

Prevalence of Aggressive Behaviours among Students in Secondary Schools in Bungoma County, Kenya

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Abstract: - This study aimed at finding out the prevalence of aggressive behaviours among the secondary school students in Kenya. The participants consisted of 22 schools which formulated a total of 308 students. The students' questionnaire was used to obtain information on interactions to bullying, fighting and destruction. It was established that physical fighting is one of the aggressive behaviours reported in schools world over. With regard to vandalization of school property, most cases of vandalism in schools is manifested in writing on walls, pouring food, burning school buildings, breaking into other students' boxes and pouring laboratory chemicals. Based on this, the study recommended that there is need for the concerted effort of the individual and the stake-holders are important for the successful transition of adolescents

Key terms: Prevalence; Aggressive behaviors

I. BACKGROUND

In most cases psycho-social factors contribute to the development of aggressive behaviour. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, psycho-social factors are factors that pertain to the influence of social factors on an individual's mind or behaviour, and the interrelation of behavioural and social factors. The primary psycho-social factors that contribute to students' behaviour are family, peers, school and neighbourhood. Weiser and Freud (2011) pointed out that, parents and family members are significant people in the life of students. They contribute the behaviours which are associated with success among adolescents. Sailor (2010) noted that, depending on the behaviour of the people in the immediate environment, the student could either engage in behaviour that is acceptable or not acceptable in society. Therefore, parents and family members are significant in causing aggressive behaviour of students.

Following many incidents of bullying in Norwegian schools, Solberg and Olweus (2003) conducted a survey involving 75,000 school aged children to determine the extent of bullying. The authors reported that bullying was serious and widespread in schools. According to Gaul (2010) Peer victimization has become highly prevalent in schools with some studies showing that as many as 50% of high school students report having victimized or being victimized. This prompted the researcher to carry out the study to establish the extent of bullying, fights and destruction of property/vandalism among the students in secondary schools.

Cook, Henson and Buchler, (2009) as well as Sailor (2010) investigated the role of parents and peers on the deviant

behaviour of adolescents. Their study findings established that parent factor was important in influencing the choice to abstain from deviant behaviours. The study also revealed that during the onset of puberty stage, the adolescents rely more on their parents' influence as compared to that of their peers. The studies gave significant information with regard to important factors that contribute to the behaviour of adolescents. Past research has shown that several parental factors, such as involvement (Connors-Burrow et al., 2009 and support Hill et al., 2004) have been linked to many childhood outcomes, such as the presence of aggressive behaviour.

Freud (2011) explained that peer problems might be caused by dysfunctional family, deviant neighbours, mass media and lack of self control. Based on this, adolescents with delinquent behaviour formed peer groups which shape and reinforce aggressive behaviours. But since the study involved parents and peers in developed countries, it was important to establish if similar findings could be corroborated in Kenya which is a developing country. This justified a similar study in Bungoma County to fill the gap. In addition, the study focussed on identification and participation in the informal groups. Therefore, the current study built on these findings and went further to find out the contribution of sharing of problems with peers and students' opinion to bullying and destruction of property, which were among the variables in the current study.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2010), 32% of students from ages 12 to 18 state that they have been victims of bullying at their schools. In addition, an overwhelming 24% of students among 100 polled, students reported feeling unsafe and unhappy in their schools (Gaul, 2010). Fifty percent of high school students in this study reported having bullied others or having been bullied at some point. The study of Gaul did not reveal the causes of students bullying their fellow students. The present study sought to establish the psycho-social factors that cause aggressive behaviour of students in secondary school, hence filled the knowledge gap. Parental factors have been linked to the likelihood of children engaging in certain types of aggression. According to Kuppens, Grietens, Onghenes and Michiels (2009), the control exerted by parents on their children determine their behaviour outcomes. For instance, physical punishment is associated with physical aggression in children. Authoritarian parenting predicts an increase in aggression for those who are already rated high in aggression.

Bullying is related to school difficulties because bullied children have a lower sense of self-efficacy and their academic achievement tends to be lower than their peers (Thijs & Verkuyten, 2008). In addition, bullied children are more frequently absent from school (Gastic, 2008). Interestingly, victims are also more likely to get into trouble at school and more likely to receive serious forms of discipline than non-bullied children. These difficulties often result in school transfers. Bullies and bully victims all report having more negative family experiences than children not involved in bullying. These experiences include both family conflict and family violence (Yeung & Leadbeater, 2009). The researcher laid emphasis on family factors influencing aggressive behaviour and omitted the contribution of the peers, school and neighbourhood which are important variables in the present study however the present study built on the findings of Yeung and Leadbeater to investigate the role parents play on aggressive behaviour of students in secondary schools.

Townsend, Flisher, Chikobvu, Lombard and King (2009) studied the relationship between bullying behaviours and high school dropout in Cape Town, South Africa. Their findings showed that among both high school learners and drop outs, 52% of the boys and 36% of the girls had been involved in bullying behaviours. The findings also showed that girls who were bullies and victims were at a greater risk of dropping out of school. The Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention in 2009 carried out a national study in South Africa and found out that 15% of primary and secondary school learners had experienced some form of violence at school. It was established that vandalism which included breaking of window panes, blocking of toilets, damaging plants and trees and scratching of teachers' cars were common among students. These researchers conducted a study in Free State Province, South Africa (2009) and established a high prevalence of bullying behaviour in schools with 84% and 95% of the students and teachers feeling that aggression was a big problem.

Ndibalema (2013) studied widely on the relationship between family, school influence and aggressive behaviour among students in Tanzania. This study focussed on Tanzania which is a developing country like Kenya. Thus, the current study sought to establish the extent of aggressive behaviour (bullying, destruction of property and fighting) among students in Bungoma County, Kenya. Kahindi (2012) investigated the causes of student unrest in Kaloleni Secondary School in Kilifi District, Coast Province. The study revealed that the most serious factors that contributed to students' unrest in schools included poor parenting, peer pressure, laxity of teachers and inadequate facilities for curriculum implementation. The study further found other most serious factors to be harsh, excessive and unjustified punishments, and drug abuse. Moreover, the students who have been practising aggressive behaviours might become a burden to school authorities and these students might engage

in acts of delinquent behaviour such as bullying fighting and destruction of property. Okwemba (2007) concurred with Kahindi's findings by stating that bullying behaviour is rampant in secondary schools in Kenya. These studies investigated the causes of student unrest in secondary schools without highlighting features of student indiscipline. The present study pointed out aspects of student indiscipline like bullying, fighting and destruction of property.

Kangendo (2010) studied incidents and extent of substance abuse in Nairobi Province. The findings showed that 44% of the students stated that drug abuse was due to their family background while 52% blamed it on stress and frustration at home. The study also showed that family background and peer pressure were the leading reasons why students engaged in violence. Another study carried out by Kariuki (2010) targeting schools in Nairobi Province found that the common antisocial behaviours were bullying and destruction of property. It was interesting to compare the findings of these studies and the current study since they were conducted in the same Country, Kenya.

Physical fighting is one of the aggressive behaviour reported in school world over. According to Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) USA (2014) in its survey on high school risk behaviour found out that in about one in four school students physical fight was reported in the past year. According to the survey, the proportion of students in grades 9-12 fought physically leading to injuries and even death. The authors also said that injuries incurred in physical fighting during adolescence can result in significant losses in verbal intelligence. Risk factors that predict violence by youth include substance abuse, conflict and abuse at home, harsh or inattentive parenting, antisocial and delinquent peers and neighbourhoods where crime and drug abuse are prevalent. Youths who are involved in physical fighting are also often engaged in other high risk activities, such as bullying and alcohol use.

Aluede (2011) studied fighting behaviours among African American adolescents in U.S.A and found that 37% of the students had been involved in physical fight. Physical violence among students is a common behaviour problem in secondary schools. Fighting occurs in various forms between individual students and also among groups of students. The researcher conducted a study on aggression and fighting behaviour among African American adolescents. The study employed the use of self-administered questionnaires that gathered information concerning student characteristics such as aggressiveness, fighting behaviour, attitudes towards violence and weapon carrying behaviour. Using a sample of seven hundred and forty-four students, he found that 37% (168) of the students had been involved in a physical fight and school records showed that 18% (77) had been suspended from school for fighting.

According to Schwartz and Bearer (2013) youths attending schools where fighting is common may be unable to maintain

the focus necessary for academic success. Adolescents who are victims of violence are also more likely to be victims or perpetrators of violence during adulthood. The likelihood of drug use, property destruction and stress during adulthood also all increase in association with youth violence. The authors indicated that in 2011 the proportion of adolescent fights remained steady at 32% and 36%. However, between 2011 and 2013 the proportion decreased markedly, from 33 to 25 percent. Unlike these studies that investigated mainly adolescent fighting among whites, black Americans and Hispanics, the current study mainly investigated fighting among black Africans in Bungoma County, Kenya.

Mrug, Loosier, and Windle, (2008) examined the relationship between violence exposure in three different contexts and internalizing and externalizing outcomes in early adolescents. The respondents were asked to report whether they witnessed violence in different contexts. The findings of the study showed that adolescents reported high levels of exposure occurring in school and the lowest at home. In the school setting, 78.2% of adolescents reported witnessing threats or violence and 22.3% reported being victims of threats or violence. In recent years, Jamaica has suffered from an epidemic of violence that has left many individuals dead and many more wounded or physically disabled (Bailey, 2012). In 2008, the Jamaican Youth Risk and Resiliency Behaviour Survey reported 20% male adolescents carrying guns and 17% involved in gang activities (Bailey, 2012).

A study conducted by Ohsako (2012) investigated violence in secondary schools in Ethiopia and found that physical fighting among students in school was prevalent. In Kenya, Wesangula (2009) found that violent behaviour had become a contemporary issue in the Kenyan educational system. It is manifested in the form of rioting, sexual violence, bullying and fighting. The study recommended that laws related to sexual violence be enforced; ban on caning of students should be encouraged; and an anti-bullying policy be established. The findings of this study were informative concerning fighting which was the dependent variables in the study.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted correlational research design with mixed approaches. The study was conducted in Bungoma County. This is one of the 47 counties in Kenya which was purposively selected because it has many public secondary schools which are a mixture of girls’ only schools, and boys’ only schools, as well as mixed schools. This was essential for comparison purposes. Furthermore, this County has had a number of incidents of students’ aggressive behaviour and regular disturbances witnessed. These incidents have been reported in the print and electronic media and have caused concern among parents, teachers, counsellors and Ministry of education officials and other education stake-holders in the recent past (Makabila, 2010). Purposive sampling was used to select form two classes of students enrolled in public secondary schools. In order to ensure that these different

school categories are adequately represented in the sample, stratified sampling was used. The sample size of students in form two who were selected for the current study was determined using a formula that was developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) where 308 students in form two were obtained. A sample of 22 schools was selected through the process of stratified random sampling from a population of 220 schools. The students’ questionnaire was used to obtain information on interactions to bullying, fighting and destruction of property.

III. RESULTS

The objective was to establish the prevalence aggressive behaviours practiced in schools. In this regard, the prevalence of bullying, fighting and destruction of property among the students in secondary schools was examined as follows.

Extent of Bullying Amongst students in Secondary Schools

Students were first requested to rate on a five point summative Likert scales the extent of aggression in their schools in terms of bullying based on given statements. These were analysed using weighted averages as shown in Table 3.

Table 1: Extent of Bullying Behaviour in Secondary Schools

	SA	A	U	D	SD	$\sum f_i$	$\frac{\sum f_i w_i}{\sum f_i}$
Am called by “nick” name by others	98	48	67	46	49	308	2.68
I disturb the weak students	53	56	76	66	57	308	3.06
I cannot be trusted by others	77	98	53	48	33	309	2.55
I harass other students	85	89	64	51	19	308	2.45
I am part of a group that goes around teasing others	60	89	74	54	31	308	2.70
I like to instil fear in others	79	90	72	47	20	308	2.48
I like to show others that “I am the most important person”.	39	45	49	71	104	308	3.51
I like upsetting someone that I can easily beat	35	41	56	76	101	309	3.54
I make fun of other students	16	61	55	91	85	308	3.55

The ratings for each respondent were summed up to obtain an index which measured level of bullying, the index ranged from 9 to 45. An index of more than 27 could imply high bullying behaviour while an index of less than 27 could construe low bullying behaviour among the students. The descriptive statistics for bullying are shown in the table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Bullying Behaviour

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness
Bullying Index	308	9.00	45.00	27.1039	9.92885	-.012

As shown in table 2, the mean bullying index was 27.1039 with a standard deviation 9.92885. The skewness index of -

0.012 indicated that the data exhibited negative skewness with more observations lying above the mean than below the mean hence the conclusion that the bullying indices deviate from the normal distribution. However, the deviation from normal is quite small. In the range of 9 to 45, the mean bullying index is above the average of 27. This could imply that bullying is still high in secondary schools in Bungoma County. The finding is in line with the finding by Olweus and Breivik (2015) who reported that bullying was serious and widespread in schools. Also, Kariuki (2010) targeting schools in Nairobi Province reported that bullying was a common antisocial behaviour in schools.

Extent of fighting behaviour in secondary schools

Students were first requested to rate on a five point summative Likert scales the extent of aggression in their schools in terms of fighting based on given statements. These were analysed using weighted averages and are presented in the Table 5.

Table 3: Extent of fighting behaviour in secondary schools

	SD	D	N	A	SA	$\sum f_i$	$\frac{\sum f_i w_i}{\sum f_i}$
I am feared by other students	91	50	77	46	44	308	2.68
I like to show others that I am strong	46	46	58	102	56	308	3.25
I like to get into a fight with someone I can easily beat	95	88	44	41	40	308	2.49
I fight back when a teacher tries to cane me	102	90	54	48	14	308	2.29
Fighting is a good thing to do when you cross with someone	102	90	72	27	17	308	2.24
I hit anyone back who hits me	41	40	47	70	110	308	3.55
When we lose a match we fight the other team	58	56	49	71	74	308	3.15

One hundred and forty-one (45.8%) of the respondents disagreed that they are feared by other students (scored 1 and 2 on the scale) as compared to 90 representing 29.2% who agreed that they are feared by other students (scored 4 and 5 on the scale). With a weighted average of 2.68, the results suggest that on the average, students were indifferent on being feared by other students. However, the results show that more students do not feel that they are feared by other students. With regard to showing others that one is strong, 92 respondents representing 29.9% disagreed (scored 1 and 2 on the Likert scale) as compared to 158 representing 51.3% who agreed (scored 4 and 5 on the Likert scale). The results suggest that on the average, the learners were indifferent as to showing others that one is strong as indicated by weighted averages of 3.25 indicating ‘Neutral’. However, there were

more students who indicated that they like showing others that they are strong than those who indicated otherwise.

As far as getting into a fight with students one can easily beat is concerned, the results suggest that on the average, students disagreed as indicated by weighted averages of 2.49 representing ‘Disagree’ on the scale. One hundred and eighty-three (183) respondents representing 59.4% disagreed (scored 1 and 2 on the Likert scale) whereas 81 representing 26.3% who agreed (scored 4 and 5 on the Likert scale). This is a pointer that in most schools fighting is prohibited habit.

Concerning fighting back when a teacher tries to cane them, 192 respondents representing 62.3% disagreed (scored 1 and 2 on the Likert scale) as compared to 62 representing 20.1% who agreed (scored 4 and 5 on the Likert scale). The results suggest that on the average, the learners disagreed as to fighting back when a teacher tries to cane them as indicated by weighted averages of 2.29 indicating ‘Disagree’. With regard to whether fighting is a good thing to do when they cross with other people, the results suggest that on the average, students disagreed as indicated by weighted averages of 2.24 representing ‘Disagree’ on the scale. One hundred and eighty-three (192) respondents representing 62.3% disagreed (scored 1 and 2 on the Likert scale) whereas 44 representing 14.3% who agreed (scored 4 and 5 on the Likert scale).

In relation to hitting back anyone who hits them, the results suggest that on the average, students agreed as indicated by weighted averages of 3.55 representing ‘Agree’ on the scale. Eighty-one (81) respondents representing 26.3% disagreed (score 1 and 2 on the Likert scale) whereas 180 representing 58.4% who agreed (scored 4 and 5 on the Likert scale). As far as fighting the other teams when their school loses a match is concerned, the results suggest that on the average, students were indifferent as indicated by weighted averages of 3.15 representing ‘Neutral’ on the scale. One hundred and fourteen (114) respondents representing 37.0% disagreed (scored 1 and 2 on the Likert scale) whereas 145 representing 47.1% who agreed (scored 4 and 5 on the Likert scale). However, there were more respondents who agreed than those who disagreed indicating that during games matches students are likely to engage in fights since there must be winners and losers.

The ratings for each respondent on the various indicators of fighting as an aggressive behaviour were summed up to obtain an index which measured level of fighting, the index ranged from 7 to 35. An index of more than 21 could imply higher fighting behaviour while an index of less than 21 could imply lower fighting behaviour amongst the students. The descriptive statistics for fighting are shown in the table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for fighting behaviour among students

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness
Fighting Index	308	7.00	35.00	20.0422	8.25854	.004

Fighting as aggressive behaviour had a mean index of 20.0422 with the other values deviating from this mean to the extent of 8.25854. The skewness index was -0.004 suggesting a negative skewness. This implies that more observations were below the mean than above the mean. However, the skewness index is quite small hence the conclusion that the deviation from the normal is quite small hence the fighting indices could be assumed to follow a normal distribution. In the range 7 to 35, the mean fighting index could be regarded as low since it was below the average of 21. This implies that students in secondary schools do not fight much and this could be attributed to deterring school rules.

However, Physical fighting is one of the aggressive behaviour reported in the schools world over. According to Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) USA (2014) in its survey on high school risk behaviour found out that in about one in four school students physical fight was reported in the past year. According to the survey, the proportion of students in grades 9-12 fought physically leading to injuries and even death. According to Schwartz and Bearer (2013) youths attending schools where fighting is common may be unable to maintain the focus necessary for academic success. This view is further supported by Ohsako (2012) and Wesangula (2009) who found that physical fighting among adolescent students in school was prevalent.

Extent of behaviour of vandalization of property in secondary schools

Students were requested to rate on a five point summative Likert scale the extent of aggression in their schools in terms of vandalization of property based on given statements. These were analysed using weighted averages and are presented in the table 5.

Table 5: Extent of Vandalization of property in secondary schools

	SD	D	N	A	SA	$\sum f_i$	$\frac{\sum f_i w_i}{\sum f_i}$
I write on the walls of the classroom and other buildings	31	42	47	98	90	308	3.56
I tear school text books	107	80	40	56	25	308	2.39
Whenever we are served with bad food, I pour mine on the floor and tables	36	40	44	101	87	308	3.53
I break furniture /tables and chairs	102	90	54	48	14	308	2.29
I break windows with stones	102	90	72	27	17	308	2.24
Whenever there is unrest in the school I burn the school buildings	31	41	48	87	101	308	3.60
I vandalize electrical gadgets/ implements in the school	58	56	49	71	74	308	3.15

I pour chemicals in the laboratory	31	50	47	90	90	308	3.51
I scratch the teachers' vehicles	110	78	39	56	25	308	2.38
In a group of others, I burn the Principal's car whenever I am dissatisfied with school rules	123	60	50	48	27	308	2.34
I block the toilets	112	54	90	38	14	308	2.31
I tear school curtains	102	90	72	27	17	308	2.24
I vandalize other student's boxes	31	41	48	87	101	308	3.60
In the company of other students, we cut the wire in the school fence	58	56	49	71	74	308	3.15
I tear the uniform of other students	41	40	47	90	90	308	3.48
Whenever there is an opportunity I join other students to break into school canteen	107	80	40	56	25	308	2.39

The results of the analysis showed that the adolescents were in agreement with the propositions that they write on the walls of the classroom and other buildings; that whenever they are served with bad food they pour it on the floor and tables; that whenever there is unrest in the school they burn the school buildings; that they pour chemicals in the laboratory and they vandalize other students' boxes as indicated by weighted averages of 3.56, 3.53, 3.60, 3.60 and 3.51 respectively. The result indicates that most cases of vandalism in schools is manifest in writing walls, pouring food, burning school buildings, breaking into other students' boxes and pouring laboratory chemicals.

The respondents disagreed to the propositions that they tear school text books; they break furniture; they break windows with stones; they scratch the teachers' vehicles; when in a group they burn the Principal's car whenever they are dissatisfied with school rules; they block the toilets; they tear curtains and that they join other students to break into school canteens whenever there is an opportunity as indicated weighted averages of 2.39, 2.29, 2.24, 2.38, 2.34, 2.31, 2.24 and 2.39 respectively.

The learners were indifferent to the propositions that they vandalize electrical gadgets/ implements in the school; they cut the wire in the school fence and they tear the uniform of other students as indicated by weighted averages of 3.15, 3.15 and 3.48 respectively. However, in the three instances there were more students who agreed to the propositions than those who disagreed implying that vandalizing electrical gadgets, tearing other students' uniforms and cutting the wire fences were aggressive behaviours present in most schools but not to a large extent.

The ratings for each respondent on the various indicators of vandalization of school property as aggressive behaviour were summed up to obtain an index which measured level of vandalism. The index ranged from 16 to 80. An index of more than 48 could imply higher vandalism while an index of less than 48 could imply lower vandalism amongst the students in secondary schools. The descriptive statistics for vandalization of property are shown in the table 6.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics for Vandalization of school property

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness
Vandalization Index	308	16.00	80.00	46.1429	16.29629	.075

Vandalization of school property as an aggressive behaviour recorded a mean of 46.1429 with the other values deviating from the means by 16.29629 respectively. The skewness index of 0.075 indicated that the data exhibited positive skewness with more observations lying above the mean than below the mean. Since the skewness index is very small it is concluded that vandalization of property indices exhibit a small deviation from the normal distribution. The mean vandalization of property was below 48 hence the conclusion that destruction of property as aggressive behaviour was slightly below average in secondary schools in Bungoma County hence may not be dominant. This finding is at variance with a finding by Kariuki (2010) who reported that destruction of property was a common antisocial behaviour in schools.

Overall Aggressive Behaviour amongst Secondary School Students

The ratings for each respondent on the various indicators of Bullying, fighting and vandalization of school property as aggressive behaviours were summed up to obtain an index which measured level of overall aggression. The index ranged from 32 to 160. An index of more than 96 could imply higher aggressive behaviour while an index of less than 96 could imply lower aggressive behaviour amongst the students in secondary schools. The descriptive statistics for bullying are shown in the table 9.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics for Overall Aggression Behaviour

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness
Bullying Index	308	16.00	80.00	94.2825	20.67402	.165

For overall aggressive behaviour, the mean was 94.2825 with the other values deviating from the mean by 20.67402. The skewness index of 0.165 indicated that the data exhibited positive skewness meaning that more observations were below the mean than above the mean hence the conclusion that the fighting indices exhibit a small deviation from the normal distribution. Comparatively, the results of the analysis show aggressive behaviour manifested in bullying was more

predominant in schools than fighting and vandalization of school property.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study established that bullying was still high in secondary schools in Bungoma County. Fighting behaviour was not much amongst adolescents in secondary schools a finding attributable to deterring school rules. However, Physical fighting is one of the aggressive behaviours reported in schools world over. With regard to vandalization of school property, most cases of vandalism in schools is manifested in writing on walls, pouring food, burning school buildings, breaking into other students' boxes and pouring laboratory chemicals. Therefore, the study concluded that aggressive behaviour manifested in bullying was more predominant in schools than fighting and vandalization of school property.

V. RECOMMENDATION

Based on these findings, the parents and teachers should device effective ways of dealing with aggressive behaviors. The concerted effort of the individual and the stake-holders are important for the successful transition of adolescents. Therefore they should aim at developing a holistic individual who is socially, intellectually and psychologically fit in society.

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