

SELF ESTEEM, GENDER AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AS PREDICTORS OF AGGRESSION AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined self-esteem, religious affiliation and gender as predictors of aggression among secondary school adolescents in Anambra State. The participants comprised two hundred and forty senior secondary school students drawn from 24 secondary schools in the six education zones of Anambra State. The age range of the respondents was between 18 and 24 years with mean age of 14.70 and standard deviation of 1.73. Through stratified random sampling technique a total of 240 (120 males & 120 females) respondents were selected for the study. The study determined the power of self-esteem, religious affiliation and gender in predicting aggression. The study was guided by three null hypotheses stated at 0.05 level of significance. Three instruments; index of self-esteem, Buss Perry aggressive questionnaire, and religious affiliation questionnaire were employed for data collection. The three step multiple regression statistics was used to analyze the data. The result showed that gender has a significant predictor-power on aggression. Self-esteem and religious affiliation did not significantly predict aggression. The result of the study was consistent with other previous studies. The outcome of the study suggest that counseling psychologists and other professionals involved in behavior modification should consider self-esteem, religious affiliation and gender while handling cases of aggression in adolescents. Based on the findings of the study and limitations thereof, the researcher recommends the need to carry out a similar study in other geo-political zones with a larger sample so as to make comparisons. Again, there is need to carryout studies on the effect of other variables on aggression in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

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KEYWORDS: self esteem, gender, religious affiliation, predictor, Anambra state.

INTRODUCTION

Aggression is a threatening behavior or feeling that often result in fighting. It is a behavior whose primary purpose or function is to injure another person or organism whether physically or psychologically. The chambers 21st century dictionary (1996) defined aggression as the act of attacking another person or country without being provoked. Aggression has been described as one of the most disruptive and pervasive behavioural problems for children and usually persist across contexts and relationships. (Waldman, 1996, Huesmann, Dubons & Boxer 2009).

Aggression is associated with certain characteristics such as fighting, hitting, shouting, yelling, temper tantrums and stiffening of body, name calling and use of abusive language. In addition, aggressive behavior include finger/nail biting, hair twisting, pinching another, pencil chewing, throwing objects at others, destroying another child possession and rejection of

friendly gestures (Ikenyiri, 2003). Aggressive children tend to be very selective in their choice of friends; they easily identify their enemies and compete for rivalry.

The manifestation of aggressive traits cut across all ages and levels of human existence. This manifestation is enhanced by certain factors classed as biological, home background, and environmental factors. Other identified encouraging factors include frustrations, self inadequacies and gender of the aggressor among others (Hanlet & Haggai, 2003). The consequences of aggression are numerous and have implications for aggressors, their victims, the school, families, communities, educational system and the society at large. It affects the overall development of the individuals by affecting their mental health, academic achievement and growth, psycho-social functioning and adjustment among others (Hanlex & Haggai, 2003).

Aggression has been associated with self esteem. Self esteem refers to ones attitudes towards oneself or one's opinion or evaluation of oneself which may be positive or negative (Rosemberg, 1965). It is the evaluation of the self; the fact that a person has high self esteem means that the individuals likes himself or herself. On the other hand, having low self esteem means that the individual feel uncomfortable about himself. Usher (200) observed that low self esteem is an emotional state that carries discomfort that can develop into behavior problems which includes delinquency, aggressive behavior and so on. He noted however that the seriousness of the problem depends not only on the nature of adolescents self esteem but also on other conditions such as difficult school transition and a troubled family life.

Substantial body of research has addressed the relationship between religious affiliation and aggression. Religious affiliation refers to the level of ones devotion or involvement to her religion which includes frequency of attendance, and participation in religious activities, religious conviction and how it guides one's action. Musa (2013) contended that most religious riots witnessed in most parts of Northern Nigeria could be attributed to religious affiliation. He argued that some youths particularly the Islamic fundamentalist have taken up arms against the non-Muslim group on the belief that violence is a veritable means of making converts.

Again, gender identity has been associated with aggressive behavior of individuals in a social setting. Gender is the fact of being either male or female while gender identity is the internal sense of being either male or female (Ramalingam, 1991). The males folk are historically believed to be generally more aggressive than females (Cole & Dodge, 1997, Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), and men commit the vast majority of murders (Buss, 2005). This is one of the most robust and reliable behavioural sex differences and it has been found across many different age groups and cultures. There is evidence that males are quicker to aggression (Frey, 2003) and more likely than females to express their aggression physically (Bjorkqvist, 1994). When considering indirect forms of non-violent aggression, such as relational aggression and social rejection, some scientists (Archers, 2004, Card, Stucky, Sawalani & Little, 2008) argued that females can be quite aggressive although females aggression is really expressed physically. The level and form of aggression expressed by male and female adolescents is dependent on sex-stereotype which developed out of human values and expectations.

Aggressive behaviour are mostly observed among the youths more than any other group. This could be attributed to the ability of the youths to watch and imitate the behavior of others. This argument is supported by Bandura and Walters (1962) that

aggression is a learned behavior which is acquired by watching and imitating the behavior of others including violent behaviors. The incidence of aggression with its attendant consequences has generated great concern to all and sundry. The attempt to ascertain factors that predict aggressive tendencies among adolescents in Anambra State prompted the need for the present study so as to determine the extent to which self esteem, gender and religious affiliation predict aggression.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Aggression as a hostile behavior has adversely affected the personal and social functions of the aggressors and their victims as it intrudes on their rights and impairs normal classroom functioning and other social issues. Parents, guardians, teachers and psychologist are worried on the devastating effect of aggression on the aggressors, their families and the society at large. Aggression may result from the early socialization of children and families which play an important role in the socialization process.

Previous studies on aggression tend to examine the interaction between parental behaviours, emotion and relationship with the parents as the strongest single predictor of children's aggressiveness. There seem to be little or no studies carried out in Anambra State to determine the powers of self esteem, gender and religious affiliation in predicting aggression among adolescents. It is against this background that the problem of this study is stated thus: how do gender, self esteem and religious affiliation predict aggression among adolescents in secondary schools.

HYPOTHESES

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses stated at 0:05 level of significance.

1. Self esteem will not significantly predict aggression.
2. Gender will not significantly predict aggression
3. Religious affiliation will not significantly predict aggression.

METHOD

Participants:

The participants consisted of 240 (120 males & 120 females) senior secondary school students (SS II) selected from 24 public secondary schools in Anambra State. Their ages ranged from 18-24 years with a mean age of 14.70 and standard deviation of 4.73. The purposive random sampling techniques was adopted in selecting four secondary schools (2 males & 2 females) from each of the six education zones in Anambra State. Again, from each of the sampled schools, 10 students were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique. This gave a total of 240 participants.

The study population comprised 53,279 secondary school students in the 256 public secondary schools in Anambra State (Department of Research and Statistics, Ministry of Education, Awka, 2014). The study was delimited to public secondary schools in Anambra State. In order words, private and mission secondary schools were not involved in the study because of administrative bottlenecks that hinder easy access to those schools.

Instruments:

Three instruments were used for data collection namely: Index of Self Esteem (ISE), Buss Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) and Religious Affiliation Scale (RAS).

The Index of Self-Esteem developed by Hudson (1982) was used to measure self esteem. This scale comprised 25 items with five response options ranging from 1-rarely, 2- 1 little of the time, 3-some of the same, 4-a good part of the time to 5 – most or all of the time. Two sample items from the test reads: I feel that others get along much better than I do (Item 2) and I feel that I am a beautiful person, (Item 3). Hudson (1982) obtained a validity coefficient of .93. and a test-retest reliability coefficient of .92. Whereas Hudson (1982) provided the norm for American Clients, Onighaiye (1996) provided norms for Nigerians. The norms for Nigerian participants are 30.89 for males and 32.04 for females).The test was correlated with the interpersonal sensitivity subscale of the symptom checklist – 90 (SCL-0) and it has a concurrent validity coefficient of .46. It also yielded a discriminatory validity of .42 with the Ego identity scale (EIS) (Hudson, 1982).

The second instrument is the Buss Perry Aggression Questionnaire developed by Buss and Perry (1992). The instrument was used to measure aggression. This scale comprised 29 items with five response options ranging from 1 – extremely uncharacteristic of me to 5 – extremely characteristic of me. The (BPAQ) has a validity alpha of .90 and four substances comprising verbal aggression (5 items, $\alpha=76$ physical aggression (9 items, $\alpha=83$), anger (7 items, $\alpha=81$) and Hostility (8 items, $\alpha=84$). Although it has wide cross cultural validation, this test has not been adapted to Nigerian participants. The researcher administered the questionnaire to 100 students of Community Secondary School, Ugwuoba in Enugu State (mean age = 16.7, male = 40, & female = 68) alongside the Hostility subscale of Symptom Checklist -90 (SCL-90) of Derogats, Lipman and Covi (1977) and it produced a validity coefficient concurrent of .44 ($p \leq 0.01$). It also yielded a Guttman split-half coefficient of .65 and a Cronbach's Alpha of .49. The norm for Nigerian participants in BPAQ is 79.57.

The third instrument was Religious Affiliation Scale developed by Omoluabi (1995).The scale was used to measure religious affiliation. It consisted of 21 items.

Respondents were required to rate the extent they agree with each statement as it applies to them in a true or false format. Direct scoring was applied to all the 21 items in the scale. Examples of the items in the scale are; I believe in a supreme God/Allah, I go to Church/Mosque always. Omoluabi (1995) reported a test re-test reliability coefficient of 0.97. This instrument has a Nigerian norm of 30.87.

Procedure:

The researcher sought and obtained permission from the relevant school authorities and class representatives from the sampled secondary schools. On agreed dates, the researchers with the help of the three trained research assistants administrated the instruments to the selected adolescents.

The purpose of the study was first explained to all the participants, and they were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the research before completing the questionnaires. Follow-up process was facilitated immediately after the completion of the questionnaires.

All the participants gave a written consent before participating in the study. Anonymity and confidentiality were adhered to. In cases where the questionnaires aroused painful memories, there was an agreement in place for the participants to be referred to psychologists for counseling or psychotherapy, and where need be, to social workers for social help; but no such cases was reported.

Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select 10 students from each of the 24 secondary schools sampled in the six education zones of Anambra State. The stratified random sampling technique was used for selecting participants because of its ability to capture major features of the population in the sample. Like a weighted average, it produces characteristics in the sample that are proportionate of the population. Thus four schools (2 males & 2 females) were selected from each zone and 10 students from each school. This gave a total of 240 respondents (120 males & 120 females). The 240 participants were selected from the 24 secondary schools using simple random sampling technique. This involves the use of folded pieces of paper which was inscribed "A" or "B". These folded papers were equal to the number of students in each selected school and were mixed up in a bag. The students were instructed to pick one of the papers. Papers that contain "A" were used for the study whereas those that contain "B" were discarded.

The administration and retrieval of the instruments lasted for three weeks.

Design and Statistics

The study adopted a cross-sectional correlation survey design. Cross sectional correlational design

was used for the study because the study investigated the extent to which different variables-self esteem, religious affiliation and gender predict aggression. The three steps hierarchical multiple regression statistics derived from SPSS 17.0 was used to analyze the data generated.

The three-steps hierarchical multiple regression statistics was used because this study involves multiple independent variables. Anderson (2003) asserted that the hierarchical multiple regressions is capable of combining the multiple independent variables in a hierarchical manner to generate a combination which best separate the independent variable groups and also gives the predictive power of each variable.

RESULTS

Summary results of three steps Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses for aggression on gender, self esteem and religious affiliation

Predictors	AGGRESSION		
	Step 1β	Step 2β	Step 3β
step 1	-		
Gender	.50***	.50***	.51***
Step 2			
Self Esteem		.30 ^{NS}	.03 ^{NS}
step 3			
Religious Affiliation			.4 ^{NS}
DF	80.83***	.29	.58
DR	.25***	.25	.26
DR ²		.00	.00
DF	1.238	2.237	3.236
Dublin Watson	1.67		

Note: N=24, *** p< .0005, ^{NS}Not Significant

Table 1 presents the result of a hierarchical multiple regression analysis which tested the entire hypotheses of the study. The overall model of the regression analysis was significant [R² = 2.6, F (3,236) = 27.10, P<. 0005]. The overall fit of the model shows that 25.6% of the variation in the participants aggression rate was explained. Also, the Dublin-Watson of .67 falls within the accepted range (1.5<D<2.5), indicating that there is no autocorrelation problem in the data and that the error term is independent. Gender explained 25.4% of the variations in aggression while self esteem and religious affiliation explained only .01% and .2% of the variations in adolescents aggressive behaviors.

Only gender (β = .50, p< .0005) was found to be a significant predictor of aggression in all three steps of the hierarchical regression with males dummy coded as 1) displaying stronger aggressiveness (t=8.99) than their female counterparts (dummy coded as 0). This confirms that hypothesis 2 earlier stated in the null form is rejected implying that males are significantly likely to be more aggressive than females.

On the other hand, self-esteem [β = .03, p< .05], and religious affiliation [β = .04, p< .05] where both found not to be significant predictors of aggression.

DISCUSSION

The result of the study showed that self esteem had a positive (though not significant) relationship with aggression [β = .03, p>.05], religious affiliation [β = .04, p>.05], were both found not to be significant predictor of aggression. Only gender [β = .50, p< .0005] was found to be a significant predictor of aggression in all the three steps of the hierarchical regression with males displaying strong aggressiveness (t=8-99) than their female counterparts.

The independent contribution showed that although self esteem has positive relationship with aggression, the relationship was not significant (t=54, p> .05). Based on this finding, the null hypothesis which states that self esteem would not significantly predict aggression among adolescents in secondary school was accepted. The result that self-esteem could predict aggression was significantly expected. The findings revealed that students with low self-esteem have gender tendency for aggression than students with high self-esteem. The study by Bentizn and Justica (2006), Usher, Zahn-Waxier (2000) and Nunn and Thomas (1999) showed that subjects with low self-esteem when provoked by an experimental assistant express their anger outwardly. The result of the study is in agreement with the findings of Bumesietr and Bodar (1998) that self-esteem is not significantly related to aggression. The study, however, contradicts the work of Scheff and Feraron, (2004) that the relationships between self-esteem and aggression is significant. The above authors showed that the link between self-esteem and aggression have shown mixed results.

The next hypothesis which states that religious affiliation does not significantly predict aggression was accepted. The result infer that as religious affiliation scores reduces (indication of low religiosity) aggression increases (though not significantly). The result of this study was supported by the work of Zakari (2009) and also Isa (2010) who contended that religious affiliation of individuals have no association with their aggressive tendencies. Then argued that religiosity has no relationship with aggression. Nonetheless this study contradicts previous studies (Sahail & Abram, 2002) and Templer (1972) who found that religiosity is concerned with aggression and fear of death. The result of the present study could be attributed to the high level of education and religious tolerance prevalent in the south-east of Nigeria which does not promote aggression.

The research hypothesis three which states that there is no significant relationship between gender and aggression was rejected. This implies that aggression was found to be gender specific in this study. The outcome of this study contradicts the work of Okon, Momoh, Imhoude and Idiakhena (2011) which asserted that gender did not independently predict aggression among adolescents in secondary schools. This study supported the work of Dibia (2013) and Ugochukwu (2010) that the males exhibit a greater degree of aggression than the females. The findings may be as a result of the method used in this study as physical, verbal and relational aggression were collapsed as aggressive behaviors.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study that religious affiliation does not contribute significantly to aggression calls for the inclusion of various variables such as self-esteem, gender, aggressive cues, provocation and frustration in the search for the causes of aggression.

The findings that self-esteem contributes significantly to aggression has helpful implications for the treatment of behavior disorders and the control of aggression. This entails that when these psychological problems are implicated, boosting the clients self-esteem should be included in the treatment plan.

Another important implication of the study is that the gender of an individual could influence the manifestation of aggression. This implies that such personal factor like gender should be considered in the assessment of clients living with psychological problems.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study was limited by some challenges which include inadequate sample size that could not allow generalization. The study was conducted in one (South-east zone) out of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. Additional research on other zones will be of great interest since the findings will help in addressing this limitation.

Another major limitation is the one it shares with other studies having non-experimental design and the inability to establish causality. This study could not address questions of causality because of the onetime snap nature of data collection which characterize cross sectional research design.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

In view of the findings of the study and the limitations thereof, the following recommendations are made:

1. Researchers who are interested in this topic, should try to increase the sample size to about a thousand as the sample size used in this study may be considered too small to be used.

2. There is need to carry out more studies that can establish a causal link between the independent and dependent variables in the West African sub-region such studies should be able to operationalize self-esteem and religious affiliation and manipulate them to check their effect on the dependent variables.
3. The federal and state ministries of Education should direct for the establishment of viable psychotherapy/counselling centres in all post primary schools in Nigeria where clients having aggressive related cases will be handled by psychologists.
4. There is need to carry out new studies on the effect of other variables on aggression. This is necessary to identify other factors apart from self-esteem and gender that mediate the link between religious affiliation and aggression.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study set out to examine the ability of self-esteem, gender and religious affiliation to predict aggression behaviour of adolescents in secondary schools in Anambra State of Nigeria. The study adopted a cross sectional design. It was guided by three null hypotheses stated at 0.05 level of significance. Three major instruments viz Index of Self-esteem, Buss Perry aggressive questionnaire, and Religious affiliation questionnaire were employed to gather data. The data gathered were analyzed using the three step multiple regression statistics. The outcome of the study showed that gender has a significant predictive power on aggression. Self-esteem and religious affiliation did not significantly predict aggression. The outcome of the study suggests that Health workers, Guidance Counselors counselling psychologists and other professionals involved in behavior modification should consider religious affiliation while handling aggressive tendencies of adolescents in secondary schools.

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