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INVESTIGATING THE PREVALENT AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR AND THE PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUCH AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the prevalent aggressive behaviour and the psychosocial factors responsible for such among secondary school students in Kogi State, Nigeria. Specific objectives were raised based on which research questions and hypotheses were generated. The designs adopted for this study are descriptive survey research design where a sample of 394 students were randomly selected from the population of 25,537 students in secondary school in Kogi State. A Multi-stage sampling was employed in this study which involved stratified random sampling to select schools and proportionate sampling technique to select number of participants and simple random sampling at the final stage. Structured questionnaires were administered, and the data collected subjected to analysis using frequency distributions, percentages, means, t-test and Analysis of Variance. The result revealed most prevalent aggressive behaviour among the secondary school students to include becoming so mad that they may want to break things, wanting to exchange blows or engage in a fight, feeling like a powder keg ready to explode, trouble controlling their temper, threatening people, wanting to hit another person when provoked. The study also found that growing up in a crowded home, inadequate family income, single parenting, addiction to alcohol and drug abuse are some factors that constitute the psychosocial factors of aggressive behaviour. In comparison to other literatures, it is hereby concluded the prevalent aggressive among secondary school students is peculiar to each locality.

Key words: Prevalent, Aggressive behaviour, Psychosocial factor, Students

Introduction

There has been a tremendous surge in aggressive behaviour among secondary school students, particularly in areas where such behaviours were previously seldomly reported (Palanichamy et al., 2020; Adeniyi & Jinadu, 2021). Most contemporary young adults tend to be lacking in stimulus control and the ability to manage crises, which often translates into aggression even when there are few or no triggering factors (Bibi et al., 2020; Eriksson, 2024). These actions may be verbal or physical, occurring suddenly with no apparent reason or resulting from frustrating situations. Hartini and March (2022) defined aggressive behaviour as a behaviour that causes physical or emotional harm to others, or threatens to do so, noting that aggressive behaviour can range from verbal abuse to the destruction of a victim's personal property. Carrotte, Davis, and Lim, (2020) further emphasized that aggression involves acting with the intention of hurting another person to whom the behaviour is directed.

Nowadays, many students are directly or indirectly involved in aggressive behaviour. This issue affects not only the students but also the educational personnel, teachers, parents, school governing bodies, student representative councils, and the community at large (Aborisade, 2024). Consequently, students' aggressive behaviour frequently disrupts the smooth operation of the school, creating an environment that is unconducive to learning and teaching. Aggressive behaviour among students endangers everyone's safety, undermines the culture of learning and teaching very difficult, violates social norms, and causes breakdowns in a relationships (Abiogu et al., 2021; Amaefule, 2022). Although students who exhibit aggressive behaviour tend to be irritable, impulsive, and restless, the act of aggression is intentional, meaning it is done deliberately, and can therefore be controlled (Maccoby, 2011).

There is no single explanation for aggressive behaviour as many different factors contribute to it. Allen (2010) identified several factors associated with aggressive behaviour including a history of physical fighting or vandalism, drug or alcohol abuse, discovery of detailed plans to commit violence, and making direct, and veiled or conditional threats of violence. Other contributing factors include a history of controlling others, an excessive need for attention or respect, feelings of low self-worth, early childhood abuse or neglect, witnessing violence at home, in the community, or in the media, a history of being bullied, and easy access to weapons.

Identifying the psychosocial factors underlying aggressive behaviour is crucial for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. Early prevention, a holistic approach, improved family and school environments, and support for vulnerable individuals, contributes significantly to public health benefits (Osiesi et al., 2023; Kuzhiyenga & Kotian, 2024). This understanding also enables tailored interventions that address the root causes such as poor parenting, peer influence, emotional difficulties, and negative family environments, ultimately reducing aggression and promoting healthier social dynamics (Ariwkhan, 2024; Osiesi et al., 2023; Kuzhiyenga & Kotian, 2024).

According to Sullivan (2011), young adults who are prone to developing feelings of inferiority and resentment, and who have a need to dominate others, often come from dysfunctional families where relationships are poor and communication is minimal or non-existent. Sullivan (2011) also suggests that most self-reported male bullies come from dysfunctional families, typically lacking love, support, and a sense of belonging. Additionally, families that do not provide limits and monitoring are more likely to see increased antisocial behaviour and poor relationship skills in adolescent family members (Sullivan, 2011). Moreover, individuals with low self-esteem see the world through a negative filter, and their dislike of themselves affects their perception of everything around them.

Although there is widespread discussion about the increasing danger of aggressive behaviour among students, the concept and extent of this behaviour have not been clearly defined, particularly concerning the prevalent forms of aggression and the psychosocial factors responsible for such in most communities.

The aim of this study is to investigate the prevalent aggressive behaviour and the psychosocial factors responsible for it among secondary school students in Kogi State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study include:

1. Identify the prevalent aggressive behaviour among secondary school students in Kogi State, Nigeria.

2. Identify the psychosocial factors responsible for aggressive behaviour among secondary school students in Kogi State, Nigeria.

The outcome will help provide targeted solutions to address the growing problem of aggressive behaviours among secondary school students in Kogi State, Nigeria, as well as in other regions worldwide.

Research Question

(1) What are the prevalent aggressive behaviour among secondary school students in Kogi State, Nigeria?

(2). What are the psychosocial factors contribute to aggressive behaviour among secondary school students in Kogi State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were raised for the purpose of the study

i. Certain aggressive behaviours are prevalent among secondary school students in Kogi State, Nigeria.

ii. Certain psychosocial factors predispose students to aggressive behaviour.

Method

A descriptive survey research design was employed in this study. According to Awotunde and Ugodulunwa (2004), the focus of descriptive research is not on whether the observed distribution exists, but on the nature of the distribution itself. Descriptive surveys typically enable researchers to explain and measure data characteristics both at a specific point in time and comparatively over time (Gray, 2009). The population of the study comprised all SS1 students in public senior secondary schools in Kogi State, Nigeria. The population size is 25,537 (Kogi State Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, 2019).

A sample size of 394 students from selected public secondary schools in Kogi State was chosen for this study. This was deemed as ample size appropriate for an estimated population of 25,537, based on Glenn's (1992) table for determining sample size from a given population. A multi-stage sampling method, also known as multi-stage cluster sampling, was employed in this study. This method is a more complex form of cluster sampling that involves two or more stages in sample

selection. In simple terms, multi-stage sampling divides large population clusters into smaller clusters across several stages to make primary data collection more manageable.

At the first stage, stratified random sampling was employed. Out of 120 schools, twelve (12) government secondary schools were randomly selected from twelve local government areas: Ajaokuta, Adavi, Okehi, Okene, Dekina, Ofu, Bassa, Ankpa, Lokoja, Kabba/Bunu, Yagba West, and Kogi to participate in the study (Table 1). In selecting the local government areas, four LGAs were chosen from each of the three senatorial zones, namely Kogi Central, Kogi East, and Kogi West senatorial districts. The participating schools were selected by the hat-and-draw method to identify the schools that participated in the study.

The second stage involved a proportionate random sampling technique, where the population was divided into strata for sample selection using Jörgen's (2005) proportional sampling formula. In stratified random sampling, the strata were formed based on members' shared attributes or characteristics. A random sample was drawn from each stratum in a number proportional to the stratum's size relative to the overall population, using a sampling fraction of 16.8%. This method was applied to sample students from each of the 12 government secondary schools listed in Table 1. Random sampling method was used to determine the sample size for each school by selecting ten percent of the students.

Table 1: Sampled Schools Source: *Kogi State Ministry of Education and Science and Technology*

S/No.	School	Population	Sample
1.	Adavi Local Government Secondary School	340	57
2.	Government Science Secondary School, Adogo	111	19
3.	Ebira Muslim Community College	252	42
4.	Okehi Community Secondary School, Oboroke	111	19
5.	Government Secondary School, Egume	333	56
6.	Government Secondary School, Itobe	208	35
7.	Demonstration Secondary School, Ankpa	127	21
8.	Government Science Secondary School, Oguma	123	21
9.	Titcombe College, Egbe	119	20
10.	Bishop Delise College, Lokoja	235	39
11.	Local Govt. Commercial Sec. Sch., Korede	216	36

12.	Govt. Science Secondary School, Koton-Karfe	173	29
	Total	**2,348**	**394**

The instrument used for data collection in this study was the questionnaire titled "Psychosocial Aggressive Behaviour Questionnaire" (PSABQ), adapted from the original instrument, The Aggression Questionnaire by Buss and Perry (1992). The questionnaire contains 29 items measured on a Likert scale ranging from one (not characteristic) to five (very characteristic). The PSABQ consists of two sections: Section A collects demographic information about the questionnaire provides information on demographic data of the respondents while Section B comprises items designed to elicit responses regarding the prevalence of aggressive behaviour, The PSABQ was designed using a modified 4-point Likert scale (section B).

The rating scale has the following options:

1 = Extremely Uncharacteristic of Me

2 = Somewhat Uncharacteristic of Me

3 = Infrequently Characteristic of Me

4 = Extremely Characteristic of Me

The rating scale for Section C-D has the following options: SA - Strongly Agree (4), A - Agree (3), D - Disagree (2), and SD - Strongly Disagree (1).

The questionnaire was validated by practicing professionals from the Faculty of Education at the University of Abuja, Nigeria. These experts evaluated the content, relevance, clarity, and potential ambiguities in the instrument. Based on their feedback, necessary corrections were made to restructure the questionnaire before its administration in the pilot test.

To establish the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted at Government Senior Secondary School (GSSS), Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria. The instrument was administered to 20

respondents who were not part of the main study. The test-retest method was employed, with a two-week interval between the two administrations. The two sets of scores obtained from the pilot test were correlated using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC). The reliability coefficient (r) obtained was 0.79, indicating that the instrument was reliable.

The instrument was administered directly to the respondents by the researcher, with the assistance of two trained research assistants. The research assistants received orientation on the instrument and were instructed on how to guide the respondents in completing it. The researcher and assistants obtained the participants' consent after explaining the purpose of the study. The participants were then given the questionnaire to complete appropriately. All completed questionnaires were collected immediately.

The tools used to analyze the collected data included descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze demographic data and address the research questions. These methods included frequency counts, percentages and mean scores. The decision rule was based on a midpoint of 2.5, where mean scores equal to or above 2.5 were considered as agreement, while mean scores below 2.5 were considered as disagreement.

The null hypothesis was tested using inferential statistics, specifically Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC), t-test, and ANOVA. PPMC was used to test hypotheses 1 and 2, while ANOVA was employed to assess differences among more than two variables. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 20.

Results

Table 2 presents data on the prevalence of aggressive behaviour among secondary school students. The analysis indicates agreement with all items. The sectional mean of 2.87 reflects consensus, demonstrating that aggressive behaviour is prevalent among secondary school students in the study area.

From the results, the most prevalent aggressive behaviours' among secondary school students were: becoming so angry that they broke things, threatening people they know, having trouble controlling their temper, sometimes feeling like a powder keg ready to explode, and wondering

why they sometimes feel so bitter about things. Others include: I have to resort to violence to protect my rights, I will, enough provocation, I may hit another person, somebody hits me, I hit back, friends say that I'm somewhat argumentative, and in a while, I can't control the urge to strike another person. Some other aggressive behaviours include: of my friends think I'm a hothead, are people who pushed me so far that we came to blows, frustrated, I let my irritation show, can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me, and I get into fights a little more than the average person.

The aggressive behaviours, ranked in order of their prevalence based on mean scores, reveal that the most common aggressive behaviour among secondary school students was, have become so mad that I have broken things (mean score of 3.61, Table 2). This was followed by, are people who pushed me so far that we came to blows (mean score of 3.13); sometimes feel like a powder keg ready to explode (mean score of 3.08); have trouble controlling my temper (mean score of 3.01); have threatened people I know (mean score of 2.89); and enough provocation, I may hit another person (mean score of 2.89).

Table 2: Prevalence of Aggressive Behaviour among Secondary School Students N=394

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	I have become so mad that I have broken things.	3.61	0.79	Agreed
2	I have threatened people I know.	2.89	1.10	Agreed
3	I have trouble controlling my temper.	3.01	1.16	Agreed
4	I sometimes feel like a powder keg ready to explode.	3.08	1.01	Agreed
5	I wonder why sometimes I feel so bitter about things.	2.63	1.15	Agreed
6	If I have to resort to violence to protect my rights, I will.	2.80	1.03	Agreed
7	Given enough provocation, I may hit another person.	2.89	1.09	Agreed
8	If somebody hits me, I hit back.	2.60	1.14	Agreed

9	My friends say that I'm somewhat argumentative.	2.76	1.10	Agreed
10	Once in a while I can't control the urge to strike another person.	2.86	1.08	Agreed
11	Some of my friends think I'm a hothead			Agreed
12	There are people who pushed me so far that we came to blows.	3.13	1.09	Agreed
13	When frustrated, I let my irritation show.	2.61	1.11	Agreed
14	I can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me.			Agreed
15	I get into fights a little more than the average person.	2.62	1.10	
	Sectional Mean	**2.87**		**Agreed**

Table 3 presents the psychosocial factors predisposing students to aggressive behaviour. From the results, the psychosocial factors predisposing students to aggressive behaviour were, Growing up in a crowded home can make someone always angry, When the family income cannot sustain members, getting angry is so easy, and A home where only one parent is present, make a child to be tensed. Others include A child who grew up taking alcohol, is most like to be aggressive with others, Use of drugs can make students behave harshly towards others, In a home where there is constant quarrels and nagging, and children will grow up to be aggressive, A child who grew up watching violent movies is most likely to bully others. Also included among the psychosocial factors are Learning about guns and weapons early in life increases the tendency to use them in real life, The way parents bring up a child contribute to their aggressive behaviour, A school environment where capital punishment is the norm can only harden students and make them aggressive, Hanging out constantly with friends who take delight in breaking rules and regulations make on to be an aggressive person, and A society where violence is common breeds young people who think it is normal to always be aggressive.

The psychosocial factors ranked in order of their prevalence (mean score) reveal the most common psychosocial factors predisposing students to aggressive behaviour as, "Use of drugs can make students to behave harshly towards others (mean score of 3.37, Table 3)", "Hanging out constantly with friends who take delight in breaking rules and regulations make one to be an aggressive person (mean score of 3.31)", "In a home where there is constant quarrels and nagging, children will grow up to be aggressive (mean score of 3.19)", A child who grows up taking alcohol, is most likely to be aggressive with others (mean score of 3.18)", "Learning about guns and weapons early in life increases the tendency to use them in real life (mean score of 3.16)", and "A home where only one parent is present, make a child to be tensed (mean score of 3.15)".

Table 3: Psychosocial factors predisposing students to aggressive behaviour.

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Growing up in a crowded home can make someone always angry	3.01	1.08	**Agreed**
2	When the family income cannot sustain members, getting angry is so easy	3.02	0.85	**Agreed**
3	A home where only one parent is present, make a child to be tensed	3.15	0.82	**Agreed**
4	A child who grew up taking alcohol, is most likely to be aggressive with others	3.18	0.98	**Agreed**
5	Use of drugs can make students behave harshly towards others	3.37	0.87	**Agreed**
6	In a home where there is constant quarrels and nagging, children will grow up to be aggressive	3.19	0.87	**Agreed**
7	A child who grew up watching violent movies is most likely to bully others	3.01	0.99	**Agreed**
8	Learning about guns and weapons early in life increases the tendency to use them in real life	3.16	0.98	**Agreed**

9	The way parents bring up a child contribute to their aggressive behaviour	3.04	0.88	**Agreed**
10	A school environment where capital punishment is the norm can only harden students and make them aggressive	2.90	1.03	**Agreed**
11	Hanging out constantly with friends who take delight in breaking rules and regulations make one to be an aggressive person	3.31	0.99	**Agreed**
12	A society where violence is common breeds young people who think it is normal to always be aggressive	2.59	1.08	**Agreed**
	Sectional Mean	**3.08**		**Agreed**

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that aggressive behaviour is prevalent among secondary school students in the study area. The majority of respondents acknowledged that they become angry and destroy objects around them when experiencing aggression; some even go as far as threatening others, feeling like a powder keg ready to explode. Most respondents reported difficulty controlling their temper when angry. Studies by Bolu-Steve et al. (2020) and Aklile (2022) identified common aggressive behaviours among secondary school students, including shouting, arson, kicking, fighting, and the use of knives or axes. Similarly, Babalola (2023) reported prevalent aggressive behaviours among secondary school students in Ibadan, Nigeria, such as kicking, hitting, snapping, throwing objects, and screaming. However, the present study reveals a prevalence of behaviours such as extreme anger leading to breaking things, physical fights, inability to control temper, and threatening or hitting others. Therefore, the aggressive behaviours observed among secondary school students in Kogi State, Nigeria, appear to be specific to the study area.

Although the results of other studies differ from those of the current study, they are all related. For instance, these behaviours are precursors to violent acts and can lead to an increased crime rate in

society (Ingram et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). The fact that students may become so angry that they break things, engage in physical fights, lose control of their temper, or threaten and hit others indicates that such behaviours among secondary students can also contribute to violence in the broader community. However, the observation that different aggressive behaviours are prevalent in different study areas highlights the need for more focused research to identify the specific aggressive behaviours common among various groups. This also underscores that the issue of prevalent aggressive behaviours should not be generalized without thorough investigation.

Aggressive behaviours are known to be influenced by psychosocial factors, and identifying these factors is crucial for developing effective solutions to the issue (Liu, 2013; O'Brien, 2011; Osiesi et al., 2023). Kuzhiyengal and Kotian (2024) identified psychosocial factors affecting aggressive behaviours among secondary school students, including family dynamics, peer relationships, individual emotional regulation skills, as well as environmental factors such as school climate and community context. Similarly, Jacob et al. (2025) found that psychosocial factors such as peer influence, social acceptance, gender, and aggressive behaviour are significant among adolescents with intellectual disabilities. Moreover, the combined effects of peer influence, social acceptance, and gender were found to significantly contribute to aggressive behaviour. In the present study, the primary predisposing factors influencing aggressive behaviours among students included drug use, frequent association with friends who enjoy breaking rules and regulations, living in a home characterized by constant quarrels and nagging, and growing up taking alcohol, Learning about guns and weapons early in life increases the likelihood of using them in real life. These findings also indicate that while most psychosocial factors influencing aggressive behaviours among students are common, many are specific to particular areas.

In the present study, respondents agree that measures such as reducing family size to manageable proportions, increasing family income, maintaining an intact home, and avoiding alcohol are effective strategies for controlling aggressive behaviour among secondary school students. Furthermore, children who grow up with less quarrelsome parents and who watch educational movies are less likely to bully others and tend to develop into non-aggressive members of society.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study identified several aggressive behaviours prevalent among secondary school students in Kogi state, Nigeria. These factors include becoming extremely angry and wanting to break things, threatening others, inability to control one's temper, feeling like a powder keg ready to explode, and harboring intense bitterness. Additional behaviours include resorting to violence to protect their rights, a tendency to hit others when provoked, retaliation, being argumentative, and uncontrolled rage leading to physical aggression. Further aggressive behaviours observed in the study include fighting and engaging in arguments during disagreements. Compared to other studies, the aggression exhibited by secondary school students in Kogi State was found to be distinctive.

The results indicate that several psychosocial factors predispose students to aggressive behaviour. These include growing up in a crowded home, living in a family with insufficient income to support its members, residing in a single-parent household, early exposure to alcohol consumption, drug use, and a home environment characterized by constant quarrels and nagging. Additionally, children who frequently watch violent movies are also affected. Other contributing psychosocial factors include early exposure to guns and weapons, parenting styles, attending schools where corporal punishment is common, regularly associating with peers who enjoy breaking rules and regulations, and living in a society where violence is prevalent.

It is therefore recommended that parents and teachers consider various factors that contribute to aggressive behaviour, such as growing up in a crowded home, inadequate family income, single parenting, and addiction to alcohol and drug abuse, as a starting point to address aggressive behaviour among students in the study area. Additionally, the government, through schools, should implement measures such as promoting manageable family sizes through birth control, increasing family income, maintaining intact homes, and discouraging alcohol consumption as strategies to significantly reduce psychosocial aggressive behaviour among students. Furthermore, school-based support teams should recognize the different programs available and the comprehensive measures suggested in this study for implementation as part of preventive efforts against aggressive behaviour. Finally, schools and orientation or guidance teachers could implement parent guidance programs to enable parents to educate their children effectively. These programs

should periodically include knowledge and skills related to the prevention and control of aggressive behaviour.

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