



## Influence of Demographic Variables and Peer Relations on Aggressive Tendencies among Secondary School Students in Keffi, Nigeria

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**Abstract.** Aggressive behaviour or tendencies is a great concern to all and sundry, of which there has been less work done on this phenomenon. Therefore, we investigated the influence of demographic variables and peer relations on aggressive tendencies among students from four secondary schools in Keffi, Nasarawa State - Nigeria. 200 students (135 males and 65 females) between 14 and 25 years of age participated in the study. In addition to providing demographic data, participants responded to the Index of Peer Relations (IPR) scale developed by Hudson et al., (1986) to assess the extent to which a respondent has problems with peers. Participants also responded to Buss Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) developed by Buss and Perry (1992) to measure aggression. Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis was used to test the study hypotheses. Results showed that there was a statistically significant main effect of family structure on aggressive tendency, ( $F(1, 192) = 7.752, p < 0.05$ ); implying that participants from separated family ( $M = 98.45, SD = 15.371$ ) are more aggressive than those from intact family ( $M = 88.33, SD = 15.252$ ). Additionally, there was no statistically significant effect of gender and age on aggressive tendencies where gender: ( $F(1, 192) = 0.206, p > 0.05NS$ ) and age: ( $F(1, 192) = 0.210, p > 0.05NS$ ) respectively. Furthermore, it was found that peer relations ( $M = 56.95, SD = 12.034$ ) and aggressive tendencies ( $M = 89.34, SD = 15.527$ ) correlated significantly  $r(198) = -0.140, P < 0.05$ ). In this light, the study concluded that both demographic variables and peer relations has a significant influence on aggressive tendencies in secondary school adolescents. It is recommended that findings of studies such as this to be made available through various channels (including social media) to enable parents understand the need for family cohesiveness and training of children to

develop critical peer relations / social emotional skills, such as empathy, cooperation, and problem-solving strategies.

**Keywords:** Demographic Variables; Peer Relations; Aggressive Tendencies; Adolescents.

### 1. Introduction

Aggressive behaviour is a major issue of present society, which is a reason of many socially unacceptable activities happening in our surroundings as well as in schools. When we read daily newspapers, we notice that so many incidents take place in our schools due to aggressive behaviour of students. In this context, aggressive behaviour can be seen in many secondary school students where they involve in many anti-social activities like incidents of misbehave with teachers, bullying peers etc (Kaur & Niwas, 2017). Amadi et al., (2015) have come to a conclusion that, aggressive adolescents at school show a very strong need for social recognition; they would like to be considered as powerful, socially accepted, different, and rebellious by their classmates. In other words, some authors suggest that the desire for popularity, leadership, and power leads to the involvement of many adolescents in disruptive behaviours, providing them the opportunity to construct the social reputation they desire. In fact, it has been documented that aggressive adolescents normally show somewhat negative attitudes to institutional authorities such as the police, the law, and also the school and teachers (Amanda & Monica, 2004).

In view of the above, many disciplines have attempted to define aggression. However, in behavioural science, as defined by Escobar-Chaves and Anderson (2008), aggressive behaviour is an

intentional act to cause harm to another person. This could be expressed more overtly, such as physically hitting someone, in verbal or relational contexts, and also as violence, bullying, and more like covert action, such as lying and stealing. The covert context of aggression is to reduce the repercussion towards the aggressor. The end goal of aggression is to cause intentional harm to another person. The intentionality of aggressive behaviour makes it an abnormal act that violates social norms (Agbonlue, 2022). To others, aggressive behaviour refers to such verbal, nonverbal and physical behaviour that injures another indirectly or directly and results in extraneous gains for the aggressor. These behaviours are typically described in terms such as those that appear frequently in the literature (Hunt, 1993; Kerr & Nelson, 1998; Long & Brendtro, 1993; Sasso et al., 1990). The aggressor's body language for all of these aggressive behaviours is attitude that clearly communicates rage, anger, humiliation, frustration, and other feelings that motivate (Lancelotta & Vaughn, 1989).

Studies such as that of Campos et al., (2019), suggest that demographic variables play a significant role in predicting behaviour among adolescents and by implication, young adults. Factors such as gender and family structure have been considered as important predictors of behaviour (e.g. Teye-Kwadjo et al., 2018; Dhirabc et al., 2016; Watkins & Ohannessian, 2020; Park & Lee, 2020). In addition to these, poor peer-relations has been identified as a factor responsible for behavioural and emotional problems among adolescents (Leviton et al., 2019) and in tendency towards aggressive behaviour like cyberbullying, and other negative behavioural outcomes (Akgül & Artar, 2020).

In Nigeria, many adolescents and quite a number of young adults are in secondary schools where they interact with peers from different families and different backgrounds. This study's focus is on the influence of demographic variables and peer relations on aggressive tendencies among adolescents in secondary schools. The basis for this study is underscored by the prevalence of aggressive behaviours prevalent in Nigeria among adolescents and young adults (e.g. Fenny & Falola, 2020).

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Incidences of aggressive behaviours (ranging from physical abuse to cyberbullying) among adolescents have become more prevalent in the Nigerian society (Akanni et al., 2020; Olu, 2020; Fenny & Falola, 2020; Olasanmi et al., 2020). However, there is still a huge gap in research regarding the factors responsible

for this increase in the number and range of aggression among adolescents.

Based on the review of literature, aggressive behaviour can mark future dysfunctionality, such as antisocial behaviour and substance abuse (Fergusson et al., 2007; Gruenwald, 2017; Schaeffer et al., 2003). Mundia (2006) highlighted that biological, individual, home, and school environments, peer influence, exposure to media violence, and community and social factors could be the causes of aggressive behaviours. Moreso, gender, family structure and peer relations have been found to contribute significantly to aggressive behaviours among adolescents. Given the dynamics of our culture, which socialises the male child to be more aggressive than females (Olawoye et al., 2004). It is worth exploring the role of gender in aggression among adolescents.

Interestingly, the rate of divorce is also reportedly on the increase in Nigeria and this poses a huge challenge to the family structure, which in turn has been shown to be associated with higher aggressive tendencies among adolescents. Research on peer relations has been conducted in Nigeria (e.g., Popoola et al., 2018) but there is a dearth of literature with respect to its predictive capacity for aggressive tendencies among adolescents and young people. This study was carried to address these gaps. While there has been a focus on the causes of aggressive behaviours among secondary school students in Nigeria (Agbonlue, 2022; Obikeze & Obi, 2020; Omotoso, 2019), less attention has been paid to the phenomenon of aggressive behaviour in our society especially in secondary school's environment. It is based on this premise that this study aims to investigate the influence of demographic variables and peer relations on aggressive tendencies among adolescents in secondary schools, Keffi, Nigeria.

### 1.2 Objective of the study

The study fundamental objective is to investigate the influence of demographic variables and peer relations on aggressive tendencies among adolescents in secondary schools, Keffi, Nigeria, while specific objectives are:

- To examine the gender influence on aggressive tendency among students from selected secondary schools in Keffi town
- To access the family structure influence on aggressive tendency among students from selected secondary schools in Keffi town
- To find out the relationship between peer relations and aggressive tendency among

students from selected secondary schools in Keffi town

### 1.3 Hypotheses

In the light of the study research questions and objectives, the following were hypothesised as follows:

- Gender will statistically and positively influence aggressive tendency among students from selected secondary schools in Keffi town;
- Family Structure will statistically and positively influence aggressive tendency among students from selected secondary schools in Keffi town; and
- There will be a statistically significant relationship between peer relations and aggressive tendency among students from selected secondary schools in Keffi town.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

Aggressive behaviour and tendencies in secondary schools have been recognised as a huge problem in Europe and America (McClanahan et al., 2015; Smith, 2016; Vega-Gea et al., 2016) as well as Mexico (Castillo & Pacheco 2008) as detailed by Jiménez and Estévez (2017). The universality of this problem has also been documented by Bucur et al., (2020) along with its consequences. In Nigeria, various aggressive behaviours such as fighting, slapping, rape, bullying (physical, verbal and social), and other high-risk behaviours is said to be on the increase among adolescents in secondary schools, as well as universities (Olu, 2020). According to Cui and Lan (2020), the rate of aggressive behaviour at school seems to boom as youth enter adolescence. This is attributable to the biological changes within the onset of puberty which are troubling or disturbing to adolescents, which in turn may intensify aggressive behaviour in such a period (Tremblay, 1998; Pomerantz et al., 2017).

Demographic factors such as gender and family structure as well as peer relations have been associated with aggressive behavioural tendencies among adolescents and young persons within the secondary school setting. Fundamentally, gender is an essential characteristic in aggressive behaviour, also among students. In a study focused on aggression in a relationship, the study revealed that there was more likelihood that young women in the university would experience sexual violence (sexual violence being an example of aggressive behaviour). Young men in the university would be victims of

psychological aggression (Kaukinen, 2014). Another study among university students showed that women were more physically aggressive than men in a relationship (Hines & Saudino, 2003).

In another clime, male gender was one of the factors associated with aggressive behaviours (physical fighting) among Romanian high school students between 15 and 16 years old (Bucur et al., 2020). In the same study, other factors found associated with physical fighting include: binge drinking during the previous 30 days, serious problems with friends, parent(s) who do not know where and with whom the adolescents spend their evenings, poor parental caring, low school grades, and high truancy. In a study by Currie et al., (2008) on the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) conducted in Romania between 2005 and 2006, 6% of the girls and 24% of the boys aged 15 have been involved in a physical fight at least three times in the last 12 months. In another survey performed by HBSC between 2009 and 2010 (Currie et al., 2012), it was found that 4% of the girls and 19% of the boys aged 15 have been involved in a physical fight at least three times in the last 12 months. In Nigeria, studies have reported that boys engage in more aggressive behaviours like bullying than girls (Egbochuku, 2007; Owuamanam & Makinwa, 2015). Furthermore, in their cross-sectional survey of 465 final-year secondary school students in Benin City, Nigeria, aged 16-19 years. Akanni et al., (2020) found bullying to be significantly associated with students who are male, have poor relations with their teachers and are involved in cult and gangsterism.

Studies by Shetgiri et al., (2015) as well as Laufer and Harel (2003) have shown that adolescents who maintain a stronger, healthier relationship with their families and their education are less likely to participate in unacceptable behaviours, such as violence. The family structure of an adolescent could impact on their emotional status and how they relate with others – including their peers. It has been observed that children whose parents have divorced have more behaviour problems than those in intact families; children living in step-parent and blended families also tend to have more behaviour problems (Ryan et al., 2015). Results from a study involving a large Norwegian sample of 11–16 years old students (n = 4509) showed that young people living with a single parent were also more likely to report no participation in organised sports; the study suggests that living with a single parent or in reconstituted families was unfavourably associated with physical activity, sport participation and screen-based behaviours among Norwegian youth. Park and Lee

(2020) analysed data from the 2018 Korean Youth Risk Behaviour Web-based Survey responded to by 59,096 adolescents. They used logistic regression, t-tests, and a variance analysis of a complex sample general linear model to examine the association of family structure with health behaviours, mental health and academic achievement at  $P < 0.05$  level of significance. Their results showed that non-intact families (single-mother families, single-father families, and restructured families) had significantly higher odds of smoking a cigarette, drinking a sip of alcohol, internet use, physical activity, and sexual experience, and mental health issues such as depression, suicidal ideation, perceived stress, and poor perceived health status than intact families (two-parent families).

Also, non-intact families were significantly related to low perceived academic achievement compared to intact ones. They concluded that family structure is a significant factor in adolescent health behaviour, mental health, and perceived academic achievement; and that adolescents who experience a transition in their family structure may be more vulnerable to health risks and exhibit lower academic achievement than those in an intact family. In Nigeria, family structure has been found to be a significant predictor of youth educational outcomes. Odimegwu et al., (2017) examined the gender differences in the effect of family structure on educational outcomes of youth in Nigeria - using the 2010 Nigeria General Household Survey which is available through Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)-International, consisting of 14,178 males and 13,858 females. They found that there was a negative relationship between living with neither parent and ever enrolling among males and females, but the effect was much stronger for females. This finding aligns with the outcome of the study on *Timing of vape use among adolescents: Differences by family structure* conducted by (Watkins & Ohannessian, 2020). Their own findings indicated that adolescents with divorced parents at Time 1 vaped earlier, and were 51% more likely to vape than adolescents with married parents. In summary, there seems to be a general trend in literature supporting the notion that family structure plays a significant role in adolescent behaviour.

Other factors have been considered by researchers in the quest to discover factors responsible for aggressive behaviour among adolescents. For instance, in a study conducted on the psychological determinants of aggressive behaviour among adolescents in secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria

by Izuchi, and Anetoh (2014), it was discovered that while stress significantly influenced aggressive behaviour among secondary school adolescents, self-concept and locus of control did not. Also, working with a student sample of 379, Wakoli et al., (2016) examined the extent to which adolescent students' peers influence aggressive behaviour among students in Bungoma County, Kenya. Results of their analysis show that adolescents agreed to propositions that they like to please their friends; they have good relationship with their friends; their peers respect them and recognise them as important and that their school friends have negative attitudes towards education. The study established that peer pressure influence was high amongst secondary school students. A coefficient of determination  $R^2 = 0.578$  indicated that 57.8% of aggressive behaviour was as a result of peer pressure showing that peer pressure significantly contributed to the variance in aggressive behaviour among learners. This brings us to the issue of peer relations.

According to Pepler and Bierman (2018), 'positive peer relationships make critical contributions to healthy social-emotional development. Children benefit from the social and emotional support that friends offer, and they learn important social skills by interacting with peers... Unfortunately, children who struggle with delays or deficits in social-emotional skills are often rebuffed by peers, limiting their opportunities for positive peer interactions and pushing them further to the margins of the peer group with negative consequences for their well-being'. One negative consequence could be the development of aggressive tendencies. Children who can take the perspective of others, understand subtle social cues, manage their emotions, and control their impulses and aggressive behaviours experience more positive peer involvement and a sense of social belonging (Rubin et al., 2015). On the other hand, children who have not developed age-appropriate social-emotional skills struggle to initiate and sustain meaningful relationships with peers at school, particularly if they are socially awkward or volatile emotionally and unpredictable in their behaviour (Bierman and Powers, 2009; Pepler, Craig, and Roberts, 1998).

The importance of peer relationships cannot be overemphasised because social-emotional competencies developed through peer relationships in childhood and adolescence accumulate to lay the foundation for well-being and healthy, supportive relationships in adulthood (Flynn et al., 2017). Conversely, children with under-developed social emotional competencies are often marginalised by peers and experience increasing social alienation over time, along with increases in emotional distress and

antisocial behaviours (Gazelle & Ladd, 2003; Dishion et al., 1999). Furthermore, findings from a study in Ilorin, Nigeria by Popoola et al., (2018) revealed that adolescents with higher peer-relation are more assertive than those with lower level of peer-relation ( $M=10.60$ ), [ $t(249) = 5.16, p < .05$ ]. Similarly, among other things, Levitan et al., (2019) found that adolescents with poorer peer relations, and poorer family functioning showed more behavioural and emotional problems.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research design

An ex post facto, cross-sectional research design was used to find out: (i) the influence of gender on aggressive tendency among students from selected secondary schools in Keffi town; (ii) the influence of family structure on aggressive tendency among students from selected secondary schools in Keffi town; and relationship between peer relations and aggressive tendency among students from selected secondary schools in Keffi town.

#### 3.2 Population, sample and sampling techniques

A sample of 200 students (135 males and 65 females) – drawn from an estimated population of 840 students in the senior secondary schools in Keffi Community – participated in this research. They were aged between 14-18 years (adolescents) and 19-25 years (young adults) respectively. Four (4) out of seven (7) public secondary schools were randomly selected through a ballot selection technique; these include Government Secondary School Yelwa, Pivotal Teachers College (PTC), Government College Keffi (GCK) and Keffi Development Foundation School (KDF).

#### 3.3 Instruments

A questionnaire was developed to capture demographic data. Participants were asked to identify their gender and specify the status of their family structure (whether intact or separated). The 25-item Index of Peer Relations (*IPR*) scale developed by Hudson (1986) was used to measure participants' problems of interpersonal relationships with peers. It is a self-report instrument, which uses the five-point Likert scale format ranging from 'rarely or none of the time' to 'most or all of the time'. Hudson (1986) provided the psychometric properties for American sample while Anumba (1995) provided the psychometric properties for Nigerian samples. Norms for the instruments for males is 29.31, while for

females is 26.83. Anumba (1986) obtained a divergent validity coefficient of .62 by correlating *IPR* with Hare Self-Esteem Scale (HSS) developed by Hare (1985). Hudson (1986) reported an alpha coefficient of .94. The interpretation for the instrument is based on Nigerian norms or mean scores, which states that scores higher than the norms indicates poor peer relations, while scores lower than the norms indicate appropriate peer relations.

Aggressive tendency was measured using the Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) developed by (Buss & Perry, 1992). This scale is made up of 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 subscales comprising verbal aggression (5 items,  $\alpha = .76$ ) physical aggression (9 items,  $\alpha = .83$ ), anger (7 items,  $\alpha = .81$ ) and Hostility (8 items,  $\alpha = .84$ ). This instrument has wide cross-cultural validation, which were also validated and adapted using Nigerian participants by Onwukwe (2014). He administered the questionnaire to 200 students of Renaissance University Ugbawka in Enugu State (mean age = 20.7, male = 90, female = 110) alongside the Hostility subscale of Symptom Checklist-90 (SCL-90) of Derogatis et al., (1977) and it produced a coefficient of concurrent validity of .44 ( $p < 0.01$ ). It also yielded a Guttman split-half coefficient of .65 and a Cronbach's alpha of .49. These analyses were done using the computer based Statistical Package for Social Sciences 16.0 (SPSS 16.0). On the bases of the mean scores the author established a norm of 67.60 for both male and female participants. The instruments were administered to the participants using convenient sampling technique after the necessary permissions had been sought from the participating school authorities.

#### 3.4 Statistical Techniques

The statistics used for the descriptive explanations were frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Inferential statistics used for the tests of significance of the stated hypotheses were: *Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)* to determine the influence of gender and family structure on aggressive tendencies and *Pearson Product-Moment Correlation* to test the relationship between peer relations and aggressive tendencies among secondary school students.

#### 3.5 Ethical consideration

Appropriate steps were taken to ensure confidentiality and informed consent of would-be

participants. Letters were written to the designated authorities of the participating secondary schools to explain the academic purpose of the research and get approval its conduct in among their students; the schools provided convenient dates for distribution

and retrieval of completed instruments. Participation in the study was voluntary and the confidentiality of participants was safeguarded. Participants were also given the right to disengage from the research process at any point in time and for whatever reason.

**4. Results**

**4.1 Data Presentation**

**Table 1:** Frequency and Percentages of the Characteristics of Participants

Demographic Data		Frequency	Percentages
Gender	Male	135	67.5
	Female	65	32.3
	Total	200	100%
Family Structure	Intact	180	90
	Separated	20	10
	Total	200	100%
School	GSS Yelwa	55	27.5
	PTC	45	22.5
	GCK	49	24.5
	KDF	51	25.5
	Total	200	100%
Class	SS I	66	33
	SS II	71	35.5
	SS III	63	31.5
	Total	200	100%

Table 1 presents frequency and percentages of the demographic characteristics of 200 students (Males = 135 and Females = 65). Family structure: Intact (N = 180, 90%) and Separated (= 20, 10%). School: GSS Yelwa (N = 55, 27.5%), PTC (N = 45, 22.5%), Government College Keffi (N = 49, 24.5%) and KDF Secondary School (N = 51, 25.5%). Class: SS I (N = 66, 33%), SS II (N = 71, 35.5%) and SS III (N = 63, 31.5%).

**Table 2:** Index of Peer Relations and Aggressive Tendency across Gender

Gender		Peer Relations	Aggressive Tendency
Male	Mean	55.7	90.08
	N	135	135
	Std. Deviation	12.024	15.57
Female	Mean	59.54	87.8
	N	65	65
	Std. Deviation	11.723	15.442
Total	Mean	56.95	89.34
	N	200	200
	Std. Deviation	12.034	15.527

Table 2 shows the indexes for interpreting peer relations and aggressive tendency between male and female students in the study. The total mean index of peer relations is 56.95 and that of aggressive tendency is 89.34. The mean scores for male students are 55.70 on peer relations and 90.08 on aggressive tendency respectively - indicating that male students have appropriate peer relations and high level of aggressive tendency; while female students mean scores on peer relations and aggressive tendency are 59.54 and 87.80 respectively - indicating that females have poor peer relations and low aggressive tendency.

**Table 3:** Index of Peer Pressure Relations and Aggressive Tendency according to Family Structure

Family Structure		Peer Relations	Aggressive Tendency
Intact	Mean	57.31	88.33
	N	180	180
	Std. Deviation	12.264	15.252
Separated	Mean	53.7	98.45
	N	20	20
	Std. Deviation	9.348	15.371
Total	Mean	56.95	89.34
	N	200	200
	Std. Deviation	12.034	15.527

Table 3 shows the indexes for interpreting peer relations and aggressive tendency between students from intact and separated homes. The total mean index of peer relations is 56.95 and that of aggressive tendency is 89.34. Mean scores for students from intact homes are 57.31 on peer relations and 88.33 on aggressive tendency respectively - indicating that the students have poor peer relations and a low level of aggressive tendency. Mean scores for students from separate homes are 53.70 on peer relations and 98.45 on aggressive tendency respectively - indicating that this set of students have appropriate peer relations and high level of aggressive tendency among their peers.

**4.2 Test of Hypotheses**

The results of data analysis and corresponding interpretations are presented below:

Hypothesis 1 stated that gender will statistically influence aggressive tendency among students from selected secondary schools in Keffi town. This hypothesis was tested with Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the result presented in Table 4 below.

**Table 4:** Summary of ANOVA results for between subject effects of gender and family structure on aggressive tendency

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3152.203 <sup>a</sup>	7	450.315	1.929	0.067
Intercept	399199.804	1	399199.804	1709.991	0
Gender	48.098	1	48.098	0.206	0.65
Family Structure (FS)	1809.771	1	1809.771	7.752	0.006
Gender * FS	140.458	1	140.458	0.602	0.439
Error	44822.677	192	233.451		
Total	1644302	200			
Corrected Total	47974.88	199			

a. R Squared = .066 (Adjusted R Squared = .032)

The result from Table 4 above shows there was no statistically significant main effect of gender on aggressive tendency where gender:  $F(1, 192) = 0.206, p > 0.05ns$ . This implies that participants have no significant mean difference in aggressive tendency in terms of gender in this study (See Table 5 below). Hypothesis 1 was therefore not supported.

Hypothesis 2 stated that family structure will statistically influence aggressive tendency among students from selected secondary schools in Keffi town. This hypothesis was tested with Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the result presented in Table 4 above.

Table 4 shows a statistically significant main effect of family structure on aggressive tendency,  $F(1, 192) = 7.752, p < 0.05$ . This implies that participants from homes where the family is separated ( $M = 98.45, SD = 15.371$ ) show

more aggressive tendencies than those from homes where the family is intact ( $M = 88.33$ ,  $SD = 15.252$ ). Mean scores of participants from homes where the family is separated were significantly higher than mean scores of participants from homes where the family is intact (See Table 5 below). Hypothesis 2 was supported by this result.

**Table 5:** Mean and standard deviation scores of gender and family structure influence on aggressive tendency

Gender	Age	Family Structure	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Male	14-18 years	Intact Family	88.3	15.374	92
		Separated Family	95.92	16.919	12
		Total	89.18	15.664	104
	19-25 years	Intact Family	92.07	15.202	28
		Separated Family	102.67	12.342	3
		Total	93.1	15.109	31
	Total	Intact Family	89.18	15.354	120
		Separated Family	97.27	15.953	15
		Total	90.08	15.57	135
Female	14-18 years	Intact Family	87.78	14.769	49
		Separated Family	107	4.583	3
		Total	88.88	15.054	52
	19-25 years	Intact Family	81.45	15.801	11
		Separated Family	94.5	24.749	2
		Total	83.46	16.826	13
	Total	Intact Family	86.62	15.029	60
		Separated Family	102	14.509	5
		Total	87.8	15.442	65
Total	14-18 years	Intact Family	88.12	15.115	141
		Separated Family	98.13	15.779	15
		Total	89.08	15.415	156
	19-25 years	Intact Family	89.08	15.917	39
		Separated Family	99.4	15.789	5
		Total	90.25	16.064	44
	Total	Intact Family	88.33	15.252	180
		Separated Family	98.45	15.371	20
		Total	89.34	15.527	200

Table 5 shows the mean and standard deviation scores of the participants on aggressive tendency where mean above the cut-off mean indicates high aggressive tendency across the variables. From the table above, scores based on Gender: Males ( $M = 90.08$ ;  $SD = 15.570$ ) and Female ( $M = 87.80$ ;  $SD = 15.442$ ); and Family Structure: Intact ( $M = 88.33$ ,  $SD = 15.252$ ) and Separated ( $M = 98.45$ ,  $SD = 15.371$ ) respectively.

Hypothesis 3 stated that there will be a statistically significant relationship between peer relations and aggressive tendency among students from selected secondary schools in Keffi town. This hypothesis was tested with Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and the result presented in Table 6 below.

**Table 6:** Summary results of the relationship between peer relations and aggressive tendency

Variables	M	SD	df	r	Sig.
Peer Relations	56.95	12.034	198	-0.140	0.047
Aggressive Tendency	89.34	15.527			

$$r(198) = -0.140, P < 0.05$$

From Table 6 above, mean and standard deviation scores were ( $M = 56.95$ ,  $SD = 12.034$ ) on peer relations; and ( $M = 89.34$ ,  $SD = 15.527$ ) on aggressive tendency respectively. Furthermore, the result shows a statistically significant  $r(198) = -0.140$ ,  $P < 0.05$  negative relationship between peer relations and aggressive tendency. This implies that the

level of peer relations has a significant inverse relationship and influence on the level of aggressive tendency among the secondary school students. Hypothesis 3 was confirmed in the study.

### 5. Discussion on the findings

The result of the study first showed that there was no significant difference between males and females on aggressive tendency even though mean scores by male students was marginally higher than that of females. This implies that gender does not significantly influence aggressive tendency among students. This finding is at variance with findings on physical aggression by Bucur et al., 2020, Akanni et al., 2020 and Egbochuku, 2007. However, it is consistent with findings on relational aggression by Lansford et al., 2012. According to Björkqvist (2017), in proportions of their total aggression scores, boys and girls are verbally about equally aggressive, while boys are more physically and girls more indirectly aggressive. In their study, Naseem and Munaf (2020) also found out that overall, there was no significant gender difference in aggression; nevertheless, physical aggression was significantly higher in males, whereas, anger was higher in females.

The result for the second hypothesis which stated that family structure will statistically influence aggressive tendency among students was found significant and this was supported by findings of Shetgiri et al. (2015) as well as Laufer and Harel (2003) who concluded that adolescents who maintain a stronger, healthier relationship with their families and their education are less likely to participate in unacceptable behaviours, such as violence. Similarly, Ryan, Claessens and Markowitz, (2015) established that children whose parents have divorced have more behaviour problems than those in intact families. In the same vein, Park and Lee (2020) concluded that family structure is a significant factor in adolescent health behaviour, mental health, and perceived academic achievement; and that adolescents who experience a transition in their family structure may be more vulnerable to health risks and exhibit lower academic achievement than those in an intact family. Other studies (Odimegwu, Somefun, and Akinyemi, 2017; Watkins and Ohannessian, 2020) also support this result.

The third hypothesis which specified that there will be a statistically significant relationship between peer relations and aggressive tendency among students was also supported by the result of this study. This is in line with findings by Levitan, Barkmann, Richter-Appelt, H. et al. (2019) that adolescents with poorer peer relations, and poorer family functioning showed

more behavioural and emotional problems. This means that students in secondary school with lower peer relations are likely to display higher aggressive tendencies.

### 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, gender does not significantly influence aggressive tendencies among secondary school students; overall, boys and girls are verbally about equally aggressive, while boys are more physically and girls more indirectly aggressive. Family structure has significant influence on aggressive tendencies as children from homes where the family is separated show more aggressive tendencies than those from homes where the family is intact. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between peer relations and aggressive tendency because students who are better in peer relations tend to exhibit less aggressive than those who have poorer peer relations and vice-versa.

It is therefore recommended that:

- Psychological associations and other non-governmental organisations need to expand existing capacity-building/outreach programmes and fashion out new ones to help parents engage more in attitudes and behaviours that engender family cohesiveness.
- Government should fully engage and embed psychologists in all the relevant agencies (like the Ministry of Women Affairs, Education, Youth & Social Development, etc.) that interface with families and children so that they can provide counselling and psychosocial support to families and children/adolescents.
- Findings of studies such as this should be made available through various channels (including social media) to enable parents understand the need for family cohesiveness and training of children to develop critical peer relations / social emotional skills, such as empathy, cooperation, and problem-solving strategies.
- Counselling should be mainstreamed into secondary school programmes and strengthened such that students can have unfettered access to needed therapy.

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