

The relationship between parental availability and aggression in the 21st century: Studies among adolescents in Nnewi North Local Government Area, Anambra State, Nigeria

Ufearo, F. N.¹, Ebenebe, R. C.¹, Eleje, L. I.^{1*}, Chukwuma, E. O.², Onukafor, U. M. P.² and Oparaugo, U. I.¹

¹Department of Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria.

²Department of Educational Foundations, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria.

*Corresponding author. Email: ijeomaexcite@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT: Manifestation of aggression among adolescents could be related to poor parental availability. In this study, the relationship between parental availability and aggression in the twenty-first century among adolescents in Nnewi North Local Government Area (LGA) Anambra State, Nigeria was investigated. Two research questions guided the study. The researchers adopted a correlation research design. The sample for study comprised of 800 respondents randomly selected from eight (8) secondary schools in the LGA. The instruments for data collection were adopted questionnaire on aggression and questionnaire for parental availability designed by the researchers and validated by two experts in test construction. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha statistics with an index of 0.78 for parental availability and 0.85 for aggression. Pearson correlation was used to analyse the collected data. The results of the study revealed that parental availability (communication and supervision) reduced aggression among adolescents. It was therefore concluded that establishing a strong parent adolescent relationship in the families could be an immeasurable help in raising well-adjusted and successful adolescents. It was recommended that parents should always have in mind the need for family attachment and as such provide opportunity for family meeting where they will listen to their children's views and give them corrections and some pieces of advice where necessary. In addition, parents are to visit their children's schools from time to time to meet their teachers who will help them in assessing their behaviours.

Keywords: Adolescents, aggression, homes, parental availability.

INTRODUCTION

Most of the time the home where peace should be existing is been polluted by some aggressive behaviours manifested by the adolescents. Adolescents are seems to be involved in violent and aggressive behaviours within the Nigerian society as indeed in most places in the world. Adolescence is the transitional period in human life, which links childhood with adulthood. Childhood/children are persons male or female from birth to 18 years of age, and

adolescents fall into this stage of life. According to Unachukwu et al. (2019; Pp86), "adolescence is a period of life in the development of an individual, which is between childhood and adulthood occasioned by physical changes called puberty". Ejedimu (2020) defined adolescence as a period of self-discovery and self-identity characterized with conflict, adventure, peer-ties, exploration and mass media influence within and on the outside. Adolescents are

regard as children who are in their transitional age of development to adulthood characterised with rapid growth and maturity. The issue of adolescents' social decadence has become a contemporary problem in Nigeria and has attracted the attention of researchers and scholars from different disciplines of life (Adenike, 2013; Adebisi, 2018).

Prior to twenty-first (21st) century, children including adolescents are always engaged in home activities with their parents. Some of these activities include farming, trading, cooking and learning of their cultures. This type of learning, involve children imbibing the way of life of their people. Shlomo (1980) referred to this type of learning as informal education that happens during talks, discussions, praise, laugh, frown, soliloquize and observing of people or events. Sequel to this type of learning, male children are attached to their fathers and accompany them in farming and trade while female children stay at home with their mothers learning domestic chores like cooking and home management. This scenario creates an avenue for bonding, affection, communication, support and supervision some others between parents and their children. Moreover, adolescents who are involved in this type of relationship with their parents are focused, learning many skills and may not be having too many distractions. The 21st century comes with the era of technology to which the adolescents attach themselves more to technology, and the parents are involve in so many activities abandoning some of their parenting practices (National Academies et al., 2016; Eleje et al., 2019). Worst still, some parents in trying to correct the error, use harsh punishment, which according to Skinner's theory produces negative emotional reactions such as aggression, passivity, and anxiety.

Obviously, starting from the puberty stage of adolescents, many changes occur in both male and female creating some emotional changes in adolescents. Hence, there is need for experienced adults to counsel adolescents on their present bodily changes for their right perception of the changes, which would result in effective and correct appraisal of the emotions. Ejedimu (2020) put it that one major need of the adolescents is coping strategies, finding a standard metric to distinguish between right and wrong amidst the various conflicting voices sounding around them. Parents should stay close to their adolescent children to have adequate knowledge and understanding of their problems. Bonding and encouragement are the key determinants that can help adolescents to pass through challenges associated with their age without being deviants (Ramirez, 2016). Apparently, bonding is mainly possible when parents make themselves available for their children. National academies et al. (2016) referred to parental availability as quality time and communication parents engaged with their children. Parental availability in the home is one of the most pertinent structures of the family members, alliance feeling, emotional link and commitment that result in family

cohesion (Elham, 2016). Farrington (2011) defined parental availability as the degree of parental supervision of a child's activities and their degree of watchfulness or vigilance. Hence, parental closeness and degree of caring and watchfulness on their children is regard as parental availability. Stattin and Kerr (2000) in their own opinion regarded poor parental availability as lack of parental knowledge of the child's where about and the child's failure to disclose him or herself to parents. Emphatically, they were of the view that adolescents who are always with their parents are more likely to communicate with them and during their discussions, will tell them their daily activities and disclose to them their thoughts and findings. Further, Jacobson and Crockett (2000) recorded that adolescents' discussing their daily activities with parents (adolescent disclosure) is the strongest predictor of parental knowledge of child's where about which is consistently linked to low level of aggression.

Currently many questions regarding parental availability and antisocial behaviour (aggression) need urgent answers, especially in our own environment where parents are largely unavailable to their children because of prevailing bad economic conditions. As a result, parents become more engage with multiple works at a time in order to find adequate resources for family sustenance. Disagreeably, National Academies et al. (2016) emphasized that children need far more of their parents' love, affection, time and attention than other material provisions. They made it clearer that the home may fall short of perfection in many areas but must never lack in attachment for the children to have positive mental attitude. Paul (2016) is of the view that adolescents reporting a secure parental attachment have higher levels of self-esteem and empathy and as such do not manifest aggressive behaviours. Social psychologists defined aggression as a behaviour that intended to harm another person who is motivated to avoid that harm. Permit me to say that aggression is expression of angry emotion on a person, event or situation. Kumari and Kumar (2018) highlighted that aggression has multi-dimensional forms, which can be social, verbal or physical, and can be directed externally towards others or navigating towards self-harm. Sun and Shek (2012) listed some examples of aggression as bullying, fighting and vandalizing while they categorized verbal aggression into quarrelling, cursing, aggravating, labelling, insulting statements, verbal assaults, shouting/screaming, blaming and aggressive argument. Some of these behaviours are manifestations of emotions that cause aggression.

As a result of aggression, Krug et al. (2002) had it that, globally an average of 565 children, adolescents and youths between the ages of 10 to 29 years die each day as a result of interpersonal aggression. Sharma and Marimuthu (2014) also posit it that there is rise in incidence of aggression among youths, predominantly adolescents. This clearly highlights the fact that aggression among

children and adolescents is a major concern in the current scenario. There are multiple risk factors and determinants of physical aggression mostly; peer pressure, school social environments, growing substance abuse, use of excessive junk food, sedentary lifestyle, exposure to community violence, poor parental (bonding, supervision and support) and media exposure, academic issues among others (Kumari and Kumar, 2018; Ramos, 2013).

Consequently, the record of the study conducted by Ojedokun et al. (2013) concluded that the students who perceived that their parents manifested more love, care and attention on them are less likely to perpetrate aggression as compared to those who perceive their parents as more authoritative and over protective. Savage's opinion (2014) was in support of the above notion that parental lack of affection and communication and low level of parental support and attachment causes psychological distress leading to aggression and violent behaviours. The study conducted in Enugu state on adolescents showed that poor parent child communication causes serious consequences like low-self-esteem, which is responsible for aggression that can cause irreparable and physical damages (Offordile et al., 2019). Few studies conducted in India on adolescents showed that parental bonding had direct influence on levels of aggression in adolescents (Indumathy and Ashwini, 2017). The more close-knitted and nurturing parent-adolescent relation is, the less likely that an adolescent would develop aggression. Certain studies conducted in Korean students revealed that along with other factors, a poor parental bond is one of the reasons causing aggressive behaviours in adolescents (Lakhdir, et al., 2020). Some of the above findings stimulated the already existing worries in our minds concerning some observations within Nnewi North local government area.

The researchers observed adolescents' incessant roaming along the streets both during school hours and late in the evenings. Their visit to video-clubs, event-centres, NIAJA bet-pools, common news of the boys within the ages of 16 to 18 years bugling into people's houses, others hanging around smoking cigarette and Indian-hemp; some of the adolescents involve in beating their teachers among others. With growing adolescents' aggression cases in Nnewi North LGA, the association between parental availability and aggression among adolescents need to be established.

Research question

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between parental communication and manifestation of aggressive behaviours among adolescents in the 21st century in Nnewi North Local Government Area?

2. What is the relationship between parental supervision and aggressive behaviours among adolescents in the 21st century in Nnewi North Local Government Area?

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between parental availability and aggression in the twenty-first century among adolescents in Nnewi North Local Government Area (LGA). Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the relationship between parental communication and manifestation of aggressive behaviours among adolescents in the 21st century.
2. Determine the relationship between parental supervision and manifestation of aggressive behaviours among adolescents in the 21st century.

METHODOLOGY

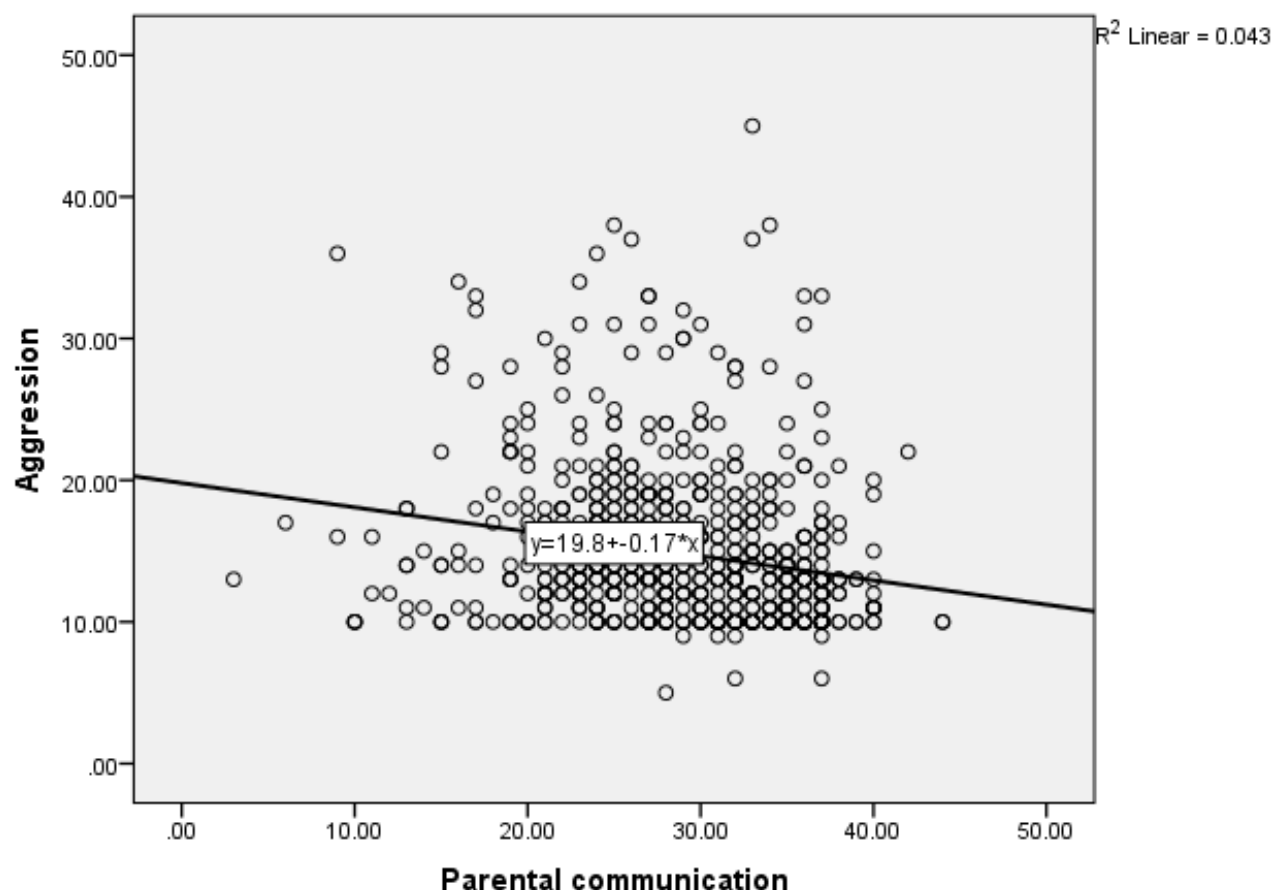
A correlation research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in public senior secondary schools in Nnewi North LGA of Anambra state. The local government comprised of four villages highly populated; inhabitants were mainly traders engaged in many trading transactions that attracted banks and bankers in the area. The population consisted of 2034 senior secondary (SS1 and SS2) students, data collected from Anambra State Educational Zonal Office in Nnewi in June 2019. Random sampling technique was used to select 400 SS1 and 400 SS2 students from the four sampled secondary schools.

The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire divided into two major sections. Section A, titled Parental Availability in the Home (PAH) contained 10 items developed by researchers based on extensive literature review. The items in this questionnaire solicited information on parental communication and parental supervision. Its response format was a four-point scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Section B titled Adolescents Aggressive Behaviour (AAB) in the home, was an adoption of Achenbach based assessment (ASEBA). Two experts in the test construction validated the instrument and reliability of the instrument was determined using cronbach alpha method. Alpha coefficient for parental availability and aggression were 0.75 and 0.85, respectively. The research questions were answered using Pearson product moment correlation.

Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to participants selected for the study with the help of their teachers who were briefed. Students were dully instructed to complete the columns provided in the parental availability and adolescent aggression in the home, according to how they were generally felt about themselves and their

Table 1. Pearson r on the relationship between parental communication and manifestation of aggressive behaviours among adolescents in the 21st century.

Variables	N	Pearson correlation	Sig. (2 tailed)	Remark
Parental communication VS adolescent aggression	782	-0.27	0.00	Manifestation of aggression in adolescents reduced.

**Figure 1.** Scatter plot showing relationship between parental communication and aggression among adolescents.

parents, to ensure anonymity and honest response, the respondents were asked not to write their names.

RESULTS

Research question one

Result from Table 1 showed that parental communication had negative correlation with aggression among the adolescents. That is, parental communication in the home reduced manifestation of aggression among the adolescents. The regression analysis as seen in Figure 1 indicates that the increase in parental communication

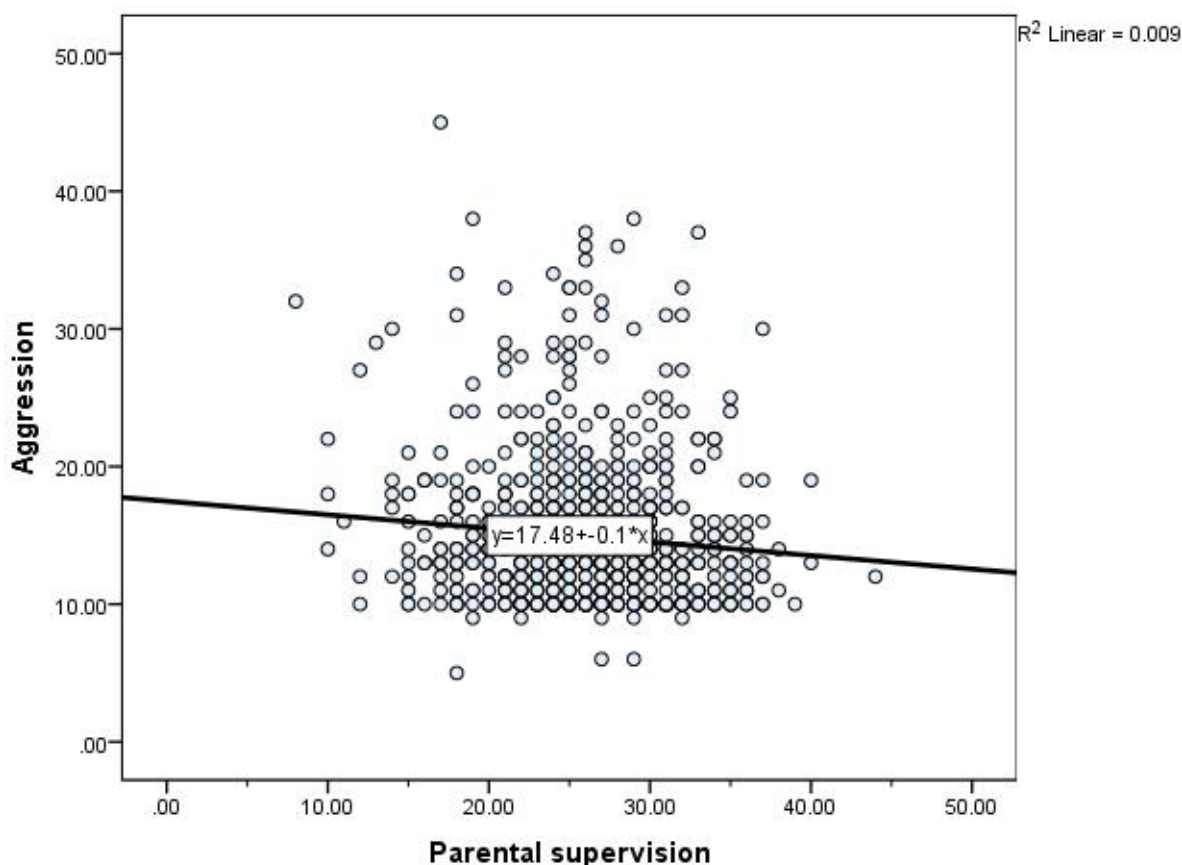
actually gave rise to equivalent reduction in aggression among the adolescents.

Research question two

Result presented in Table 2 showed that there is negative correlation ($r = -0.95$) between parental supervision and aggression, indicating that parental supervision reduced manifestation of aggression in the home. Regression analysis in Figure 2 also indicates that increase in parental supervision actually gave rise to reduction in manifestation of aggressive behaviours among the adolescents.

Table 2. Pearson r on the relationship between parental supervision and aggression among adolescents in 21st century in Nnewi Local Government Area.

Variables	N	Pearson correlation	Sig. (2 tailed)	Remark
Parental supervision VS adolescent aggression	798	-0.95	0.007	Manifestation of aggression in adolescents reduced.

**Figure 2.** Scatter plot showing relationship between parental supervision and aggression among adolescents.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the findings on the relationship between parental communication and manifestation of aggressive behaviours among adolescents showed that parental communication had negative correlation with aggression among adolescents. Looking at regression analysis in Figure 1, there is a clear illustration showing that the increase in parental communication gave rise to equivalent reduction in aggression among adolescents. The findings created an insight that parental availability (communication) is an important factor in reduction of aggression among adolescents. The findings agree with that of Paul (2016) who found that adolescents reporting a secure parental attachment which involves communication has higher level

of self-esteem and empathy and as such do not manifest aggressive behaviours but pro-social behaviours. The result in this study is also in agreement with the study of Offordile et al. (2019) who concluded that poor parent child communication causes serious consequences like low self-esteem, which is responsible for aggression that can cause irreparable and physical damages. The result is synonymous with the characteristics of the olden days parenting that is, highly engulfed with parental communication as presented earlier in the background of this study. Currently, parents are becoming highly obsessed with work and career aspirations thereby neglecting the critical role of having quality time with their children.

However, the findings on the relationship between

parental supervision and manifestation of aggressive behaviours among adolescents posit it that parental supervision reduced manifestation of aggressive behaviours among adolescents. Regression analysis in Figure 2 indicates that increase in parental supervision causes reduction in adolescents' aggression. From the results, it becomes apparent that parents in this area of study are practicing some degree of parental supervision, which reflected in the reduction of manifestation of aggressive behaviours among the adolescents. The result support the earlier record of Farrington (2011), who recorded that parental availability is a degree of parental supervision of child activities and their degree of watchfulness or vigilance. Emphatically Stattin and Kerr (2000), Jacobson and Crockett (2000) and Farrington (2011) concluded that parents who supervise their children, and have knowledge of their whereabouts are consistently linked to children with low level of aggression.

The results in this study are in agreement with the study of Ojedokun et al. (2013) who concluded that children who perceived their parents to manifest more love, care and attention on them are less likely to perpetrate aggression as compared to those who perceive their parents as more authoritative and overprotective. With this in mind, it will be beneficial to parents to create quality time in the home for their children especially the adolescents. Elham (2016) posit it that parental availability in the home result to family cohesion which is one of the most pertinent structures of the family that result in reciprocal understanding among family members, alliance feeling, emotional link and commitment. Naturally, adolescents groomed in a cohesive family feels the warmth and love of the parents together with the interest, responsibility, feelings and commitment of the members of the family that help the adolescent in rising above the challenges of his or her development (Zare and Samani, 2008). Pardhasaradhi and Goel (2015), in support of the above statement said that parent-child interaction and parent's way of dealing with their children help them to develop certain attitudes and skills.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study tries to explore the relationship between parental availability (communication and supervision) and aggression among adolescents in Nnewi North L.G.A. The study revealed significant negative relationship between parental availability and aggression among adolescents. Based on the results of this study, the researchers are of the opinion that parents in this area of study are practicing some degree of parental availability (communication and supervision), therefore, the manifestation of aggressive behaviours by the adolescents is not common in the study area. However, parents are encouraged to be more close to their adolescent children and engage always in open

conversation with them to enable them find out some other factors that are sustaining the manifestations of aggressive behaviours among them. Finally, the researchers concluded that parental availability (communication and supervision) has negative relationship with aggression.

The researchers recommend that parents should be sensitized by government on the process of adolescents' development to enable them provide adequate environment and counsels for proper adjustment and smooth transition of adolescent into adult hood. They should always have in mind the need for strong family cohesion and provide opportunity for family meetings, where children would be free to lay their views and receive some piece of advice concerning their behaviours. It is necessary that parents should visit their children 'schools from time to time to liaise with their teachers in assessing their behaviours, to prevent them from being influenced negatively by their peers. Parents should ensure that their children are groomed to avert maladaptive behaviours as adolescents for the word of God in Proverbs 22: 6, said "train up a child the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it". More research should be carried out in Nnewi North LGA to investigate more on the factors that are enforcing manifestation of aggressive behaviours among the adolescents.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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