AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.13 (2), September-December, 2024 https://ajemates.org

EFFECT OF SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING ON AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOURS OF MALE AND FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the effect of social skill training on aggressive behaviour among secondary school students in Anambra State. With two research questions and two null hypotheses tested at a 0.05 significance level, the quasi-experimental, non-randomized pre- and post-test control group design was used. The sample comprised 94 students, purposively selected from a population of 554. The "Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire" was employed for data collection, with an internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.88. Data were gathered through direct delivery, and mean scores were used to address the research questions. ANCOVA tested the null hypotheses, using a norm of 70.27 as a decision guide. The findings revealed that social skill training significantly reduced aggressive behaviour in secondary school students, with a more pronounced effect on female students. Based on these results, it was recommended that guidance counsellors in Anambra State secondary schools incorporate social skill training into their counselling programs. Additionally, counsellors should organize interventions focused on reducing aggressive behaviours and promoting appropriate social behaviour among students. The study recommended that guidance counsellors should adopt SST as part of their behaviour management strategies, ensuring that students not only succeed academically but also develop essential life skills for their overall well-being.

Keywords: social skills, training, aggression, behaviours, effect, students, school

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Introduction

Aggressive behaviour among students has become a growing concern, particularly in educational settings where it disrupts learning environments and negatively impacts interpersonal relationships. Secondary school students are in their period of adolescence which is a critical developmental stage, where social behaviours are shaped and reinforced, making it an ideal period for interventions aimed at mitigating aggression. In secondary schools, aggression can manifest in various forms, including physical violence, verbal confrontations, and social exclusion, which can affect both personal growth and academic achievement.

Aggressive behaviour, as defined by Gabbey and Raypole (2022), encompasses a wide range of harmful actions directed towards individuals, animals, or property, including physical violence, verbal abuse, and indirect aggression such as gossiping. Similarly, Mitchell et al. (2020) describe aggressive behaviour as hostile actions aimed at asserting dominance or defending oneself in ways that violate others' rights, leading victims to feel controlled, ashamed, or humiliated. In the context of secondary schools, such behaviour is particularly prevalent and can take both physical and psychological forms.

The definition used in this study aligns with the notion of aggressive behaviour as deliberate actions intended to harm someone who actively seeks to avoid such harm. This behaviour is common in secondary schools, where students, especially adolescents, often struggle with emotional regulation, peer pressure, and identity development. Previous research by Bonell et al. (2014) and Barnes et al. (2014) suggests that early exposure to high levels of aggression in elementary school classrooms can contribute to the development of aggressive tendencies in students. Over time, consistent exposure to aggression may desensitize adolescents, normalizing aggressive behaviour as a typical method of resolving conflicts. Such a cycle of aggression in schools not only disrupts learning environments but also fosters long-term behavioural issues. Students who experience or witness frequent aggressive acts may adopt these behaviours, perpetuating a harmful school climate. This highlights the importance of early interventions, such as social skills training, to help students develop healthier ways of managing conflict and aggression.

Addressing aggressive behaviour in children is essential from an early age, as such behaviour can lead to various personal and interpersonal problems later in life. Social-learning theorists argue that environmental influences play a key role in the development and perpetuation of violent behaviours. According to Moore et al. (2018), children who exhibit violent tendencies can benefit from therapeutic interventions like social skills training, which help correct these behaviours by teaching appropriate social interactions and conflict resolution strategies. However, managing aggressive behaviour in the classroom poses significant challenges for both guidance counsellors and teachers. Implementing a behaviour management approach that effectively caters to all students with aggressive tendencies can be difficult, especially when trying to establish desirable

behaviours consistently across different situations. Such an approach may require the use of various techniques and skills to intervene and modify destructive behaviours.

Social skills training is one of the most effective techniques in behaviour intervention for students displaying aggression. It focuses on equipping students with essential interpersonal skills, such as communication, empathy, and conflict resolution, which can help reduce aggressive tendencies. By working closely with teachers, guidance counsellors can implement social skills training programs tailored to the needs of aggressive students. These programs promote positive behavioural change, fostering a healthier classroom environment. The collaboration between guidance counsellors and teachers is crucial in ensuring that the interventions are consistent and holistic, addressing the root causes of aggression while supporting students in developing appropriate social behaviours.

Many students, especially those in their teenage age tend to regularly display disruptive behaviours in school settings because they have not yet developed the social skills necessary to interact prosocially with others. These children could become irritable and aggressive. They also have the tendency to evaluate themselves negatively, they communicate rarely, indicating that they are in dire need of social skills training. Ilknur and Bulbin (2017) defined social skills as the acceptable social pattern of behaviour which helps children gain social reinforcement and acceptance. Maher (2016) also defined social skills training as a set of psychotherapeutic technique based on social learning theory that has been developed to teach social skills to individuals. However, according to Beelman and Losel (2020), social skills training is a common misconduct prevention approach, focusing on skills that are particularly relevant to aggressive and violent behaviour, including self-control and anger management, perspective-taking, interpersonal problem-solving in conflict situations, prosocial attitudes and communication skills. Thus, based on the above scholarly concepts, social skills training is defined in the context of this study as a systematic, goal-directed and educational method in developing, generalizing and maintain social skills, that are particularly relevant to aggressive behaviour, such as self-control, perspective-taking, interpersonal problem-solving in conflict situations, prosocial attitudes and communication skills.

Social skills training as Beelman and Losel (2020) noted include a range of different skills across various domains (behavioural, social-cognitive and social-emotional). Consequently, social skills training are meant to teach people how they can better communicate and express feeling, thoughts and needs to others in order to encourages human interaction devoid of destructive tendencies. Secondary school students are more likely to engage in destructive aggressive behaviour, not only because they are required to interact with a large number of peers and educators for many hours each day, but also because they have not yet developed the necessary social skills to communicate their needs and negative emotions. This may be

exacerbated by a process known as social contagion, in which pupils exposed to disruptive classmates may mimic such behaviours or be obliged to behave in similar ways in order to adapt to the social situation.

The need to investigate the effect of social skills training on aggressive behaviours among male and female secondary school students in Anambra State is critical for several reasons. Aggressive behaviour in secondary schools is a growing concern, with students exhibiting forms of physical violence, verbal aggression, and relational hostility, which disrupt learning environments and negatively impact their personal development. Addressing this issue is essential for creating safer and more conducive learning spaces.

First, existing research suggests that aggressive behaviour, if not properly managed, can escalate and manifest in more severe behavioural problems as students mature. Studies such as those by Bonell et al. (2014) and Barnes et al. (2014) indicate that persistent exposure to aggression in classrooms desensitizes students and promotes the normalization of such behaviours, reinforcing the need for targeted interventions. Social skills training (SST) is a proven method for teaching appropriate interpersonal interactions, conflict resolution, and empathy, which are critical in curbing aggression. However, the effects of SST on male and female students may differ due to gender-specific behavioural patterns and socialization processes. While some studies have explored the general efficacy of SST, there is a gap in understanding how gender differences may influence outcomes, especially in the cultural context of Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Aggressive behaviour is one of the most disruptive challenges that undermine the peaceful environment necessary for effective learning in schools. In educational settings where aggressive behaviour is prevalent, achieving the core objectives of fostering positive changes in the cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor domains of students becomes increasingly difficult. This hampers students' overall success, preventing them from becoming well-rounded individuals capable of contributing positively to society. Given the critical role education plays in national development, it is essential that schools provide a learner-friendly atmosphere. However, the persistent presence of destructive aggressive behaviours among students poses a significant threat to this goal. Left unchecked, such behaviours can not only harm the aggressors and their direct victims but also negatively impact other students, teachers, school administrators, and the wider community. The pervasive nature of this issue has prompted numerous researchers to investigate solutions aimed at curbing aggressive behaviour in schools. While many of these studies have been conducted in Western contexts, few have examined effective interventions in Nigeria, particularly in Anambra State.

There is a noticeable gap in research exploring the effectiveness of social skills training as an intervention for aggressive behaviours among secondary school students in this region. This gap has

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motivated the researcher to conduct this study, focusing on the impact of social skills training on the aggressive behaviours of male and female secondary school students in Anambra State. By investigating this intervention, the research will offer insights into its relative effectiveness in addressing aggression and contribute to developing more targeted strategies for behaviour management in schools.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the effect of social skills training technique on aggressive behaviour of secondary school students in Anambra State. Specifically, the sought to:

1. Examine the effect of social skills training technique on aggressive behaviour of senior secondary school students (SS 1) in Anambra state when compared to the control group using their pretest and posttest mean scores
2. Determine the difference in the effect of social skills training technique on aggressive behaviour of male and female senior secondary school students (SS 1) in Anambra state when compared using their pretest and posttest mean scores.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the effect of social skills training technique on aggressive behaviour of senior secondary school students (SS 1) when compared to those in the control group using their pre-test and post-test mean scores?
2. What is the difference in the effects of social skills training technique on aggressive behaviour of male and female senior secondary school students (SS1) when compared using their pre-test and post-test scores?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference in the effect of social skills training technique on aggressive behaviour of senior secondary school students (SS 1) when compared to those in the control group using their pre-test and post-test scores.
2. There is no significant difference in the effects of social skills training technique on aggressive behaviour of male and female senior secondary school students (SS 1) when compared using their pre-test and post-test mean scores.

Research Method

Research Design: This study utilized a non-randomized pre-test, post-test, control group quasi-experimental research design to investigate the effects of Social skills training on the aggressive behaviour of secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria. The research aimed to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between the interventions (independent variables) and aggressive behaviour (dependent variable). As Nworgu (2015)

suggested, this design allows for manipulation of variables to observe outcomes, making it suitable for educational settings where full experimental control may not be feasible.

Area of the Study: The research was conducted in Anambra State, located in Nigeria's South-Eastern geopolitical zone. This state is densely populated, with a 2016 projected population of over 6 million people. It has six education zones, including Onitsha, which was selected for this study. Onitsha Education Zone consists of three local government areas and 28 public secondary schools, characterized by high student populations and aggressive behavior among students. The zone's public schools also struggle with overcrowded classrooms, which likely exacerbate issues like aggression, making it an ideal research area.

Population of the Study: The study population comprised 554 senior secondary school students (SS2) identified as aggressive through the ABIQ. This sample was gender-balanced, with 340 males and 214 females. These students had all scored above the norm on the ABIQ, indicating higher-than-average aggression levels. The researchers sought to determine the interventions' effects on both male and female students.

Sample and Sampling Technique: The final sample consisted of 94 SS2 students from three coeducational secondary schools, selected using purposive sampling. The schools were chosen based on the number of students exhibiting high levels of aggression. School 1 provided 28 students, School 2 provided 31 students, and School 3 provided 35 students. Each school formed intact classes for the study, functioning as experimental group and the control group, respectively.

Instruments for Data Collection: Two primary instruments were used: the ABIQ and the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ). The ABIQ, adapted from Buss and Perry (1992), consists of 28 self-reported items on a five-point scale, designed to capture physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, hostility, and irritability. The BPAQ is widely used in social science and education research, consisting of 29 self-reported items, also rated on a five-point scale. The BPAQ was used to measure pre- and post-intervention aggression levels among participants.

The BPAQ was revalidated for the Nigerian context by several scholars, including Ezeokana et al. (2014) and Onukwufor (2013). The present researcher also revalidated the instrument, with input from three experts in Educational Foundations and Guidance and Counselling. These experts assessed the instrument for clarity, relevance, and logical arrangement, providing suggestions for improvement. Afterward, the instrument was considered valid for this study.

The BPAQ has demonstrated high reliability in previous studies. In a Nigerian sample, Onukwufor (2013) reported an internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.80. For the current study, the researcher conducted a trial test, obtaining a reliability coefficient of 0.88 using Cronbach's Alpha, which was deemed satisfactory.

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Method of Data Collection: Data collection occurred in two phases. First, guidance counselors identified students with aggressive behaviours over six weeks, who then completed the ABIQ and BPAQ, establishing pre-test scores. After interventions, BPAQ was re-administered to measure post-test aggression. The researcher and six trained assistants facilitated this process to ensure accuracy.

Experimental Treatment Procedure: After obtaining necessary permissions, interventions were conducted during counseling sessions over eight weeks. The experimental group received Social skills training treatment, while the control group received conventional counseling.

Control of Extraneous Variables: Extraneous variables were controlled by scheduling interventions simultaneously, using familiar assistants, assigning different schools to each group, and applying ANCOVA to adjust for group differences.

Method of Data Analysis: Data were analyzed using SPSS version 23. The statistical mean was used to answer the research questions, while ANCOVA was used to test the null hypotheses. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered significant. The analysis focused on differences in pre- and post-test scores, with a higher reduction in aggression indicating a more effective intervention.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: What is the effect of social skill training on aggressive behaviour of secondary school students when compared to those in the control group using their pre-test and post-test mean scores?

Table 1: Pre-test and Post-test aggressive behaviour mean scores of students treated with social skill training technique and those treated with conventional counselling (Norm= 70.27)

Source of variation	N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Lost Mean	Remark
Social skill training Technique	28	80.78	63.82	16.96	Effective
Control	35	80.63	78.09	2.54	

Table 1 showed that students who underwent social skill training had a pre-test mean score of 80.78, before dropping to 63.82 in the post-test, a reduction of 16.96. Those who received conventional counselling had a pre-test mean score of 80.63, dropping to 78.09 in the post-test, a reduction of 2.54. Therefore, the post-test mean score of 63.82, which is below the norm of 70.27, indicates that social skill training is effective in reducing aggressive behaviour in secondary school students.

Research Question 2: What is the effect of social skill training on aggressive behaviour of male and female secondary school students when compared using their pre-test and post-test mean scores?

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Table 2: Pre-test and Post-test aggressive behaviour mean reduction difference of male and female students treated with social skills training technique

Source of Variation	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Reduced Mean	Remark
Male	17	80.65	63.94	16.71	
Female	11	80.55	61.91	18.64	More Effective

The results of Table 2 showed that males who were treated with social skill training technique had a pretest mean score of 80.65 and a posttest mean score of 63.94, meaning their aggressive behaviour decreased by 16.71. Females who were subjected to the same technique had a pretest mean score of 80.55 and a posttest mean score of 61.91, which indicates a reduction in aggressive behaviour of 18.64. It is evident that social skill training technique is more successful in decreasing aggressive behaviour in female secondary school students, as the mean score reduction was greater than that of the male students.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the effect of social skill training on aggressive behaviour of secondary school students when compared to those in the control group using their pre-test and post-test mean scores.

Table 3: ANCOVA on the the effect of social skill training on aggressive behaviour of secondary school students when compared to those in the control group using their pre-test and post-test mean scores

Source of variation	**SS**	**df**	**MS**	**Cal. F**	**Pvalue**	**P≤0.05**
Corrected Model	3792.992	2	1896.496	141.363		
Intercept	18.829	1	18.829	1.404		
Pretest	627.905	1	627.905	46.804		
Treatment_Model	3169.833	1	3169.833	236.277	0.001	S
Error	804.945	60	13.416			
Total	328890.000	63				
Corrected Total	4597.937	62				

The results of Table 3 showed that at a 0.05 significance level, the F-ratio was calculated to be 236.277, and the p-value was .001. As the p-value is lower than the required 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant difference in the effect of social skill training on the aggressive behaviour of secondary school students when their pre-test and post-test

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mean scores are compared to those of the control group.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the effect of social skill training on aggressive behaviour of male and female secondary school students when compared using their pre-test and post-test mean scores.

Table 4: ANCOVA on the effects of social skill training on aggressive behaviour of male and female secondary school students when compared using their pre-test and post-test mean scores.

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Pvalue	P≤0.05
Corrected Model	144.407	2	72.204			
Intercept	42.865	1	42.865			
PRETEST	78.150	1	78.150			
GENDER	63.212	1	63.212	2.707	0.112	NS
Error	583.700	25	23.348			
Total	114777.000	28				
Corrected Total	728.107	27				

Findings in Table 4 revealed that at a significance level of 0.05, the calculated F-ratio was 2.707 with a 1df numerator and 27df denominator. The P-value was higher than the required 0.05, meaning that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the effectiveness of social skill training techniques on aggressive behaviours of male and female secondary school students.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study revealed that social skills training technique is effective in reducing aggressive behaviours in secondary school students. The findings of the study revealed that social skill training techniques is effective in reducing aggressive behaviours in secondary school students. It also indicates the potential for this technique to be used as an effective intervention strategy to reduce problem behaviours in school-aged children. The finding could be attributed to the possibility that the social skills training technique may have helped to increase the students' ability to regulate their emotions, tolerate frustration, and resolve conflicts in a positive way, which can help to reduce aggressive behaviours. It is also possible that the social skills training technique provided students with the skills and knowledge needed to overcome social challenges or difficult situations in a more positive way, which could have contributed to the reduction in aggressive behaviours.

The results of the studies conducted by Mayowa (2022) and Seema and Kumar (2018) support the findings of our study, indicating that social skills training is an effective method for decreasing aggressive behaviours among secondary school students. Mayowa's (2022) research

demonstrated that Social Skills Training Techniques (SSTT) effectively reduced aggressive behaviour among secondary school students in Lagos State. Similarly, Seema and Kumar (2018) found that social skills training led to a significant improvement in self-esteem among participants in the experimental group. Both studies suggest that social training is a beneficial intervention for enhancing both behaviour and self-esteem among students.

These findings highlight the importance of incorporating social skills training programs into educational settings to address issues related to aggression and self-esteem among secondary school students. By providing students with the necessary skills to navigate social interactions effectively and develop a positive self-image, such interventions can contribute to creating a more supportive and conducive learning environment. Moreover, the consistency of these findings across different studies strengthens the evidence base for the effectiveness of social skills training in promoting positive outcomes among students. Therefore, educators and policymakers should consider integrating social skills training programs into school curricula to support the holistic development of students and foster a positive school climate.

The findings of Mayowa (2022) and Seema and Kumar's (2018) studies indicate that social skills training can be an effective intervention for reducing aggressive behaviours in secondary school students. This is because SSTT can help students develop the skills needed to recognise, understand, and manage their emotions in difficult situations, as well as to interact with others in a respectful and non-aggressive manner. Moreover, the improvement found in the Seema and Kumar (2018) study suggests that SSTT can also help students develop a positive sense of self-worth and confidence, which can further help to reduce aggressive behaviours. These findings provide support for the current finding that social skills training technique is effective in reducing aggressive behaviours in secondary school students and can be used as a viable intervention for this purpose.

Findings of the study revealed that social skill training techniques is more effective in reducing female secondary school students' aggressive behaviour than those of males. The findings further revealed that there is no significant difference in the effectiveness of social skill training techniques on the aggressive behaviours of male and female secondary school students. The reason for the technique being more effective in reducing female secondary school students' aggressive behaviour than those of males could be attributed to the gender differences: Studies (Galen & Underwood, in Jacob, et al. 2021; Jacob, et al. 2021) have shown that males and females respond differently to social skill training, with females often showing greater improvements in their aggressive behaviour. This could be due to the fact that females often respond better to positive reinforcement and a supportive environment. Studies have also found that female secondary school students are more likely to be engaged in social skill training, which can lead to improved attitudes and behaviours. This could be because they are

more motivated to learn and develop social skills due to the greater social pressure they face at this age.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that social skills training technique was effective in reducing aggressive behaviours of secondary school students. Additionally, the social skills training technique was more effective in reducing female secondary school students' aggressive behaviour. The findings revealed that SST is an effective tool for reducing aggressive behaviors in both male and female students, contributing to a more conducive learning atmosphere. Through the development of essential social skills, students are better equipped to manage conflicts, express emotions appropriately, and engage more positively with their peers and teachers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Guidance Counsellors in all secondary schools in Anambra State should adopt the use of social skills training technique in modifying aggressive behaviour among secondary school students The counsellors should organise programmes designed to reduce aggressive behaviour in students using social skills training to help them learn appropriate behaviour.

2. Schools should provide support and resources to help students understand and practice the techniques taught in the social skill training programs. This will help students understand the concepts and apply them to real-life situations.

3. Schools should create an environment that is conducive to learning and that encourages positive behaviour. This can be achieved by providing a safe and supportive learning environment and promoting positive relationships between teachers and students.

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