

Assessment of Gender Differences on Aggressive Behaviour among Undergraduates of Benue State University Makurdi, Nigeria

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Abstract

An assessment into the influence of gender difference on aggressive behaviour among undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi, was conducted in a survey of 150 participants drawn from undergraduates of Benue State University. The participants made up of 73 (48.7%) males, 77 (51.3%) females took part in the study. An adjusted five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used for data collection. The findings showed there is a statistical significant difference between male and female on physical aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University. ($F, df = : 148 = 13.330; p < 0.05$). The findings also showed that there is a statistical significant relationship between gender difference and verbal aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University. ($r, df = : 148 = .041; p < 0.05$). There is no statistical significant relationship between gender difference and anger among undergraduates of Benue State University. ($r, df = : 148 = .885; p > 0.05$). These findings were discussed within the frame work of gender difference and aggressive behaviour. Finally recommendations were made among which Students involve in aggression cases should in addition to other measures be referred to the school counsellor for remediation.

Key words: Aggressive behaviour, Undergraduates, Gender, physical aggression, verbal aggression and Anger

Introduction

In today's society, everywhere one turns, he/she is greeted with yet another tale of violence against our fellow man. From civil wars to international disputes, ethnic clashes, lovers quarrels to community violence, child abuse to school bullying with various violent behaviors destroying lives every day.

Scholars have defined aggression from diverse perspectives. However, there appears to be a consensus that aggression is a deliberate act intended to cause harm to another person. Bernstein, Penner, Clarke-Stewart & Roy (2006) defined aggression as "an act that is intended

to cause harm to another person". Colman (2003) defined aggression as "a behaviour whose primary purpose is to injure physically or psychologically". Myers (2005) in his own submission defined aggression as "physical or verbal behaviour intended to hurt someone". Also Brehm, Kassin & Fein (2005) saw aggression as behaviour that is intended to harm another individual. Based on the above definitions, aggression refers to any act that hurts harms or destroys which must be intended or deliberate. This presupposes that injuring someone accidentally or for the person's wellbeing cannot be construed as aggressive behaviour. For example, a nurse who gave a painful injection to a patient cannot be considered to be aggressive behaviour because there was no intent to harm. On the other hand, a student who threw stone at another student but missed is aggressive behaviour because there was intent to harm. Words uttered to offend someone amount to aggressive behaviour. It should be noted that extreme acts of aggression are referred to as violence. It is intended to hurt and kill (Behm, Kassin and Fein 2005; Fraser and Burchell, 2001 & Myers, 2005).

Gender is a factor that plays a role in both human and animal aggression. Males are generally more physically aggressive than females (Cole and Doge 1997, Maccoby and Jacklin 1974), and men commit the vast majority of murders (Buss 2005). There is evidence that males are quicker to aggression (Frey et al 2003) and more likely than females to express their aggression physically (Bjorkqvist 1994). However, when considering indirect forms of aggression, such as relational aggression and social rejection, females and males are equally aggressive (Archer, 2004, Card, Stucky, Sawalani, and Little, 2008). Some researchers suggest that females are not necessarily less aggression in less overt and physical ways, (Bjorkqvist, 1994). For example, females may display more verbal and reflationary aggression as well as social rejection. Further researches on assessment of gender difference on aggressive behavior focuses on gender related hormones as they have been identified as the most powerful determinants of gender physical appearance and behavioral response as observed by (Ramirez 2003) Men score significantly higher on scale of physical aggression than women (Harris and knight-Bohnoff 1996).

Bettencourt and Miller's (1996) review illustrated that men were more aggressive than women in neutral conditions, and specific types of provocation highlighting gender differences in aggressive behavior. Whereas with women physical attacks and insults elicited far more aggression than when a verbal attack was made on her self-esteem, males reacted equally aggressive to attacks on their self-esteem as much as their physique selves, which were both more than the aggression in response to an insult. The review further showed that men were more aggressive than women when physical aggression was available to them, but were equally aggressive as each other when verbal aggression was involved. Eagly and Steffen's (1986) meta-analysis illustrated the importance of personal perceptions of the effects of their aggression between males and females. It was found that females were significantly less physically aggressive than men when they feel that they will bring harm to the victim, or themselves, or predict feelings of guilt or anxiety, thereby illustrating that personal gender-related belief can have a significant effect on the extent to which aggression, is expressed. The researchers concluded that the differences between such gender-related beliefs are amplified in situations involving physical aggression, which is consistent with the frequent findings of males being highly more likely to be significantly more aggressive than females when aggression is physical in nature. Ultimately, the types of provocation leading to aggression and the beliefs behind the perceived consequences of the aggression expressed illustrate that males and females differ in terms of the type of aggressive behavior that they typically prefer to exhibit, whereby males prefer to use physical aggression more than females, who prefer to be more verbally aggressive.

Oconnor, Archers, Hair and Wu (2002), stated in another experiment on testosterone study with adult men, participants received testosterone injections weekly for eight weeks and were given in various varieties of measures designed to test their moods, aggression and impulsivity at four weeks and eight weeks. The result indicated that from a number of possible predictors trait impulsivity accounted for the major variance. Aggression level score had no relationship with increases in the testosterone levels, nor were testosterone levels related to mood effects. The finding of this research lend supports to the unpopular idea that testosterone levels had nothing at all to do with aggression because if aggression is caused by the level of testosterone then participants would have become more aggressive than they use to be over the course of the study. Dougherty, Bjork, Moeller and Swan (1997) observed in another study that testosterone levels in women are known to fluctuate with menstrual cycle, increasing significantly during ovulation phase-regardless of these fluctuations, women tend to respond with the same type and extent of aggression to provocations during the entire menstrual circle.

According to Carlson (1998) female criminals are more likely to commit crimes during or close to the menstrual phase of the cycle when progesterone is low while aggression is reduced around the ovulation phase when estrogen and progesterone levels are high in weight lifters who take anabolic steroids become more irritable and hostile. Gibb (2002) opined verbal abuse of childhood maltreatment and negative cognitive styles, in his research, he found out that, girls are most likely to use name calling, teasing, rumors, rejection, quarreling, extortion, gossiping, and intimidation vicious and talking personal belongings. Buss (1961) claimed that women are so seldom aggressive, that female aggression is not worth that trouble to study. Aggression is, according to his view (at that time), a typical male phenomenon. Frodi, Macaulay, and Thome (1977) reviewed 314 studies on human aggression, and found that 54% of these concerned men only, and only 8% women. These facts are certainly reviewing. However, Natalia, Martin, Jose, Fernanda & Salas, (2011) reported no statistical significant difference between male and female on verbal aggression.

According to David, Lauren & Caleb, (2010), there is a significant sex difference on physical aggression, with males reporting engaging in it more often. Gender differences in aggression have frequently been reported, such that men and boys show more aggression than women and girls, especially in terms of physical aggression (Burton, Hafetz, and Heinninger, 2007). However, Rachel Simmons the author of the New York Times bestseller odd girls, the first book to explore the phenomenon of bullying between girls suggest that females are not necessarily less aggressive, but tend to express through not only physical aggression, but also through non-physical means.

Onkwufor (2013) observed 360 adolescent students in Obio/Akpor LGA of Rivers State Nigeria on physical and verbal aggression, at the end of his study he opined that prevalence of physical aggression and verbal aggressions were higher among males than females.

Bjorkqvist and Niemela (1992) findings pointed out that most studies on human aggression have been conducted by men, and even when females have been the object of study, aggression has operationalized in typically male fashions, usually as physical aggression. For instance, by observational techniques in school yards, only physical techniques in school yards, only physical aggression can clearly be distinguished.

According to Onkwufor, (2012) anger takes place when the aggressor's primary intension is to harm the victim as a result of Hostility. Regarding the gender difference on anger as a component of aggression, several scholars have found no evidence that male and female differ in their experience of anger (Muovchevich & Howells, 2001, Thomas, 1989 Boman, 2003,

Simon & Nath, 2004, Shelds, 2007, Dutton & Tsai, 2007; Lively & Powell, 2006). However, a different result was put forward by Brody, Lovas & Hay, (1995) who founded that male reported to be more anger producing than were females.

Peter & Boman, 2003, Dutton, Donald, Webb, Ryan and Lee, 1994) found a significant relationship between gender differences and anger. Hess, Senecai, Kirouac, Herrera, Phillipot & Kleck, (2000) men experience higher levels of anger than women. Fabia and Andreu, (2010) also found gender difference on anger-women show higher level of anger than men. Archer (2004) also reported gender difference on anger.

Aggression in Nigeria is typical of violent demeanor such as kidnapping, suicidal attacks on government establishments, banks mosques, churches, schools, rape, inter-communal conflicts, herdsmen and farmers, vadalization of oil installations etc which are reducing the economic activities and income of individuals and the government at large. At this point, it's interesting to note that most of these aggressive behaviours are committed by youths who are either still in tertiary or products of tertiary institutions, therefore the need to study students aggressive behavior these days as more psychotic incidents of students harassments, fatally wounding or killing teachers/lecturers and fellow students in schools for various reasons are being observed and reported by the news media. Such reports portray the university environment as an unsafe dangerous and security-risk place. In addition, students have been identified to develop emotional and behavioral disorders coupled with various learning disabilities under such environment, and those who associate with them are at risk or in difficult circumstances thus constituting a great problem to school administrators in most campuses of Nigerian universities. Although most aggressive behaviors tend to be associated with more male students, it is not really known if male students are more aggressive than female counterpart is. It is therefore the aim of this study to asses if there exist gender differences on aggressive behavior amongst male and female students of Benue State University Makurdi, with specific objectives of identifying if aggressive response are more among male students over the female students and investigate how different components of aggression i.e physical aggression, verbal aggression and anger relates to aggression of both genders of students in Benue State University Makurdi.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to assess if there exist gender differences on aggressive behavior among undergraduate of Benue State University Makurdi. This will be achieved through the following set of specific objectives.

- i.** To determine gender difference in physical aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University.
- ii.** To examine relationship between gender and verbal aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University.
- iii.** To explore relationship between gender difference and anger among undergraduates of Benue State University.

Research Questions

Data shall be collected that would help answer the following research questions:

- i.** What is the difference between male and female on physical aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University?
- ii.** What is the relationship between gender difference and verbal aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University?
- iii.** Will there be any significant relationship between gender difference and anger among undergraduates of Benue State University.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were postulated for the study:

- i. There is no significant difference between male and female on physical aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between gender difference and verbal aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University.
- iii. There is no significant relationship between gender difference and anger among undergraduates of Benue State University.

Methodology

The current study adopted a cross section descriptive survey design. The population for this study comprise of undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi. In order to select participant for the study, a non-probability convenient sampling was utilized to sample one hundred and fifty (150) participants for this study. The participants were both male and female. Out of 150 participants, 73 (48.7%) were male, while 77 (51.3%) were female. 20 (13.6%) participants were 100level, 55 (37.4%) were 200level, 59 (40.1%) were 300level while 13 (8.8%) were 400level. 27 (19.0%) participants were 18-23 years, 85 (59.9%) were 24-29 years while 30 (21.1%) were 30 years and above. 89 (59.3%) participants were single while 61 (40.7%) were married. 73 (48.7%) participants were from faculty of social sciences, 12 (8.0%) were from science, 52 (34.7%) were from Art, 10 (6.7%) were from Law, while 3 (2.0%) were from medicine.

Instruments

The instrument for this study was a questionnaire. It was a set of questions relating to the aims and objectives of the study which respondents were required to respond to by ticking their choice. To elicit genuine responses, the thirty two (32) item questions were based on the participant's active aggression. It used an adjusted five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (extremely characteristic of me) to 5 (somewhat characteristic of me). The fifty eight (32) item questionnaire has two sections. The sections are tagged section A and B in that order.

Procedures for Data Collection

The researchers personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents at their various lecture halls and departmental resort (parks).

Method of Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data and make inferences for the study, the researcher used Pearson product movement correlation, ANOVA and a descriptive statistics.

Results

Hypothesis 1: *There will be a significant difference between male and female on physical aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University.*

Table 1: Independent Samples Test showing significance difference between gender difference and physical aggression

Variables	N	X	df	F	Sig.	P
Gender: M	73	4.88				
F	77	4.34				
Physical aggression			148	13.330	.000	<

Tests for independent samples presented in table one above shows that there is a statistical significant difference between male and female on physical aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University. This result indicates that male students are more prone to engage in physical aggression than their female counterparts. ($F, df = : 148 = 13.330; p < 0.05$). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis has been accepted and the null hypothesis has been rejected.

Hypothesis 2: *There will be a significant relationship between gender difference and verbal aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University.*

Table 2: Showing the relationship between gender difference and verbal aggression

Variables	N	X	df	r	Sig.	P
Gender: M	73	4.15				
F	77	4.73				
Verbal aggression			148	.167	.041	<

Tests for correlations between studied variables presented in table two above indicates that there is a statistical significant relationship between gender difference and verbal aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University. This result implies that female students engage in verbal aggression than their male counterparts. ($r, df = : 148 = .041; p < 0.05$). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis has been accepted and the null hypothesis has been rejected.

Hypothesis 3: *There will be a significant relationship between gender difference and anger among undergraduates of Benue State University.*

Table 3: showing the relationship between gender difference and anger

Variables	N	X	df	r	Sig.	P
Gender: M	73	4.73				
F	77	4.69				
Anger			148	-.012	.885	>

Tests for correlations between gender difference and anger presented in table three above shows that there is no statistical significant relationship between gender difference and anger among undergraduates of Benue State University. ($r, df = : 148 = .885; p > 0.05$). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis has been accepted and the null hypothesis has been rejected.

Discussion

This studies first hypothesized that there will be no significant difference between male and female on physical aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University. The result clearly shows that there is a statistical significant difference between male and female on physical aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University. Significant difference was found between male and female students' physical aggression. Thus male students were found to be more physically aggressive than female students. This result agrees with Bernstein, Penner Clark-Stewart and Roy (2006) that boys are more physically active and aggressive than girls. The reason for this result may be due to girl's awareness that they are weaker sex and the need to avoid physical aggression for their safety. This finding goes in line with that of Weed, Winston & Lack (2010) whose findings indicated that there's a significant gender difference on physical aggression, with males reporting engaging in it more often than female. This finding is also in line with that of Fabia and Andreu (2010) who found that men are higher on physical aggression. This finding is also in agreement with sexual selection theory which proposes that sex differences in physical aggression are due to greater male than female competitions for reproduction which leads males to use more risky strategies. This finding is consistent with other researchers such as (Locke & Bogin, 2006, Cairns, 1986, Cambell & Muncer 1987, Burton, Hafetz and Henninger, 2007, Jamie & Keating, 2004, Onukwufor, 2013, Myers, 2005), their findings showed that there's a gender difference on physical aggression-men are much more likely to engage in physical aggression than women. This finding is in contrast with Aail, Peter and Elena, (2009) who found no significant difference between male and female on physical aggression. This finding has also failed to support that of Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1974) who provided evidence that no gender difference on physical aggression does not exist.

The second hypothesis postulated examined there will be a significant relationship between gender difference and verbal aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University. The result clearly shows that there is a statistical significant relationship between gender difference and verbal aggression among undergraduates of Benue State University. Significant difference was found between male and female students verbal aggression. The male students were found to be more verbally aggressive than the female students. This result was not expected because females appear to be more verbally oriented than the males. The result of this study is in consensus with Harris (1992), Maccoby and Jacklin cited in Shaffer (2005) who stated that data from more than 100 countries reveal that boys and men are more physically and verbally aggressive than girls and women. This finding is in line with Jamie & Keating, (2004) found that boys displayed more verbal aggression than girls. Onukwufor, (2013) found that male and female differ on verbal aggression, verbal aggression were higher among males than females. Katy & Michael, 2000, and Archer & parker, 1994) found a significant relationship between gender difference and verbal aggression. This finding does not support Natalia, Martin, Jose, Fernanda and Salas, (2011) found no statistical significant difference between male and female on verbal aggression.

The third hypothesis put forward to guide the study examined there will be a significant relationship between gender difference and anger among undergraduates of Benue State University. The result indicates that there is no statistical significant relationship between gender difference and anger among undergraduates of Benue State University. This finding is in line with that of (Muovchevich & Howells, 2001, Thomas, 1989 Boman, 2003, Simon & Nath, 2004, Shelds, 2007, Dutton & Tsai, 2007) who found no evidence that male and female differ in their experience of anger. Lively & Powell, (2006) found that there is no evidence that women are more likely than men to suppress these feelings (anger). This present finding is in

contrast to Brody, Lovas & Hay, (1995) who founded that male reported to be more anger producing than were females. There is no consensus between this present finding and that of Peter & Boman, 2003, Dutton, Donald, Webb, Ryan and Lee, 1994) found a significant relationship between gender differences and anger. This present finding is not consistent with Hess, Senecai, Kirouac, Herrera, Phillipot & Kleck, (2000) men experience higher levels of anger than women. Fabia and Andreu, (2010) also found gender difference on anger-women show higher level of anger than men. Archer (2004) also reported gender difference on anger.

Conclusion

From the findings, the following conclusions have been drawn:

- i. This study found a significant gender differences in the experience of aggressive behavior (physical aggression). Males reported engaging in it more often than the females' students. As expected, boys justified physical aggressive acts more easily than girls, but contrary to some previous observations, girls did not score higher than boys in the justification of verbal aggressive acts.
- ii. This found statistical significant relationship between gender difference and aggressive behavior (verbal aggression). Females were more prone to verbal aggression than male students.
- iii. In relation to the component of anger, this finding found no statistical significant relationship between gender difference and aggressive behavior. Male and female did not differ in their experience of anger.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions discussed herein, the following recommendations are made:

- i. In view of the prevalence of physical and verbal aggression among undergraduates, the school management should pay greater attention to the students both in the lecture room and at the hostels
- ii. These findings recommend the need of reducing undergraduates' tendency to justify aggression and to use violence through prevention and intervention programs, and to focus especially on boys. Where such aggressive behaviours are usually displayed and aggressors should be adequately punished.
- iii. Disciplinary committee should be set up in schools to handle problem involving aggressive behaviour, especially physical and verbal aggression.
- iv. Students involve in aggression cases should in addition to other measures be referred to the school counsellor for remediation.

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