribals and non-tribals. Also, most of the participants were from middle class families from both cultures. Therefore, it can be inferred with assertion that the participants were matched on demographic variables viz. age, educational status and family class.

Responses to questions pertaining to family environment are presented below:

**TABLE NO. 1(a):** Table showing type of family among tribal and non-tribal young adults.

TYPE OF FAMILY	TRIBALS (N=120)	NON-TRIBALS (N=120)
JOINT	12	5
NUCLEAR	108	115
AVERAGE NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS	7.61	5.87

The data obtained indicates that very few participants had joint family. In tribals it is 10% and in non-tribals it is only 4.15%. On the other hand, 90% of the tribals and 95.85% of non-tribals belonged to nuclear families. The average number of family members of the tribals is 7.61 which is higher than the non-tribals, for whom the average number of family members was found to be 5.87. This indicates commonality in relation to the type of family showing nuclear pattern.

**TABLE NO. 1(b):** Table showing parental deprivation.

	TRIBALS		NON-TRIBALS	
	Dead	Alive	Dead	Alive
Father	24 (20%)	96 (80%)	14 (11.66%)	106 (88.33%)
Mother	11 (9.15%)	109 (91.85%)	6 (5%)	114 (95%)

It has been observed that most of the participants had both parents alive. Among tribals 80% of their fathers were alive, while among non-tribals, 88.33% were alive. In case of mothers it was seen that among tribals 91.85% were alive and again among non-tribals it was 94%. It appeared that both groups of students were reared and nurtured by both parents.

**TABLE NO. 1(c):** Table showing parental relation

PARENTAL RELATION	TRIBALS	NON-TRIBALS
Good	104 (86%)	106 (88.33%)
Bad	16 (13.5%)	14 (11.66%)

In Assam both tribals and non-tribals show good relationships among parents. The percentages of families where healthy relation prevails among parents surpass that of families with strained parental relations for both tribals as well as non-tribals. The families with good relations for tribals and non-tribals are 86% and 88.33% respectively, whereas, bad relations were 13.5% and 11.66% among tribals and non-tribals respectively. The above data thus shows that congenial atmosphere exist in the homes of families among both the cultures.

The last part of the schedule consists of questions relating to settlement pattern, nature of livelihood, drug usage in the family and social and political belongingness. The responses are shown in the table below.

**TABLE NO. 1(d):** Table showing settlement pattern.

TYPE OF SETTLEMENT	TRIBALS	NON-TRIBALS
Permanent Settlement	111	120
Restricted Wondering	0	0
Within Territory	0	0
Semi-permanent, moving in village when environment is exhausted.	9	0

Although there are a few instances of semi-permanent type of settlement among tribals, nomadic wandering has become obsolete altogether. Even their grandparents who live in the hills are out of it.

**TABLE NO. 1(e):** Table showing nature of livelihood.

TYPE	TRIBAL (N=120)	NON-TRIBAL (N=120)
Service Dominant	21	61
Agriculture Dominant	73	57
Agriculture and Fishing Dominant	24	2
Agriculture/Hunting and Gathering	2	0
Hunting and Gathering	0	0

It is seen that tribal population is predominantly agricultural with instances of hunting and fishing practiced in some tribes inhabiting in interior areas and forests. There is also shift into secondary and tertiary sector with nominal shift.

**TABLE NO. 1(f):** Table showing incidence of drug usage in family.

TYPE OF DRUG ADDICTION	TRIBAL	NON-TRIBAL
Cigarette	54	62
Paan	77	81
Alcohol	72	38
Hard Core	0	0

Incidence of drug usage show that among tribal 45% are addicted to cigarette and among non-tribal it is 51.66% and in terms of Paan, it is 64.17% and 67.5% among tribal and non-tribal respectively. However, tribals are more addicted (60%) as compared to non-tribal (31.66%). It has

been observed that alcohol known as rice beer which is brewed from rice, is commonly used rather than Indian made foreign liquor and consumed during festive occasions and community festivals.

**TABLE NO. 1(g):** Table showing social and political belongingness.

TYPE	TRIBAL	NON-TRIBAL
Hereditary Aristocracy	0	0
No Class Distinction	102	84
Existence of Wealth Distinction	18	36
Representing Level Affiliation	30	45
Representing one level above community	20	32
Representing within the community	18	30

Hereditary aristocracy is not prevalent among tribal as well as non-tribal. Class distinction do not exist in tribal society where as in non-tribal society due to their cultural difference and advancement in economic and political belongingness the percentage is higher than tribal. Social and political belongingness is quite low among the tribal in comparison to non-tribal. Hence tribal development has been slow. But, with regard to aggression there is no difference in both cultures as well as gender.

### 3.2 Analysis of TAT Responses

The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) has proved to be very effective tool in researching aggression. The scoring methodology (Murray) with some modifications has been utilized. Qualitative experiences of the stories are also included at the time of scoring.

**TABLE 2:** Table showing Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test scores obtained on n-aggression, Emotional Verbal, Physical Social and Destructive modes of aggression by tribal and non-tribal young adults.

	Total aggression score			Emotional Verbal			Physical Social			Destructive		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score
Tribal	10.98	7.25	0.037	5.29	3.32	0.47	3.60	3.05	0.44	2.53	3.13	-0.54
Non-tribal	10.95	6.73		5.10	3.05		3.43	2.80		2.78	4.16	

The M and SD score for tribals on n-aggression are 10.98 and 7.25 respectively. The M and SD score for non-tribals on n-aggression are 10.95 and 6.73 respectively. The t-score for n-aggression was found to be 0.037, which is not significant. Thus, the tribal as well as non-tribal young adults involve in the need to fight, seek revenge, attack and punish opponents. Since they are high in such needs, they can be described as belligerent, irritable, cruel and abusive. Research suggests that aggressive motivation- the desire to inflict harm on others play an all too common role in human affairs and often result in overt forms of aggression, behavior directed towards the goal of injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment (Baron & Richardson, 1991). Another factor of aggression is frustration, the blocking of goal directed behavior when individual is prevented from obtaining desired goal. Frustration also increases likelihood of aggression especially when it is unexpected and viewed as unfair and illegitimate (Berkowitz, 1989). This study is contrary to study by HardeoOjha (1995) who reported that Santhal tribes from Bihar were characterized by higher need for aggression than non-tribals. Ahmed & Haque (2007) also reported that the tribals of Chittagong Hill Tracts showed higher rates of aggression as compared to non-tribals. In other studies (e.g. Bowdle et al., 1996; Nisbett, 1993) on culture and race, Southern Americans have been reported to respond more aggressively and have a higher homicide rate than Northern Americans.

In the mode emotional verbal, the M and SD score for tribals are 5.29 and 3.32 respectively. The M and SD score for non-tribals on emotional verbal are 5.10 and 3.05 respectively. The t-score for emotional verbal was found to be 0.47, which is not significant. Thus, there is no difference among tribals and non-tribals in this mode of aggression, i.e. they show no difference in their expression of hatred, being angry with, criticism, reprimands, belittling, ridicules, cursing or threatening and also slanders behind another's back and verbal quarrel. Thus, it is more of region than of culture which influences aggression, as both tribal and non-tribal show high level of aggression. It has resulted in insurgency and other conflicts in Assam which disturbs the peace and prosperity of the region.

In the mode physical social, the M and SD score for tribal are 3.60 and 3.05 respectively. The M and SD score for non-tribals on physical social are 3.43 and 2.80 respectively. The t-score for physical social was found to be 0.44, which is not significant. Here again both the cultures show no difference in physical assaults, attacking and ridiculing others.

In the mode destructive, the M and SD score for tribal are 2.53 and 3.31 respectively. The M and SD score for non-tribals on destructive are 2.78 and 4.16 respectively. The t-score for destructive was found to be -0.54, which is not significant, showing no difference in the urge to damage or destroy another's possession.

All the other comparable groups on n-aggression and its modes (Emotional Verbal, Physical Social and Destructive) viz.:

- Tribal male vs. Tribal female (Table 3).
- Non-tribal male vs. non-tribal female (Table 4).

- Tribal female vs. non-tribal female (Table 5).
- Tribal male vs. non-tribal male (Table 6).
- Tribal male vs. non-tribal female (Table 7).
- Non-tribal male vs. tribal female (Table 8).

**TABLE 3:** Table showing Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test scores obtained on n-aggression, Emotional Verbal, Physical Social and Destructive modes of aggression by tribal male and tribal female.

	Total TAT			Emotional Verbal			Physical Social			Destructiveness		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score
Tribal Male	10.58	7.28	0.60	5.53	3.34	0.79	3.33	2.97	-0.96	2.45	3.43	-0.26
Tribal Female	11.38	7.27		5.05	3.30		3.87	3.12		2.60	2.82	

**TABLE 4:** Table showing Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test scores obtained on n-aggression, Emotional Verbal, Physical Social and Destructive modes of aggression by non-tribal male and non-tribal female.

	Total TAT			Emotional Verbal			Physical Social			Destructiveness		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score
Non-tribal Male	10.70	6.11	0.41	4.78	2.96	-1.13	3.33	2.54	-0.38	2.45	2.10	-0.88
Non-tribal Female	11.20	7.34		5.42	3.13		3.53	3.17		3.12	5.50	

**TABLE 5:** Table showing Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test scores obtained on n-aggression, Emotional Verbal, Physical Social and Destructive modes of aggression by tribal female and non-tribal female.

	Total TAT			Emotional Verbal			Physical Social			Destructiveness		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score
Tribal Female	11.38	7.27	0.14	5.05	3.30	-0.62	3.87	3.12	0.58	2.60	2.82	-0.65
Non-tribal Female	11.20	7.34		5.42	3.13		3.53	3.17		3.12	5.50	

**TABLE 6:** Table showing Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test scores obtained on n-aggression, Emotional Verbal, Physical Social and Destructive modes of aggression by tribal male and non-tribal male.

	Total TAT			Emotional Verbal			Physical Social			Destructiveness		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score
Tribal Male	10.58	7.28	-0.09	5.53	3.34	1.30	3.33	2.97	0	2.45	3.43	0
Non-tribal Male	10.70	6.11		4.78	2.96		3.33	2.54		2.45	2.10	

**TABLE 7:** Table showing Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test scores obtained on n-aggression, Emotional Verbal, Physical Social and Destructive modes of aggression by tribal male and non-tribal female.

	Total TAT			Emotional Verbal			Physical Social			Destructiveness		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score
Tribal Male	10.58	7.28	-0.46	5.53	3.34	0.19	3.33	2.97	-0.36	2.45	3.43	-0.8
Non-tribal Female	11.20	7.34		5.42	3.13		3.53	3.17		3.12	5.50	

**TABLE 8:** Table showing Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test scores obtained on n-aggression, Emotional Verbal, Physical Social and Destructive modes of aggression by non-tribal male and tribal female.

	Total TAT			Emotional Verbal			Physical Social			Destructiveness		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-score
Non-tribal Male	10.70	6.11	0.56	4.78	2.96	0.46	3.33	2.54	1.03	2.45	2.10	0.33
Tribal Female	11.38	7.27		5.05	3.30		3.87	3.12		2.60	2.82	

**TABLE 9:** Table showing Discriminant Functions

Variables	Functions
N-Achievement	.811
N-Power	.212
Affiliation	.235
Aggression	.001
Nurturance	.107
Sex	.287

The discriminant function is a phase of analysis which examines the function to determine the relative variables in discriminating between groups of tribal and non-tribal. Here the interpretation proposes the ranking of dependent measures are made more in terms of relative discriminative power. The discriminant function involves examining the size and magnitude of the standardized discriminant weight (sometimes referred to as discriminant coefficient). These ratings are based on absolute size of weightage on



n-aggression (.001), emotional verbal, physical social and destructive which shows no discriminating power among tribal and non-tribal. Whereas, n-achievement, n-power and n-affiliation does show discriminating power among these two groups.

No significant difference was found among any of the comparable groups showing high aggression in terms of showing hatred, being angry with criticism, cursed, threatened as well as fights, assaults, injury, attacking, ridiculing and damaging or destroying other's possession. Thus, this kind of aggressive behavior in all above mentioned modes is equally exhibited by all the aforementioned groups. Therefore, it is to be concluded that these groups have no cultural difference viz. tribal- non-tribal and its regional influence could be the reason for their aggressive behavior which could also be a concern for future research.

Comparison of these two cultures was also made on other variables such as achievement, affiliation, power etc. But, on these variables there were significant differences found (Baruah, 2014; Baruah & Devi, 2012, Baruah, 2013). This could be the cause of terrorism, insurgency, inter-ethnic conflicts and other disputes in the region. Assam has experienced a lot of violent acts in the recent past. The different tribes resort to violence and aggression to put across their demands and make their voices heard. The non-tribal inhabitants too have taken up arms and have caused a lot of damage and destruction through their aggressive acts. The results of this study further validate the political violence and aggression that has been prevalent among the tribal as well as non-tribal population of Assam.

However, aggression cannot be the answer to all these issues and problems. Thus, it is imperative that this issue be taken very seriously and efforts need to be taken to create awareness about how delimiting this kind of aggressive behavior can be. Assam is a state which is very rich in natural

resources, culture and heritage. Another unique feature of this region is the absence of dowry system (which is present in most part of the country) and the resultant status of women, which is more favorable as compared to the rest of the country. But, it seems that the other regional disputes and aggressive acts have dominated the social, political and economic scenario of the state of Assam, which has been a bar to its growth, development and prosperity. Hence, it is incumbent to sensitize the people of this state of Assam in this regard.

#### IV. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Apart from emotional verbal, physical social and destructive modes of aggression, intraaggression, abasement and frustration could also explain the terrorist and violent acts among both the cultural groups of Assam.
- In addition to that, various other social variables can also be helpful in explaining these behaviors among both the cultural groups of Assam.

However, due to time constraints these variables could not be studied in the present research project.

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