

Prevalence and Incidence of Aggressive Behaviors among Adolescents in Senior Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Nnamdi Obikeze and Ifeoma Obi

Faculty Of Education, Anambra State University
Igbariam Campus, Anambra State, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: Nnamdi Obikeze

Abstract

This is an investigation into the prevalence and incidence of aggressive behaviours among adolescents in senior secondary schools in Anambra State. The participants comprised 500 (280 females & 220 males) secondary school adolescents randomly selected from 10 secondary schools in Awka metropolis of Anambra State. Their ages range from 12 to 18 years with a mean age of 14.7 and standard deviation of 1.73. The study adopted description survey design. Two main scales were employed to assess participants aggressive behaviours and violence experiences. The former was violent behaviour scale while the latter was one with multiple scales "Exposure to violent scales (EVS). The data generated were subjected to analysis using percentages, mean, standard deviation and z-test statistics. The result of the analysis showed that adolescents frequently manifest aggressive behavior such as arson, bullying, beating, hitting, speaking, knife attack etc with the males exceeding the females at the rate of manifestation of aggressive behaviours. The study further revealed that television viewing, stressful situation, use of internet, environmental factors, learning styles among others were the major causes of aggression. The study also showed that there is significant difference between males and females adolescents in the exhibition of aggression. However, the males were found to be more aggressive than their females counterparts. The study recommends that counseling psychologists should consider the prevalence and incidence of aggressive behaviour of adolescents while designing techniques to handle the situation. The study also recommends that the school should join hand, with law enforcement agents in stemming the rate at which adolescents exhibit violent behaviours. Based on the findings of the study, limitations of the study were highlighted and areas for further studies made.

Keywords: prevalence, incidence, aggression, behaviours, adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

Behavior is the interaction between man and his environment. Human behavior is determined by biological, psychological, social and cultural factors. These adolescents' factors indirectly or directly influence human behavior. Adolescence is the second decade of life that represents the transition period from childhood to adulthood. As such an adolescent is neither a child nor an adult. Adolescence is a period that includes many empirical and behavioural changes. Some of these changes are problematic (Savrum, 2000). According to UNICEF REPORT (2011) a bleak future awaits most children, whom they defined as those between 10 and 19 years of age. One of the recent issues concerning both the media and parents is the aggressive behavior of senior secondary school students. The increase in aggressive behavior at school has drawn the attention to this subject among researchers (Efilti, 2008, Kaya & Belgin, 2012).

In a large scale study as reported by Kaya, and Biegin (2012) the World Health Organization (WHO, 2002) observed that the frequency of physical fighting over a 1-year period among male students at high school was 225 in Sweden, 44% in the United States and 76% in Israel. Males are at higher risk not only in

violence incidents resulting in death but also in violence incidents not resulting in death. One of the most significant differences between fatal and non fatal incidents is that fatal incidents often involve guns, while fists, kicks and drilling and cutting tools are used more in non fatal incidents (WHO,2002). Violence incidents not resulting in death significantly increase during middle-adolescence (ages 14-16) and early adulthood (17-20). In a survey conducted in South Africa WHO,(2002) reported that only 3.5% of the violence victims were under 13 years of age while 21.9% of them were between 22 and 35 years. Early adolescents are much more exposed to nonfatal violence than the late adolescents (WHO, 2002).

According to the data from Anambra State Ministry of Education, Nigeria (2011-2013), a total of 6,580 (68%) Secondary School Students were involved in 2,996 violence incidents in the 257 public Secondary Schools. The report showed that occasional harm was (63.7%), bullying/threatening/interference (21.3%) and gossiping/nicknaming (15%). A total of 13 violent incidents resulting in death occurred at schools within a 1-year period. (Post Primary School Service Commission, 2013). In another study (Obi & Obikeze, 2013) observed that the act of getting involved in at least one physical fight was 72.9%

among boys and 27.1% among girls in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Several studies indicate that the reasons for aggressive behavior during this period are multifactorial such as being victim of violence, television viewing, gender, computer use, music preferences, environmental and socio-economic variables (Alikasifoglu, 2004, Arpari, & Ersoy, 2003; Hotman, Hasen, Cochain & Lindsey, 2005; Johnson, Cohen, Smailes, Kasen & Brook, 2002, Ozmen, 2006, Palabiyikogu, 1997; Savage, 2004, Singer et al, 1999; Vahip, 2002; Vlak, Spruijtit, Goede, Maas & Mens, 2005). As the reflection of globalization related to political and socio-economic changes as well as individualization and moral transition in Nigeria especially starting with 2012-2014, there has been concern in the public with regard to the problems faced by students in secondary schools relating to violence and aggression, particularly in large Nigerian cities like Bayelsa, Maiduguri, Kano, Onitsha, Jos, Enugu, Lagos, Kaduna, Port Harcourt, Warri and Niger delta areas. However, the scientific studies suggesting concrete and significant data to determine the reasons for such incidents have been insufficient in Nigeria. The individuals, family, and society have significant roles in healthy development and successful violence prevention programs during adolescence, which constitutes a high-risk period. Determining the levels of aggressive behaviors and the salient contribution factors to these behaviors is a primary step to minimize violence, which is a universal problem and risk in Nigeria with a population of over 170 million people.

The Nigeria governments have devised and employed several measures aimed at curbing adolescent's aggressive behaviors in our society. Such measures include establishment and administration of juvenile justice; promulgation of juvenile courts of laws, establishment of remand homes establishment of security and law enforcement agencies (Okorodudu, 2010). Unfortunately these measures seem not to have worked therefore, there is need for empirical investigation to unveil most of the factors that are likely to predispose adolescents to aggressive behaviors in our society and suggest radical measures to reduce the incidence.

The aim of this study was to investigate the types and rate of aggressive behavior and the contributing factors to this behavior among Secondary school students in Anambra State.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The incidence and prevalence of aggressive behaviour of adolescents in Secondary schools have been reported in Radio, Television and Newspapers. Aggressive behaviour commonly manifested by students include shouting, arson, kicking, fighting,

use of knife or axe among others. This ugly development has adversely affected the academic performance of the students and their overall well being. The students continued involvement in aggressive behaviour has brought miseries and anguish to many parents, teachers, guidance counselors and the government. The number of empirical studies conducted on aggression among adolescents in the study area have been very scanty. It is against this background that the present study was undertaken to determine the rate and prevalence of aggression among in school adolescents in Anambra State.

SIGNIFICANCE/BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

This study will be of immense benefit to adolescents, guidance counsellors, curriculum planners, reading community, government and researchers. The outcome of the study will enable adolescents understand the implications of their getting involved in aggression. The guidance counsellors stand to benefit from the study as it will provide them with the strategies and skills with which to handle all cases of aggression among adolescent in schools. The Curriculum planners will consider and integrate some aspects of the findings into the secondary school curriculum. The study on completion will help the government, in the area of crime prevention. The result of the study will expose the reading community to the etiology of aggression. With such exposure the general public will join hands in the fight against aggression. Finally, the findings of the study will act as an eye opener to researchers who may want to embark in a similar study in future.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the kinds of aggressive behaviors manifested by adolescents in Senior Sec. schools in Anambra State?
2. How frequent are adolescents involved in aggressive behaviors in secondary schools?
3. What are the contributing factors to aggressive behavior among senior sec. school students in Anambra State?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The conduct of this study is guided by one research hypothesis.

H01: There is no significant difference between male and female students at the rate of their manifestation of aggressive behaviors.

METHOD

Participants

The study adopted a descriptive survey design aimed at determining the contributing factors to aggressive behaviors among students in secondary students. The participants comprised 500 (280 females and 220

males) secondary school adolescents randomly selected from 10 secondary schools in Awka metropolis of Anambra State. Their ages ranged from 12-18 years with a mean age of 14:70 and standard deviation of 1.73. Two main scales of Violent Behaviours Scale (VBS) and Exposure to Violent Scale (EVS) were employed to assess participants' aggressive behaviors and violence experiences.

Violent Behavior Scale (VBS)

VBS developed by Song, Singer and Aglin (1998) was used to collect data. This scale assessed six distinct violence types occurring during the physical harm; slapping, or punching someone before the other, person hitting them, beating up someone; attacking someone with a knife, and shooting at or shooting someone with a real gun. The scale consisted of six items and uses a 4-point likert type scale ranging from never (0) to almost every day (3) was used to assess the frequency of each type of violence. The scoring was carried out on the basis of the total points in the scale, the higher the score, the higher the level of aggressive behavior.

The second is the "Exposure to Violent Scales (EVS) which is a self report scale to evaluate different kinds and rate of violence in the period of adolescence at the age of 12-18. It includes two subscales as recent and past exposure to violence with 4-point likert-type scale.

PROCEDURE

Before the commencement of the study. The researcher sought and obtained ethical approvals from the principals of the respective secondary schools selected for the study. Then the course schedules were examined and selected classes were identified for the data collection. In each class, the students were informed about the study's aim, and that their participation was optional or voluntary and their answers were confidential. Written informed assent form was also obtained from the students. The students were given sufficient time (45 mins) to complete and return the questionnaires.

Table 1: Percentage distribution on kinds of aggressive behaviors among students

S/n	Kinds Of Aggressive Behaviours	Male -280		Female -220		Rank order	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	M	F
1.	Physical harm	190 (68)	90 (32)	87 (40)	133 (60)	1	16
2.	Bullying	188 (67)	92 (33)	99 (45)	121 (55)	2	15
3.	Threatening	102 (36)	178 (64)	120 (55)	100 (45)	16	13
4.	Beating	160 (57)	120 (43)	116 (53)	104 (47)	6	14
5.	Knife attack or stabbing	63 (22)	217 (78)	29 (13)	191 (87)	17	18
6.	Slap or punch	142 (51)	138 (49)	140 (64)	80 (36)	18	9
7.	Hitting others	160 (57)	120 (43)	80 (36)	140 (64)	6	17
8.	Gun pointing	26 (9)	254 (91)	10 (5)	210 (95)	19	19
9.	Shot at or shot	12 (4)	268 (96)	4 (2)	216 (98)	20	20
10.	Sexual abuse (rape)	148 (53)	132 (47)	146 (66)	74 (34)	12	5
11.	Spanking	150 (54)	130 (46)	148 (67)	72 (33)	10	4
12.	Spitting	162 (58)	118 (42)	172 (78)	48 (22)	5	3
13.	Shouting	180 (64)	100 (36)	186 (85)	34 (15)	3	2
14.	Use of abusive language	166 (59)	114 (41)	190 (86)	30 (14)	4	1
15.	Spoiling another persons, possession	148 (53)	132 (47)	145 (66)	75 (34)	12	6
16.	Pushing	152 (54)	128 (48)	143 (65)	77 (35)	9	8
17.	Knocking	140 (50)	140 (50)	126 (57)	94 (43)	15	12
18.	Dragging	153 (55)	127 (45)	144 (65)	76 (35)	8	7
19.	Snatching	172 (51)	133 (49)	136 (62)	84 (38)	14	11
20.	Matching	150 (54)	130 (54)	140 (64)	80 (36)	10	9

The response format adopted was a four point likert-type scale of very often, often, occasionally and not at all. This was used to measure the rate of frequency at which male and female students manifest aggressive behaviors. The data generated were analyzed thus: The research questions were answered using percentages mean and standard deviation while the null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using z-text statistic. The data were analyzed and presented in tables in accordance with the basic research questions and null hypothesis that guided the study.

The data in table I show the various kinds of aggressive behaviors students commonly manifest. They include; physical harm, bullying, beating, threatening, spitting, slapping/punching, hitting, spanking, sexual abuse, shouting, arson, use of absence language, pushing, destroying peoples belongings, dragging, snatching and knocking. These items recorded mean scores above 2.5 which is the cut off score. Aggressive behaviors like gunshot, pointing gun and stabbing were not commonly reported. They had mean scores below 2.5. The males tend to manifest aggressive behaviors more than their female colleagues.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of students on the rate of aggressive behaviors

S/n	Kinds of aggressive behaviors	SA	A	D	SD	x	Sd	SA	A	D	SD	Female x	sd
1.	Physical harm	90	60	50	80	2.57	1.21	84	58	62	76	2.54	1.18
2.	Bullying	120	70	60	30	3.0	1.04	100	66	41	73	2.69	1.21
3.	Threatening	110	70	58	42	2.89	1.09	94	60	54	72	2.63	1.19
4.	Beating	89	116	51	24	2.96	0.92	61	97	103	19	2.71	0.88
5.	Knife attack or stabbing	46	53	54	127	2.06	1.14	23	30	44	183	1.62	0.97
6.	Slap or punch	118	81	62	19	3.02	0.96	79	62	38	101	2.43	1.24
7.	Hitting other persons	93	116	54	17	3.06	0.88	74	96	45	65	2.64	1.11
8.	Gun pointing	64	121	77	18	2.83	0.86	18	61	57	144	1.83	0.98
9.	Shot at or shot	13	47	61	159	1.69	0.91	6	18	42	214	1.34	0.70
10.	Sexual abuse (rape)	110	96	65	09	3.01	0.86	64	93	74	49	2.63	1.02
11.	Spanking	83	90	75	21	2.8	0.99	71	64	48	99	2.38	1.20
12.	Spitting	86	103	70	21	2.91	0.93	76	88	63	53	2.67	1.07
13.	Shouting	124	82	38	36	3.05	1.05	107	62	33	18	3.16	0.97
14.	Use of abusive language	95	118	40	27	3.00	0.93	80	61	54	25	2.89	1.03
15.	Spoiling another person possession	97	110	52	21	3.01	0.91	67	90	43	20	2.93	0.93
16.	Pushing	114	65	41	60	2.83	1.18	58	83	51	28	2.78	0.98
17.	Knocking	86	73	48	73	2.61	1.17	76	51	63	30	2.79	1.07
18.	Dragging	74	91	45	70	2.60	1.13	51	72	65	32	2.65	0.99
19.	Snatching	66	109	50	55	2.88	1.92	63	54	73	30	2.68	1.03
20.	Arson (Destruction of public property)	53	116	42	69	2.54	1.86	68	84	46	24	2.88	0.97
Total grand mean score						58.28	18.4					50.87	20.74
						2.91	0.92					2.54	1.04

Table 2 highlights the rate of aggressive behaviors commonly manifested by the male and female students ins secondary schools. The male students recorded a grand mean score of 2.91 whereas their

female colleagues recorded 2.54. This indicated that the male students are more aggressive than the females.

Table 3: Mean responses on the factors responsible for aggressive behaviors (N=500)

S/N	Factors	SA	A	D	SD	x	Sd	Remarks
1.	Being victim of violence	268	140	42	50	3.25	0.98	Agree
2.	Television on viewing	199	200	33	68	2.72	1.20	Agree
3.	Stressful situation	154	266	48	32	3.05	0.82	Agree
4.	Computer use/internet	166	187	64	83	2.87	1.05	Agree
5.	Environmental factor	108	122	153	117	2.44	1.07	Agree
6.	Mental disorder	118	179	50	153	2.53	1.04	Agree
7.	Learning styles	128	264	67	41	2.96	0.85	Agree
8.	Psychological development patterns	124	187	57	180	2.47	1.16	Disagree
9.	Role models	189	227	43	39	3.14	0.87	Agree
10.	Family background	233	162	47	58	3.16	1.00	Agree
11.	Peer group influence	218	154	60	68	3.04	1.04	Agree
12.	Poverty or harsh economic conditions	163	244	56	37	3.07	0.86	Agree
13.	Inconsistent laws or regulations	89	216	152	43	2.70	0.85	Agree
14.	Emotional outburst	165	245	64	26	3.09	0.81	Agree
Total grand x score		=	40.47	x	13.6			
Grand x score		=	2.89	x	1.05			

Table 3 presents the contributing factors to aggressive behaviors by students in secondary schools. The respondents agreed that factors such as being a victim of violence, television viewing, stressful situation, use of computers, internet, mental disorder, role model, family background, peer group influence, poverty, inconsistent rules and ones emotional outburst are the major causes of aggression among students in Sec. Schools. The students recorded above 2.50 which is the cut off score. However, the students disagreed with environmental situations and psychological development pattern as factors contributing to student’s manifestation of aggression. The two items 5 and 8 had mean scores below 2.5. The grand mean score of 2.89 indicates that all the items in table 3 contributed to aggression among the students at various levels.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

HO1: There is no significant differences between male and female students in the rate of their manifestation of aggressive behaviors.

Table 4: Z-test statistics on the rate of manifestation of aggressive behaviors between male and female students.

Source of variation	No	x	Sd	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male	280	58.28	18.4	4.16	1.96	Ho1 Rejected
Female	220	50.87	20.74			

The calculated Z (4.16) at 0.05 level of significant and degree of freedom 498, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between male and female students at the rate which they manifest aggressive behavior is rejected whereas the null hypothesis is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the prevalence and incidence of aggressive behaviors among secondary school students in Anambra State. The outcome of the study showed that secondary school students frequently manifest the following forms of aggression such as, physical harm, bullying, threatening, beating, knife attack, slap, hitting, gun pointing, shot at, spanking, shouting, use of abusive language sexual abuse, another person, belonging, knocking, snatching and matching. The findings of this study is similar to previous studies (Dibia,2013, Okoye, 2013, &Ugochukwu,2008). These studies opined that behaviors like fighting, punch, hitting stabbing, shouting, sexual abuse, spanking, and arson are very common among students in secondary school in Nigeria.

The results of this study reported high rate of aggressive behaviors among males than females students. Hitting someone was the most frequently reported aggressive behavior by males while shouting

was reported as the most aggressive behavior among the female adolescents. The outcome of this study is in agreement with similar studies (Alikasifoglu 2004, Eke & Ogei,2006). These scholars asserted that both male and female students are involved in aggressive behaviors. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between male and female students in the manifestation of aggressive behaviors was rejected. The findings of this study was supported by previous studies (Ugochukwu 2008 & Dibia 2013). According to results from the study conducted by the Research Commission of TGNA in Turkey (2008), male students reported that they had more exposure to violent events than females. Differences across gender were related to the location of the violence while boys were exposed to violence outside the home, girls were in more danger at home. Another study consisting of 2,500 high school students found that boys were more exposed to all kinds of aggressive behaviors than girls (Ates & Yagmurlu, 2010).

The findings of this study revealed that aggression among adolescents is caused by several factors such as being victim of violence, television viewing, stress, harsh environment, poverty, mental disorder, role model, enrolment outburst, peer group influence, poor learning styles, use of internet, and poor family background. The results of this study agrees with Kaa, Bilgin & Singer (2011) who contended that aggressive behavior is caused by television viewing, computer sue, gender, music preferences, environmental, victim of violence and socio economic variables.

The results of the study indicated that the male students more than their females counter parts are more involved in aggressive behaviors.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

These findings are mere representative of this sample and thus cannot be generalized. Again, no efforts were made to measure specific factors that may be responsible for adolescent’s manifestation of aggressive behaviors. Inview of the above findings and limitation, there is need for further studies to determine the aggressive behaviors of students in the Universities in Nigeria. Nonetheless, this study represents one of the largest investigations on the contributing factors to aggressive behavior change and their undesirable behavior becomes central in the services of Counselors.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING PRACTICE

The findings of this study have some implications for counseling practice in Nigeria. Although the prevalence of aggressive behavior is a universal problem, counselling psychologists have an important role to identify and protect students who exhibit

aggressive behaviors in their homes, neighbourhood, and schools. There is no gainsaying the fact that these students need assistance in dealing with aggression. This assistance may include learning problem-solving skills, conflict management resolution techniques, anger management, and development of positive self-concept.

Guidance Counsellors can lead the school staff to ensure safety for the young people. Counselors should indicate interdisciplinary efforts with parents, teachers, school administrators and communities to achieve the best strategies for prevention of aggressive behaviors among secondary school students.

Counsellors should screen and identify students who are exposed to aggressive behavior during their life time in a timely way. In addition, collaborative efforts should be identified between family and school staff in connection with student's disciplinary problematic behaviors.

Counselling being a social service that aims at helping people resolve their numerous problems or concerns, helping students with aggressive behaviors to change their undesirable behavior becomes central in the services of counsellors. Most students with behavior problems experience a lot of social and psychological trauma characterized by loneliness, rejection, conflicts and others. Counsellors are required to show students love, respect, and genuine empathic understanding at all times.

Through counselling, students with aggressive behaviors could be assisted to this end. There are many behavior modification techniques the counsellors could employ to help students who consistently exhibit aggressive behaviors to change to appropriate personalities, manifesting desirable behaviors and such techniques include fading, shaping, modeling, reinforcement, and reward, behavioral contract, stimulus control, and others. Scholars such as Banston and Caldas (1998) asserted that these techniques are very useful in treating bad behaviors of young persons.

Above all, counsellors could apply value clarification counselling techniques that act on beliefs and behaviors to alter the undesirable behaviors of adolescents who manifest aggression so that they can become self fulfilled by redirecting their behaviors to an acceptable standards in the society.

CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to determine the types and rates of aggressive behaviors among the senior secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria and the key contributors to such behaviors. The findings of the study revealed that students manifest

aggressive behaviors such as pushing, hitting, spitting, bullying, shouting sexual abuse, spanking, kicking, fighting arson, matching, dragging, matching among others. The study also showed that male adolescents frequently manifest aggressive behaviors in their interaction more than their female counterparts. The most commonly exhibited aggressive behavior among the males was physical harm while that of the females was use of abusive language.

The manifestation of aggressive behaviors among adolescents will likely affect their growth and development in terms of personality. Consequently counsellors intervention was considered as a panacea to curb aggressive behavior among adolescents. To this end, the use of behavior modification techniques by counsellors was suggested as a way forward.

Future studies using both qualitative and quantities designs should focus on the determination of the perceptions of aggressive behavior among adolescents and their families

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the implications of the study, and the conclusion thereof, the following recommendations are made.

1. Parents and guardians should act as models before their children by behaving well. This is because adolescents watch and imitate the bad behaviors of their parents/guardians.
2. Parents and teachers should be encouraged to device or seek better alternative ways of correcting the adolescents when they exhibit wrong behaviors instead of giving them punishment always. This is because constant punishment could make adolescents to be more hardened and engage in nefarious activities.
3. The school authorities should provide a conducive learning environment for learning so as to reduce the incidences of aggression and improve the school performance of young adolescents.
4. Parents, guardians and siblings should be encouraged to identify and report cases of aggression manifested by adolescents to the school authorities for proper management.
5. The school authorities and parents should provide recreational facilities to keep the adolescents busy and reduce boredom. This measure will no doubt reduce the rate at which aggressive behaviors occur in adolescents.
6. There is need for collaboration among parents, teachers, guidance counsellors, psychologists, social workers, priests, traditional rulers and other stakeholders to join hands in the fight against all forms of aggressive behaviors manifested by the adolescents. This approach

will help reduce student's involvement in violent activities.

7. The school guidance counsellors and teachers should occasionally organize workshops and conferences where experts in the area of behavior modification and psycho-therapy will be invited to talk to the students on the harmful effects of aggressive behaviors in their future lives.

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