

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS-TEACHER INTERACTION AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR AMONG SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KADUNA STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between student-teacher and student-student interactions and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria, with implications for counselling interventions. Utilizing a correlational research design, the study population comprised male and female students exhibiting aggressive behaviour in public senior secondary schools in Kaduna and Zaria Metropolises, totalling three thousand five hundred (3,501). A sample of 377 students was selected across 30 public secondary schools in Zaria and Kaduna metropolis using standardized instruments, including the Aggression Scale and School Environment Scale. The instruments were validated by the senior lecturers in the Educational Psychology and Counselling department and experts in statistics and language. To establish the reliability of the instruments, a pilot study was conducted at Demonstration Secondary School (HMS School), Kaduna Polytechnic. The Cronbach Alpha Method was used to test the reliability, which produced a reliability coefficient of 0.89. Mean and standard deviation were used to present the descriptive data, while the hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation [PPMC]. The findings reveal significant positive correlations between student-teacher and student-student relationships and aggressive behaviour, indicating that strained interpersonal dynamics within the school environment are closely linked to heightened aggression. The analysis of student-teacher relationships shows that while students appreciate academic support, constructive feedback, and feeling valued by their teachers, they report low trust, motivation, and approachability. These relational gaps contribute to conflict and aggression. Similarly, assessing student-student interactions highlights moderate positive engagement through open communication and extracurricular activities but identifies deficiencies in conflict resolution, peer mentoring, and inclusivity. Aggressive behaviour patterns such as argumentative, retaliatory tendencies, and emotional dysregulation were prevalent among students. The study underscores the need for targeted counselling interventions to address these issues. Recommendations include training programs for teachers on emotional intelligence, effective communication, and classroom management; peer mediation programs to improve student conflict resolution; and emotional regulation workshops focusing on anger management techniques. Additionally, fostering a positive school climate through anti-bullying campaigns and inclusivity initiatives is essential to reduce aggression and enhance the overall well-being of students.

Keywords: Aggressive Behaviour, Counselling, Student-Teacher Interactions, Student-Student Interactions, School Environment

Introduction

Student aggression and disruptive behaviors in schools have become increasingly concerning issues that significantly impact the educational environment, teacher efficacy, and student learning outcomes. The quality of teacher-student relationships plays a crucial role in shaping these behavioral patterns and their manifestations in the school setting. Aggressive behaviour encompasses actions aimed at harming others physically or psychologically, including verbal threats or physical acts. It may manifest as impulsive, emotionally charged aggression (reactive) or as calculated, goal-oriented aggression (proactive) (NCBI Bookshelf, 2024; Malti & Rubin, 2018). From the psychological point of view, Baron and Richardson (2019) refer to aggressive behaviour as any action intended to harm another individual, whether physically, verbally, or relationally, or to damage property. This behaviour may be overt or covert and is motivated by the intent to cause harm, distinguishing it from accidental harm.

Recent global statistics from UNESCO indicate that approximately one in three students (32%) report experiencing bullying from peers at school at least once in the last month (Ighaede-Edwards, et al, 2023; Chen, *et al*, 2021; Dietrich, & Cohen, 2021). The prevalence of aggressive behavior varies significantly across regions, with the highest rates reported in the Eastern Mediterranean (45.1%) and African regions (43.5%), while Europe shows lower rates at 8.4%. In the African context, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, the situation is particularly alarming with a reported prevalence rate of (48%), followed by North Africa at 43%. Studies across various African nations have revealed concerning statistics: Malawi (40.1%), Ghana (44.5%), Zambia (62.8%), and Sierra Leone (54.6%) all report high incidences of bullying and aggressive behavior among school students (Yang *et al*, 2023).

Longobardi *et al.* (2021) and Endedijk *et al.* (2022) emphasize that the quality of students' connections with their teachers is fundamental in affecting adolescents' prosocial behavior. The Nigerian context presents an even more challenging scenario. According to recent studies, the prevalence of bullying and aggressive behavior in Nigerian school's ranges between 21% and 82%, with physical violence accounting for (85%) of victimization against in-school children. The Federal Ministry of Education, in collaboration with UNICEF, found that psychological violence affects (50%) of in-school children, with higher rates in southern regions (61%) compared to northern regions (38.7%) (UNICEF, 2019).

Previous studies of Lin and Tsai (2023); Yang *et al.* (2023); Obsuth *et al* (2023); Talty *et al* (2023) revealed that poor teacher-student relationships were significantly associated with increased externalizing behaviours, including aggression. Positive teacher-student relationships acted as a protective factor, reducing such behaviour. However, the study of Ardestani *et al* (2022); Zhou (2021) found that aggressive student behaviour often provokes negative responses from teachers, such as verbal or emotional violence. These teacher reactions can exacerbate student aggression, suggesting a cyclical relationship rather than a straightforward correlation between poor TSRs and aggression.

Accordingly, the findings of Wang (2023); Ahmed *et al* (2022); Lei *et al* (2018) demonstrated that positive teacher-student relationships, characterized by trust, respect, and

emotional support, significantly enhance student engagement, motivation, and academic performance. Emotional intelligence was found to mediate this relationship, further emphasizing the role of interpersonal dynamics in education. Also, Froment *et al* (2021); Roorda, *et al.* (2017); Prino *et al* (2016) studies revealed that mistrust in teachers, fear of judgment, and breaches of confidentiality contributed to students' reluctance to seek support from teachers. This lack of trust negatively impacted academic performance, motivation, self-esteem, and mental health.

In other studies, Poulin and Boivin (2024); Hardie *et al.* (2023); Kennedy (2023); Kaur and Niwas (2017) confirmed that the presence of aggressive peers significantly increased aggressive behaviours, particularly among students with high aggression-relevant propensity, such as weak morality and poor self-control. Contrary to the above findings, Longobardi, *et al* (2016); Avant *et al.* (2016) Xue, *et al.* (2024) studies of that Socio-Economic Status [SES] mismatches were more predictive of aggressive behaviours than strained peer interactions alone. Strong parent-child relationships further reduced aggression regardless of peer dynamics, challenging the sole attribution of aggression to peer strain.

Alnaeem (2021); Gorski (2021); Munir and Zaheer (2021) that participation in extracurricular activities significantly improves communication skills among students, reduces communication apprehension, aggressive behaviour and fosters interpersonal relationships. However, the research findings of Ribeiro, *et al* (2024); O'Donnell, *et al* (2023); Díaz-Iso *et al* (2020) demonstrate that while extracurricular activities can have benefits, this study found that excessive involvement may negatively impact academic conscientiousness due to time constraints and overextension. Murrell *et al* (2021) and Kessio (2019) studies confirmed that students struggling to resolve conflicts constructively within group projects, often resorting to avoidance or aggressive tactics.

The pattern of aggressive behaviour of students, the findings of Osumah (2022); Obikeze and Obi (2020); Omoteso (2019); Onukwufor (2019) revealed that boys exhibited higher levels of aggression than girls, with behaviours such as retaliation and suspicion towards others being prevalent among students. The findings suggest a significant relationship between environmental factors and aggressive tendencies among adolescents. In terms of regulating emotions, research revelations of Anjanappa *et al.* (2023); Estévez *et al* (2020); Gül *et al.* (2019) establish relationship between emotion dysregulation and problematic technology use in adolescents. Socially, the findings of Winer *et al.* (2024); Dunbar *et al.* (2022) found that experiencing frequent disagreements with peers, highlight the need for conflict resolution programs.

It could be observed from previous research that positive teacher-student relationships foster emotional stability, reduce behavioural issues, and enhance academic performance. Conversely, negative or strained interactions may exacerbate aggression and other antisocial behaviours among students. Factors such as poor communication, lack of discipline, and inadequate emotional support from teachers could contribute to the prevalence of aggression in schools. Moreover, aggressive behaviours such as bullying, fighting, and defiance towards authority disrupt classroom management and hinder educational processes. Despite the importance of understanding this dynamic, limited studies have specifically examined the link

between teacher-student interaction and aggressive behaviour within the unique socio-cultural context of Kaduna State. This gap in knowledge underscores the need for research to:

- i. find out the relationship between student-teacher and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary students in Kaduna State.
- ii. find out the relationship between students-students interaction and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary school students in Kaduna State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What is the relationship between student-teacher conflict and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary students in Kaduna State?
- ii. What is the relationship between students-student's interaction and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary school students in Kaduna State?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were tested at $p \leq 0.05$:

Ho₁. There is no significant relationship between student-teachers and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary students in Kaduna State.

Ho₂. There is no significant relationship between students-student's interaction and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary school students in Kaduna State.

Methodology

The researcher adopted a correlational research design to investigate the relationship between the school environment and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary school students in Zaria and Kaduna metropolis. A correlation research design refers to studies in which the purpose is to discover the relationship between two or more variables (Nworgu in Osakede, 2017). This design was chosen because the study aimed to explore the relationship between the school environment and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary school students in Kaduna state: Implications for counselling. The study population comprised male and female students exhibiting aggressive behaviour in public senior secondary schools in Kaduna and Zaria Metropolises, totalling three thousand five hundred (3,501). The researcher selected SS I and SS II students based on their intact presence in the school and accessibility. A sample of four hundred (400) students was selected from thirty (30) public secondary schools in Zaria and Kaduna metropolises (Research Advisors, 2010). The secondary schools and participants were selected using simple and stratified sampling techniques.

The instrument for data collection in the study was a questionnaire. The first instrument, titled "Aggression Scale," was adopted from the work of Faris, Ishak, and Ramli (2016), a rating instrument for identifying students or persons with aggressive behaviour. The instrument contained twenty-nine (29) items with a rating scale of 5 points: 1 = Does not Reflect My Behaviour (DRB), 2 = Rarely Reflects My Behaviour (RRB), 3 = Occasionally Reflects My Behaviour (ORB), 4 = Sometimes Reflects My Behaviour (SRB), and 5 = Always Reflects My Behaviour (ARB). The overall score in this questionnaire was 145, divided into three levels: high 117–145 (extremely aggressive), intermediate 88–116 (moderately

aggressive), and low 29–87 (very aggressive). This instrument was used to identify the population of senior secondary students with aggressive behaviour. The second instrument, titled "School Environment Scale (SCEVRS)," was adapted from the work of Pianta (2010) and Kelly (2010), a rating instrument for school environment containing 30 items based on the variables of the study. Amendments were made in the two instruments to suit the study, dividing the items to capture the major variables: student-student relationships, teacher-student relationships, gender, school management, and learning faculties. Section A of the instrument contained the respondents' biodata, while Section B contained items on the school environment. The instrument had a five-item rating scale: Rarely: 1, Seldom: 2, Sometimes: 3, Often: 4, and Almost Always: 5. The third instrument was titled "The Aggression Questionnaire" by Buss and Perry (1992) for measuring students' aggressive behaviour.

The instrument contained twenty-nine (29) items and two sections: Part A contained the respondents' biodata, while Part B contained items on aggressive behaviour structured based on a five-point ranking as follows: rarely (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), and almost always (5). Two questions with asterisks were reverse-scored. The aggression scale consisted of three factors: Physical aggression (PA) = Items 1 to 11; verbal aggression (VA) = Items 12 to 20; and hostility (H) = Items 21–29. The total score for aggression was the sum of the factor scores.

The instruments were given to Educational Psychologist, Counsellors and other experts to ascertain their content and face validity, and corrections were effected before their final production. The researcher conducted a pilot study at Demonstration Secondary School (HMS School), Kaduna Polytechnic, which was not part of the main study. The single and on-site administration methods were used.

The researcher used the on-spot distribution and collection method during the pilot study to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. In contrast, the Cronbach Alpha Method was used to test reliability and a reliability co-efficient of 0.89 was obtained. The instruments were administered to subjects using a single-administration method. In each school, two teachers familiar with the students were trained to administer the instruments. The researcher employed two statistical tools: descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyze biodata and research questions. For hypothesis testing, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (RR) was used to test the two null hypotheses.

Result and Discussion

Four hundred (400) students participated in the study, selected from thirty (30) public secondary schools in Zaria and Kaduna metropolises. Out of the four hundred [400] questionnaires distributed, three hundred and eighty-five (385) were successfully retrieved. This represents (96.3%) of the total questionnaire distributed. At the data cleaning stage, three hundred and seventy-seven (377), representing (94.3 %) were adjudged as well completed and usable for this analysis. Thus, the analysis is based on this. The result and analysis are presented as follows:

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between student-teacher interaction and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary students in Kaduna State?

Table 1: Relationship between Student-Teacher Interaction and Aggressive Behaviour

Variable	n	Mean	SD
Student-teachers' relationship	377	2.78	0.56
Aggressive Behaviour		2.56	0.61

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The mean score for the student-teacher relationship is 2.78, with a standard deviation 0.56. At the same time, the aggressive behaviour variable shows a mean score of 2.56 with a standard deviation of 0.61. Thus, the mean scores of both variables are relatively close (2.78 and 2.56), suggesting a possible relationship between these factors. The standard deviations (0.56 and 0.61) indicate similar levels of variability in both measures, showing a consistent spread of scores around their respective means. The slightly higher mean score for student-teacher relationship (2.78) compared to aggressive behaviour (2.56) suggests that better student-teacher interactions are associated with lower levels of aggressive behaviour and vice-versa.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between student-students interaction and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary students in Kaduna State?

Table 2: Relationship between Student-Student Interaction and Aggressive Behaviour

Variable	n	Mean	SD
Student-Students' relationship	377	2.68	0.61
Aggressive Behaviour		2.51	0.66

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data on Table 2 reveals insights about the relationship between student-student interaction and aggressive behavior among secondary students in Kaduna State. The student-student relationship measure shows a mean score of 2.68 with a standard deviation of 0.61, while aggressive behaviour has a mean score of 2.51 with a standard deviation of 0.66. The relatively small standard deviations indicate consistency in the responses across the sample. The mean difference of 0.17 between student-student relationships and aggressive behavior suggests a positive association. This indicates that as student-student relationships improve (higher scores), there tends to be a small decrease in aggressive behavior and vice-versa. In other words, the mean scores (2.68 and 2.51) suggest that both student-student interactions and aggressive behaviors are present at moderate levels in the sampled population.

Test of Null Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between student- teachers and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary students in Kaduna State. This hypothesis was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine the relationship between the two variables. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation between Student- Teachers and Aggressive Behaviour

Variable	Mean	SD	N	R	P-value
Student-teachers' relationship	2.78	0.56	377	.761**	0.002
Aggressive Behaviour	2.56	0.61			

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level**

The Table indicates that the mean score for the student-teacher relationship is 2.78, with a standard deviation of 0.56, while the mean score for aggressive behaviour is 2.56, with a standard deviation of 0.61. The correlation coefficient (r) between the student-teacher relationship and aggressive behaviour is 0.761, statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($P = 0.002$). Given the significant p-value (less than 0.05), the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between student-teachers and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary school students in Kaduna state is rejected. This positive and strong correlation suggests that as the quality of the student-teacher relationship improves, there is a corresponding reduction in aggressive behaviour among students, or vice versa.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between student- students and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary students in Kaduna State. This hypothesis was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine the relationship between the two variables.

The result of the analysis is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation between Student- students and Aggressive Behaviour

Variable	Mean	SD	N	R	P-value
Student-students' relationship	2.68	0.61	377	.801**	0.001
Aggressive Behaviour	2.51	0.66			

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level**

The analysis on Table 4, reveals that the mean score for the student-student relationship is 2.68, with a standard deviation of 0.61, while the mean score for aggressive behaviour is 2.51, with a standard deviation of 0.66. The sample size for this study is 377 participants. The correlation coefficient (r) of the two variables is reported as 0.801, and the p-value is 0.001. The correlation coefficient of 0.801 indicates a strong positive relationship between student-teacher relationships and aggressive behaviour, as it exceeds the threshold of 0.7 for strong correlations. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.001 is below the significance level of 0.05, confirming this relationship is statistically significant. In other words, the analysis demonstrates a strong and significant positive correlation between student-student relationships and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary school students in Kaduna State. This implies that interventions to improve student-student relationships could reduce aggressive behaviour within this population.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed a strong positive correlation between student-teacher relationships and aggressive behavior. This suggests that poor student-teacher relationships are closely

linked to higher levels of aggression. This is in line with the findings of Lin and Tsai (2023); Yang, *et al* (2023); Obsuth, *et al* (2023); Talty *et al* (2023); Wang (2023); Ahmed, *et al* (2022); Lei, *et al* (2018) which revealed that poor teacher-student relationships were significantly associated with increased externalizing behaviours, including aggression. Positive teacher-student relationships acted as a protective factor, reducing such behaviour. However, the study of Ardestani *et al* (2022); Zhou (2021) found that aggressive student behaviour often provokes negative responses from teachers, such as verbal or emotional violence. These teacher reactions can exacerbate student aggression, suggesting a cyclical relationship rather than a straightforward correlation between poor TSRs and aggression.

Also, the study established stronger correlation between student-student relationships and aggressive behavior. This indicates that strained peer interactions are highly associated with increased aggression. This aligns with the findings of Poulin and Boivin (2024); Hardie *et al.* (2023); Kennedy (2023); Alnaeem (2021); Gorski (2021); Munir & Zaheer (2021); Kaur and Niwas (2017) which confirmed that the presence of aggressive peers significantly increased aggressive behaviours, particularly among students with high aggression-relevant propensity, such as weak morality and poor self-control. Contrary to the above findings, Longobardi *et al.* (2016); Avant *et al.* (2016) Xue, *et al.* (2024) studies of that Socio-Economic Status [SES] mismatches were more predictive of aggressive behaviours than strained peer interactions alone. Strong parent-child relationships further reduced aggression regardless of peer dynamics, challenging the sole attribution of aggression to peer strain.

Implication for Counselling

The findings of this study have several important implications for counselling, particularly in addressing aggressive behaviours among senior secondary school students in Kaduna State. The strong positive correlations between student-teacher and student-student relationships with aggressive behaviour highlight the critical role of interpersonal dynamics within the school environment. Counsellors should prioritize improving student-teacher relationships as a means to reduce aggression.

The study revealed that students often feel unsupported, unmotivated, and distrustful of their teachers. Counsellors can work with teachers to develop trust, approachability, and emotional support skills. Training programs on effective communication, empathy, and constructive feedback could foster a more supportive classroom environment. Additionally, counsellors could facilitate workshops for teachers on emotional intelligence and conflict resolution to better manage challenging student behaviours without exacerbating aggression. For student-student interactions, the findings indicate that strained peer relationships significantly contribute to aggressive behaviour.

Counsellors should implement peer mediation programs to teach students conflict resolution skills and promote inclusivity. Activities encouraging collaboration, such as group projects or team-building exercises, can also help reduce cliques and foster community. Peer mentoring programs could be introduced to encourage students to assist one another academically and socially, addressing gaps in support for struggling peers. The study also highlighted patterns of emotional dysregulation among students, such as difficulty controlling

their temper and frequent feelings of frustration. Counselling interventions should include anger management programs and workshops on emotional regulation. These could involve teaching student's mindfulness, relaxation strategies, and cognitive-behavioural approaches to manage anger and reduce impulsive reactions.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that many students exhibit confrontational tendencies, such as being argumentative or retaliating when provoked. Counsellors can address these behaviours through social skills training that emphasizes effective communication, assertiveness without aggression, and understanding the perspectives of others. Group therapy sessions focusing on interpersonal skills could also be beneficial in reducing confrontational behaviours.

Lastly, the study underscores the importance of fostering a positive school climate. Counsellors should collaborate with school administrators to create policies that promote respect, inclusivity, and mutual support among all school community members. This may include anti-bullying campaigns, recognition programs for positive behaviour, and regular school environment assessments to identify areas needing improvement.

Conclusion

The study examined the relationship between student-teacher and student-student interactions and aggressive behaviour among senior secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria, with implications for counselling interventions. The findings revealed significant positive correlations between both types of relationships and aggressive behaviour, indicating that strained interpersonal dynamics within the school environment are closely linked to higher levels of aggression. The analysis of student-teacher relationships showed that while students appreciated academic support, constructive feedback, and feeling valued by their teachers, they reported low levels of trust, motivation, and approachability. These gaps suggest that poor teacher-student relationships contribute to conflict and aggression.

The findings have critical implications for counselling. To mitigate aggressive behaviour, counsellors should focus on improving student-teacher relationships through training programs for teachers on effective communication, empathy, and emotional intelligence. For peer interactions, interventions like peer mediation programs, team-building activities, and mentoring initiatives can foster inclusivity and collaboration. Emotional regulation programs emphasizing anger management techniques and mindfulness could help students manage impulsive reactions. Social skills training and group therapy sessions can also reduce confrontational tendencies by promoting assertive yet non-aggressive communication. Finally, fostering a positive school climate is essential. Counsellors should collaborate with school administrators to implement policies promoting respect, inclusivity, and mutual support while addressing bullying and recognizing positive behaviours. These measures collectively aim to create a healthier school environment that reduces aggression and supports students' overall well-being.

Recommendations

The following are recommended to address aggressive behaviour among senior secondary school students in Kaduna and Zaria Metropolises:

- i. The Kaduna State Ministry of Education should provide targeted training programs for teachers on classroom management, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence to foster positive student-teacher relationships and reduce aggression.
- ii. School administrators should introduce peer mediation and team-building activities to improve student-student interactions, promote inclusivity, and address conflicts constructively.
- iii. The Kaduna State Ministry of Education should deploy professional counsellors in schools to address emotional dysregulation, provide anger management training, and support students in resolving interpersonal issues.

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