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Aggressive Behaviours among Pupils: Prevalence and Management in Ibadan North Local Government Area

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the prevalence and management of aggressive behavior in the North Ibadan Regional Government. This study used a phenomenological qualitative approach with a multi-stage sampling procedure using three elementary school teachers from each selected school, ten teachers as the sample. Teacher Management Strategy for Student Aggressive Behavior Interview Schedule (TMS_PABIS) as the qualitative data obtained were transcribed and summarized to provide a basis for interpretation and thematic analysis. The findings revealed kicking, hitting, snapping, throwing objects, screaming, and biting. It can be concluded that the aggressive behavior manifestations of the lower elementary school students are high because this requires proper management before they move to the upper elementary grades and other educational levels. It involves awareness of various strategies that can be used by teachers and other education stakeholders rather than focusing on a particular system, especially social skills.

Keywords:

Aggressive Behaviours, Management, Primary School Pupils.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk menyelidiki prevalensi dan pengelolaan perilaku agresif di Pemerintah Daerah Ibadan Utara. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologis dengan prosedur multistage sampling dengan menggunakan tiga guru sekolah dasar dari masingmasing sekolah terpilih yang berjumlah sepuluh guru sebagai sampel. Strategi Manajemen Guru untuk Jadwal Wawancara Perilaku Agresif Murid (TMS_PABIS) sebagai data kualitatif yang diperoleh ditranskrip dan diringkas untuk memberikan dasar interpretasi dan analisis tematik. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa menendang, memukul, membentak, melempar benda, berteriak, menggigit. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa

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manifestasi perilaku agresif siswa sekolah dasar yang lebih rendah tinggi karena hal ini memerlukan manajemen yang tepat sebelum mereka pindah ke kelas dasar atas dan tingkat pendidikan lainnya. Diperlukan kesadaran akan berbagai strategi yang dapat digunakan oleh guru dan pemangku kepentingan pendidikan lainnya daripada berfokus pada strategi tertentu terutama keterampilan sosial.

Kata kunci:

Perilaku Agresif, Manajemen, Siswa Sekolah Dasar

1. Introduction

Human beings are generally characterized by various forms of behaviors which could either be destructive or constructive. The bad behaviors are adverse to having a sane, progressive, ideal, and conducive society. One such behavior is aggressive behavior which could hinder the holistic development of every child, among other associated negative consequences. Thus, there is no clear definition of the construct among scholars and relevant stakeholders, as some attach it as situational or environmental. In contrast, others posit that it is genetic. Although it has been challenging to provide a specific definition to the term 'aggression' and yet, it has become an essential topic in almost every field of human endeavor, especially to educators, counselors and psychologists, school professionals, and many others as they are faced not only with direct effects of anger and aggression like threats of violence and fighting among students but also with indirect effects that appear in the form of learning difficulties and social adjustment problems. Despite the variations in the meaning of aggressive behaviors, it could still be established that it is an intentional act aimed at harming other persons or objects.

Management is designing and sustaining an environment where everyone works together to attain the organization's goal (Aquino, 2022). One of the most challenging tasks of teachers is classroom management and discipline. Nemenzo (2018) found out that among the problems encountered by teachers in the teaching-learning process are initiated fields of the students and classroom management, which were both identified as "serious problems," resulting in a call for action to minimize the problem (Simbre, 2021). Educational studies continue to show that most of a principal's day comprises administrative activities (Hallinger, 2011), such as school facility management, school protection, enforcement paperwork, and non-instructional-based programs (Shava, 2021). Examine the need to preserve valuable school resources, namely experienced teachers and middle school leaders, to help critical leaders administer schools excellently until compulsory retirement age (Saad, 2022).

Various approaches have been used to define and establish theoretical explanations for aggressive behaviors among Children, such as the naturalistic and nurture approaches (Azeez and Babalola, 2020; Sadiku, 2020; Salami and Babalola, 2021). For instance, Brown (1997) refers to aggression as the use of power by one or more people to override others and intentionally inflict

injuries or harm on the rights and needs of others. Meanwhile, the Dictionary of empirical educational psychology (1990) defines it as an emotion expressed in a harsh, destructive act aimed at another person. This is further explained by the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Psychology (1992) as the motivational state, personality characteristics, a response to frustration, an inherent force, or the fulfillment of a socially learned role requirement. Bernstein et al. (2006), cited in Onukwufor (2013), defined aggression as "an act that is intended to cause harm to another person." Baron and Branscombe (2016) described aggression as behavior directed toward the goal of harming another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment. It can also be regarded as "physical or verbal behavior intended to hurt someone." This phenomenon can also manifest in diverse forms among adolescents ranging from bullying, rape, destruction of property, fighting, throwing stones, or other harmful materials.

Aggressive behaviors among children take diverse forms ranging from Physical to verbal, affective, emotional, and instrumental. The conditions or classification of manifestations of this act varies from one scholar to another. For instance, social psychologists classified aggression into physical and non-physical (Sadiku, 2020, Babalola, 2021, Salami and Babalola, 2021). The forms of physical attack include physically harming others, such as kicking, beating, shooting, etc. At the same time, non-physical aggression does not involve inflicting injuries on another person's body. It may take the form of verbal aggression demonstrated through yelling, screaming, swearing, and name calling, and relational or socially aggressive behaviors, which are constantly targeted at destroying human relationships, such as gossiping about another person, excluding others from friendship, or giving others the "silent treatment" (Crick and Grotpeter, 1996). Buss and Perry (1992), cited by Peralta et al. (2014), have delineated aggressive behaviors into physical-verbal, active-passive, and direct-indirect dimensions. Physical, aggressive behaviors are described as physical violence towards other people, like kicking, hitting, scratching, spitting, throwing objects, pinching, biting, pulling hair, or strangling, or as self-harm behavior where patients may use things to harm themselves. Verbal aggressive behavior is verbal abuse, like threats of harm (Babalola, 2021, Salami and Babalola, 2021).

Direct forms of aggressive behaviors may assume assault of personalities physically, so also verbal behaviors may include hostility and abusive expressions. An attempt to threaten others with the help of various body gestures or facial expressions is also attributed to the nature of non-verbal aggressive behavior. Conversely, verbal (non-physical) aggressive behaviors are conceptualized as provoking acts of different dimensions, such as words, attitudes, and actions (Magnavita and Heponiemi, 2012). Archer and Coyne (2005) opine that aggressive behavior can also be non-verbal in sexual, racial, and homophobic jokes and epithets, which are abusive acts designed to cause psychological harm to targeted individuals. Other types of aggression that have been identified include affective, emotional, or impulsive aggression and cognitive or instrumental aggression. Onukkwufor (2013) identified different types of aggressive behaviors, and these include hostile, aggressive behaviors, instrumental aggressive behaviors, and emotional, aggressive behaviors.

Laurence and Colin (1995) identified the following dimensions of aggression among children: physically aggressive behaviors of hitting, kicking, tripping, pushing, and pulling, while direct verbal aggression includes but is not limited to yelling, insulting, calling names, and teasing). Meanwhile, indirect aggressive behaviors take dimensions of shutting out of the group, becoming friends with others as revenge, ignoring others, gossiping, telling wrong or false stories, secret planning and revealing the secrets of others, writing nasty notes, and criticizing their personalities. Thus, Salami & Babalola (2021) identified various manifestations of aggressive behaviors among lower primary school pupils in Ibadan North Local Government. Some of them include behaviors abuse as teachers when the teacher is not around, throwing stones, and talking back any time their parents beat them. However, they will not let them hear or see them, hit people to get what they want, used to break things, e.g., break window glass, plates, and cups, out of anger, and shout anytime they cannot get what they want, among many others. Teachers are facilitators of student learning and designers of effective classroom environments where students can develop the skills they need in the workplace in the twenty-first-century classroom. The learning environment's design is critical for teachers and pupils (Dailo, 2022).

There is a high prevalence of aggressive behaviors in contemporary society, especially among students and pupils who are potent enough to think critically or as philosophical questions about the natural ability of man to be aggressive. Several Philosophers and psychologists posited that human beings are generally aggressive by nature. For instance, Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) posited viewed humans as characterized by evil acts and aggressive tendencies. He affirmed that the bold is genetically embedded in humans who use it to survive and protect their social status. However, philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) held a positive view of humans by identifying social causes of aggression. He thinks that humans naturally are not aggressive, but the behaviors attributed to the nature of society are a major causative factor (Anderson and DeLisi, 2011). The psychologist Sigmund Freud argued in his psychoanalytic theory that although people have a life instinct (*eros*), they also have a death instinct (*Thanatos*) — an impulse toward self-destruction and destruction of others. Baron and Branscombe (2016) explained the major causes of aggressive behaviors in four categories which include social, cultural, personal, and situational factors.

Aggressive behaviors have been established by literature to be characterized by negative consequences, and these include underachievement in academics, disciplinary problems, and delinquencies (Abdulmalik et al., 2016). Other prevalent consequences are school underachievement, disciplinary issues, an increasing rate of out-of-school children, and drug and substance abuse. A rising rate of childhood aggressive behaviors has been established to predict future criminality (Pingault, 2013). Aggressive behaviors in early childhood have also been shown to be a more consistent predictor of poor social functioning than inattention, hyperactive-impulsive or oppositional behavior (Brennan, 2015). Aggressive children are characterized by disruptive acts in school, bullying, and expulsion from school (Hudley, 1998).

Considering various dimensions of children's behaviors, it is pertinent to look at the literature on managing aggressive behaviors among children. Multiple studies have established that there are many techniques that teachers can use to address children's misbehavior. According to Churchward (2009), one of the techniques is assertive I-Messages. Assertive I message is an element of powerful discipline where the messages are statements teachers say to children who misbehave (Churchward, 2009). They are intended to explain what is expected from a child (Churchward, 2009). This technique allows teachers to focus on the child's attention, and the critical element is the behavior a teacher is expected or wants and not the misbehavior done (Churchward, 2009). For example, "I want you to do..." or "I need you to..." or "I hope you...". Other techniques teachers may use are visual and verbal cues. The technique suggested that teachers briefly look into a child's eye when that child misbehaves. The brief pause of looking into the child's vision can firmly send a message to the child.

Furthermore, verbal cues, such as saying the child's name, can be straightforward. Reminding language is also used. However, it is effective before a child engages in misbehavior rather than when they are misbehaved. Teachers must first model expected behaviors so that children are aware of what is expected from them before reminding language is used.

Freud proposed a channeling or catharsis approach to control aggressive behaviors. This involves re-directing aggressive energy to other activities, mainly socially approved activities, including painting, participation in sporting activities, hitting a punching bag, or watching a wrestling match, then could take the place of engaging in aggressive behavior, among others. Families and other socializing agents are at the center of discouraging such behaviors right from childhood by instilling acts of empathy, and tenderness, among others. Chauhan (2007) recommends a parent-centered approach to curb the prevalence of these acts, as parents can be trained on skills and techniques for managing children with such actions.

Other steps towards reducing this anti-social behavior include assessment, psycho-education, organizing pleasant distractions, giving praise and rewards for the efforts to stop, special counseling for grown-up children between the ages of 4-8years, and mentoring. So also identified mutual apology, reconciliation, dialogue, and empathizing. Other findings established that some teachers preferred punishment (Karaca and Ikiz, 2014). Yavuzer et al. (2009) revealed that teachers identified using guidance services and adhering to school disciplinary rules as precautions against aggressive behavior. Other findings revealed using a verbal warning, punishment, ignoring, suggesting solutions, cognitive persuasion, changing the place of the child/giving a break, providing guidance, understanding the problem, getting help, and empathy (Ongoren and Tepeli, 2016).

Various strategies have been identified to curb the prevalence of aggressive behaviors among pupils in another study area, as limited research has been carried out to examine the prevalence and management strategies of aggressive behavior in the Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State. It is against this background that the current study, therefore, aimed at establishing various forms of aggressive behaviors prevalence and management strategies used by teachers in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria, owing to its peculiarity.

1.1 Research questions

- (1) What forms of aggression are exhibited by three primary pupils in Ibadan North Local Government Area?
- (2) How do teachers manage specific aggressive behavior among primary three pupils in Ibadan North Local Government Area?
- (3) What strategy do teachers apply to manage aggressive behaviors among primary school three pupils in Ibadan North Local Government Area?

2. Methods

2.1 Research design

The study used a phenomenological qualitative approach as a non-probability sampling technique to select Ibadan North Local Government Areas in Ibadan Metropolis in Ibadan Land because the population is considered to be high and heterogeneous, increasing social interaction.

2.2 Population and sample

A simple random technique was used to select two primary schools from each Local government area totaling ten. A purposive sampling technique was used to determine three primary teachers from each school chosen, totaling ten teachers as a sample.

2.3 Data collection

The interview Schedule (TMS_PABIS) was developed by the researcher to answer formulated research questions qualitatively. The instrument is divided into two sections. The first section (Section A) consists of demographic information of three primary teachers. In contrast, Section B contains three questions focusing on examples of aggressive behaviors demonstrated by pupils, strategies used by teachers, and how teachers manage aggressive behaviors.

2.4 Data analysis

The qualitative data obtained were transcribed and summarized to provide the basis for interpretation and thematic analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1. shows the prevalence of aggressive behaviors among lower primary school pupils. Kicking, beating, throwing objects, yelling, and screaming are the prevalent aggressive behaviors among pupils, as biting is rarely exhibited, as reported by three out of ten teachers.

3.1 Theme 2: Management of aggressive behavior among lower primary school pupils.

To answer this question, qualitative data collected through interviews were analyzed, and these are presented thus: The responses of the teachers show that there are various ways through

which aggressive behaviors among primary three pupils are managed. The answers show that ten teachers adopt punishment, others adopt counseling, play way method, and withdrawal of attention. Some of the excerpts from the interview are presented below:

- Teacher A: I always punish the child and make her understand the consequences of those behaviors. I correct in love and tell the child not to repeat such an act.
- Teacher B: I always withdraw my attention, stop listening to their complaints, engaging them in some activities such as rubbing the board and collecting pen and ink from the Head of school, among others.
- Teacher F: I use play way method, a relaxation method (allow the pupils to rest when the need arises), and a game-based plan to enable them to divert their aggressive behaviors to such acts.
- Teacher H: I call such pupils for counseling to enable them to understand the consequences of their behaviors and expose them to positive action to manage such situations, and in extreme cases, I invite the parent to monitor and manage the situation at home
- Teacher J: I punish them and talk to them to make them see the reasons for punishment.

Table 1. Showing The Prevalence of Aggressive Behaviors Among Lower Primary School Pupils

S/N	Pseudonymous	Kicking	Beating	Throwing of objects	Yelling	screaming	Biting
1.	Teacher A				V		
2.	Teacher B	\checkmark	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$	
3.	Teacher C	\checkmark	$\sqrt{}$	${f V}$	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$	
4.	Teacher D	\checkmark	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$	
5.	Teacher E	\checkmark	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$
6.	Teacher F				$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$	
7.	Teacher G	$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$	
8.	Teacher H	\checkmark	$\sqrt{}$	\checkmark	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$
9.	Teacher I	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$			
10.	Teacher J				$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$	

3.2 Theme3: Teachers' strategies to manage aggressive behaviors among lower primary school pupils

Table 2. shows strategies applied by teachers to manage aggressive behaviors among lower primary school pupils. Social skills are the most commonly used strategy used by all the ten teachers interviewed; this is followed by Game based method with two teachers, Cognitive-based

and video-based strategies are operated by a teacher each. None of the teachers apply cognitive bibliotherapy to manage aggressive behaviors among the pupils.

Table 2. Showing Strategies Used by Teachers to Manage Aggressive Behaviors Among Primary Three Pupils.

S/N	STRATEGIES	Video- based strategies	Game- based strategy	Cognitive- bibliotherapy	Social skills strategies	Cognitive Based Therapies
1.	Teacher A		$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$	
2.	Teacher B				$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$
3.	Teacher C	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$
4.	Teacher D	$\sqrt{}$			$\sqrt{}$	
5.	Teacher E		$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$
6.	Teacher F				$\sqrt{}$	
7.	Teacher G				$\sqrt{}$	
8.	Teacher H	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$		\checkmark	
9.	Teacher I		$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$
10.	Teacher J	$\sqrt{}$	$\sqrt{}$		$\sqrt{}$	

3.3 Discussion of findings

Research question one was to establish the prevalence of aggressive behaviors among primary school pupils. The findings revealed kicking, beating, yelling, throwing objects, screaming, and biting. This aligns with the study of Brody et al. (1995); Onkwufor (2013); Babalola (2021); Salami and Babalola (2021), which established that the prevalence of physical aggression and verbal aggressions were high among school students. The fact that these behaviors are high among pupils also corroborates the study by Dawn and Marlene (2011), that the overall prevalence of aggressive behavior as a form of Conduct Disorder ranges from 6% to 16% for males and 2% to 9% for females.

Research question two explored how teachers manage specific aggressive behaviors among primary three pupils. Meanwhile, findings revealed that various teachers adopt different measures to manage aggressive behaviors among primary three pupils. Parts of the criteria are the use of punishment, counseling, the play way method, and withdrawal of attention, among others. The lack of uniformity in managing aggression could be due to variations in the type of behaviors demonstrated, the rate of exhibiting such acts, teachers' experience, and many others. This is in line with findings that established that preschool teachers in preschool education institutions and class teachers working at primary schools use similar methods, such as encouraging mutual apology, reconciling, peacemaking, dialogue, and empathizing. More so, the finding of this study corroborates Türnüklü and İlleez (2006) analysis which revealed the strategies used by teachers to resolve disputes among students and determined counseling as the most preferred strategies that are used to resolve disputes. The Same study also establishes that administrators, compared to teachers' conflict with students, are more inclined to use administrative means instead of trying to deal with the problem.

Finally, the present study's finding is in line with other empirical evidence, such as Yavuzer, Gündoğdu, and Dikici (2009), affirming that teachers suggested more effective guidance services and adherence to school disciplinary rules as precautions against aggression. Other literature established that coping strategies of preschool teachers with aggressive behavior patterns had been seen to be a verbal warning, punishment, ignoring, suggesting solutions, cognitive persuasion, changing the place of the child/giving a break, understanding the problem, getting help, and empathy (Ongoren and Tepeli, 2016).

Research question three sought to identify strategies teachers apply to manage aggressive behaviors among primary school pupils. The finding was that teachers have a preference for some strategies when compared to others. Notably, social skills are the most commonly used strategy by five teachers; this is followed by a Game-based approach with two teachers, Cognitive-based and video-based strategies are operated by a teacher, respectively, and cognitive-bibliotherapy is not applied to manage aggressive behaviors. These strategies could result from years of experience of teachers, educational level, types of aggressive behaviors, and gender of teachers as well as the cost and availability of materials to put those strategies in place. Although not much literature has unveiled the strategies identified in this study albeit other studies have revealed different management strategies, such as Korkut's (2004); Derman's (2011) research studies that identified strategies such as contacting the family, empathy education, instilling mutual respect as ways of managing aggressive behaviors. The findings of Derman (2011) also revealed that encouragement of joint apology, reconciling, empathizing, and dialogue strategies are critical to managing aggressive behaviors.

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the manifestation of aggressive behaviors by lower primary school pupils is high as these calls for proper management before they transition to upper introductory classes and other levels of education. Thus, the study investigated teachers' various methods and strategies to curtail further manifestation of these destructive acts. The prevalent technique used by teachers is social skills. Since the prevalence has been established, all relevant stakeholders must join hands to prevent further manifestations of these behaviors for a better and more constructive society.

4.1 Recommendations

- (1) There is a need for awareness of various strategies that could be used by teachers and other education stakeholders instead of focusing on a particular system, notably social skills.
- (2) There is a need for awareness of classroom management and styles that will not encourage aggressive behaviors among the pupils.
- (3) Parents and teachers should be exposed to child-centered and child-friendly power interaction to reduce aggressive behaviors among pupils.
- (4) Teachers and other relevant stakeholders should see it as a wake-up call towards the non-violent means of managing and caring for pupils.

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