

# Influence of Gender and Personality Characteristics on Violent Behaviour among Adolescents in Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT----** *This study investigated the influence of gender and personality characteristics on violent behaviour among adolescents in Nigeria. The purpose of the study is to find out how gender and personality characteristics influence violent behaviour among adolescents in Nigeria. A total number of three hundred (300) participants were used for the study. A questionnaire was designed by the researchers to measure the influence of gender and personality characteristics on violent behaviour among adolescents. The questionnaire contained the following items: age, sex, marital status, Big-five personality inventory (48-items) and violent inventory (56-items). Two hypotheses were tested using independent t-test and multiple regression analysis. In analysing the first hypothesis, it showed that gender had no significant influence on violent behaviour among university students. Based on the results obtained, these conclusions were made, gender has no significant influence on violent behaviour and personality traits (agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience, extraversion and conscientiousness) had a significant influence on violent behaviour among adolescents. These recommendations were made that violence on the media should be discouraged and media education should be encouraged and make it widely available to educate adolescents on effects of violence. Students with violent behaviour should be well handled and must be referred to an appropriate counselling section with the help of a school counsellor or a psychologist and with the involvement of the school management.*

**Keywords---** Personality characteristics, violence behaviour, gender and adolescents

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The American Federal Bureau of Investigation (2001) defined violence as the expression of physical or verbal force against self or others, compelling actions against one's will on pain of being hurt. This definition associates intentionality with the committing of the act itself, irrespective of the outcome it produces. Violence according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or carried out, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation. Violence can also be defined as an intentional behaviour aimed at causing either physical or psychological pain (Berkowitz, 1983). According to Berkowitz, violence is in two categories, which include the hostile and the instrumental. Elliot, Robin & Beveley (2004) posited that violence is a consequence of pain, discomfort, frustration, provocation, reciprocation, social exclusion, aggressive objects and imitation.

Since independence, various types of violence have beset Nigeria. Issues that ordinarily should have been resolved through administrative, dialogue, legislative or legal process end up in violence. There is a high level of intolerance among different ethnic groups or religious groups and students in Nigeria. Demands and demonstrations by students against school authorities or protests by student union government executives, mobilising the students, have in many cases ended in fiasco. Youth violence on campuses of tertiary institutions has increasingly become an embarrassing and a worrisome scenario for University administrators, parents, guidance counsellors, missionaries (clergies), governments and members of the civil society. Violence has become a problem to the entire society, based on the psychological or emotional stress that is being experienced by the populace when the act is being carried-out.

Many of Nigerian institutions are subsets of the various macro units of the society and they are reflection of society's with increasing use of violent methodologies to resolve conflict, frustrations and conflict situations. Nigeria, with over one hundred and fifty tertiary institutions, has witnessed various unprecedented forms of violence which were occasionally carried out by students' involvement in campus protests all in the name of student unionism, cultism etc. Due to this, peace in our campuses has been shattered and academic sessions had been disrupted as a result of the violent behaviour among the students. The violence act has led to various problems with a lot of side effects such as blood-letting (blood-shed) arising from murder or manslaughter, massive destruction and vandalism of properties which sometimes led to the closing down of the schools for a period of time which usually caused obstruction of the school academic calendar and delay in graduation of final year students.

Violence in Nigerian institutions are caused due to various factors, ranging from illegal and sporadic increment in tuition fee, poor academic calendar, poor running of the school academic system, poor road network, insufficient basic social amenities, health facilities, management problems, cult clashes, fight over girl-friends etc. Also, there are other precipitating factors of violence behaviour such as the type of home (family background), personality of individual, the type of friends (peer influence), the type of environment student lives (hostel), behavioural problem (bullying), gender discrimination etc. all these factors and more of it do cause violent activities in the school.

The violence activity that is being carried out in the Nigerian higher institutions of learning, are gender based. Reports on the level of violence in schools has not revealed cult clashes between Black Bra and Green Beret confraternity, but many incidence of cult clashes reported, were those of male folks such as Eiyé confraternity fighting with Vikings confraternity. Also in students protest, the largest population that is involved are male students, in comparing them with the number of female students that are involved. The type of violence that is reported in female students, is either fighting over boyfriend or fighting over gossip, which might have left one of the parties involved injured depending on the level of the fight. Most reports on University violence have not revealed the violent behaviour among female students except that of male students and this could be due to the effects of male violence on the school management.

The personality characteristic/traits have roles to play in the type or level of violent act that is being carried out by adolescents. Personality traits are positively associated with aggressive behaviour under relatively neutral conditions as well as under provoking conditions (Bushman, 1995; Giancola & Zeichner, 1995b; Parrott & Zeichner, 2002). Aggression and personality theorists posited that personality variables are important predictors of aggressive behaviour (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003). Indeed, several personality traits are related to aggressive behaviour, including, narcissism (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), impulsivity (Campbell & Muncer, 2009), among others. The predominant overall model of personality has identified the “Big 5” personality factors, traits that repeatedly appear across culture and gender. The type of personality characteristic traits determine the level of aggressive or violent actions across situation, while others interact with the level of provocation in their effects on aggressive behaviour. The personality traits possible for aggressive behaviour are as follows: impulsivity, emotional susceptibility, irritability, narcissism, aggressiveness, sensation seeking, anger and type “A” personality (competitive, impatient, ambitious, aggressive, hostile and fast talking). The strongest Big-5 predictor of aggressive behaviour is agreeableness, which is characterized as good-natured, trustful, and cooperative (John & Srivastava, 1999). Conscientiousness is characterized by being responsible, orderly, and dependable (John & Srivastava, 1999), and tends to be negatively related to aggression (Sharpe & Desai, 2001). Neuroticism, characterized by being easily upset and emotionally unstable (John & Srivastava, 1999), is positively related to aggressive behaviour (Sharpe & Desai, 2001). Openness is characterized by being intellectual, polished, and independent-minded (John & Srivastava, 1999), tends to be unrelated to aggressive behaviour (Gleason et al., 2004). Finally, Extraversion is characterized as being talkative, assertive, and energetic (John & Srivastava, 1999) and its relations with aggression are mixed. Sharpe and Desai (2001) found that the correlation between self-reported physical aggression and Extraversion was negative, whereas Gallo and Smith (1998) found a positive relation between Extraversion and physical aggression.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

Violence in Nigerian higher institution has been traced to some factors such as the personality characteristic/traits and gender of the people involved. Violence has caused numerous problems with so many side effects such as blood-letting (blood-shed) arising from murder or manslaughter, such as clash between two rival cults which do cause loss of lives. For example the incident in University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1999, that left more than twenty students dead. Also the killing of five members of the Anti-Cult Crusade Organisation Nigeria (ACCON) in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma in October 2003, with massive destruction and vandalism of properties which eventually led to the closing down of the university for a period of time which usually causes obstruction of the school academic calendar and delay in graduation of final year students.

Due to the problems and set-backs that have beset the authorities of the higher institutions, parents, guidance counsellors and Nigerian government in general, based on the effects of violence this study focused on investigating the influence of some basic factors that do precipitate violence, such as gender and personality characteristics. This paper attempted to provide answers to the following questions:

- Will gender have significant influence on violent behaviour among adolescents?
- Will students with agreeableness personality traits have higher violent behaviour than students with neuroticism, extraversion, openness or conscientiousness personality traits?

### ***Purpose of the Study***

Based on the effects, set-backs and worrisome scenarios that have caused the University administrators, parents, guidance counsellors, missionaries (clergies), governments and members of the civil society sleepless nights and concerns, this study likes to know the root cause of this demon in disguise (violence). In the light of this, the purpose of this study is to find out the influence of personality characteristics and gender on violent behaviour among adolescents, using the university students as a case study.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design***

The research design is a survey method, aimed at collecting data for the purpose of interpreting and knowing the influence of psychosocial variable (gender) and personality characteristics on violent behaviour among university students using University of Ibadan as a case study.

### ***Sample and Sampling Technique***

The sample for the study was students of University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo –State, Nigeria. The sample comprised of students in their 100, 200 and 300level of education in the school. Three hundred participants (students) out of the entire number of students in the school which was above 12,000 were used for the study. The institution has ten other Faculties apart from college of medicine (Arts, Science, Agriculture and Forestry, Social Sciences, Education, Veterinary Medicine, Technology, Law, Public Health and Dentistry), in which the participants were students of the Faculty of social sciences. The researchers seek for their consent before giving out the questionnaire to them to fill, but during the collection of the questionnaire, six were not returned by the students (participants) while during the data computation, twelve of the questionnaires were dropped due to the incompleteness of the questionnaire. The gender (participants) used for the study were one hundred and eleven males and one hundred and seventy-one females were drawn from the entire population of the students. All the ethnic group in Nigeria were ably represented in the population used for the study of which the participants were drawn from. The ethnic groups include Yoruba, Ibo, and Hausa which are the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The levels of education of the participants were students in their 100, 200 and 300levels. The participants were those who just got admitted, those that might be admitted through direct entry from diploma class and those who are about getting to their final year in the school system. These categories of students were catered for in sampling technique.

### ***Research Instrument***

The instrument used in this study for the collection of data was a three section questionnaire, with a total number of 104-items.

Section ‘A’ seeks gender and marital status

Section ‘B’ measures the personality characteristic of the participants using the big-5 personality characteristic traits. The items in this section are 48, where the respondents are asked to score themselves on likert scale from 5 to 1. Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Undecided = 3, Agree = 4 and Strongly Agree = 5

Section ‘C’ measures the attitude of the participants towards violence. The items in this section are 56, the respondents are asked to score their attitude towards violence on yes and no scale.

### **Administration of Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents after seeking their indulgence. Three hundred questionnaires were administered. The researchers gave enough time to explain to the respondents on how the questionnaire should be filled. The respondents were assured that there are no right or wrong answers as well as the assurance of the treatment of the information supplied under a strict and trusted atmosphere. The respondents were eager to know of what importance or benefit will the research be for them. They were assured that apart from the academic purposes, the recommendations made after the research will help the government to understand the various causes of violence and ways on how to protect every citizens from being a victim of violence activities. The researchers will assist on and how to make proper decisions on how to curb violence in the entire environment. A total number of three hundred questionnaires were administered while two hundred and eighty-two were usable, representing 94% of the total population used for analysis.

### **3. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

#### **Validity of the Instrument**

Face and content validities were employed. The questionnaire was scrutinised at facial level and thorough observations of the items were made by experts in Test and Measurement and psychology so that the items measure what are to supposed measure. The content validity was done by experts to know how adequately the items on the questionnaire cover the contents and objectives of the subject.

#### **Reliability of the Instrument**

The reliability of the questionnaire was determined through the use of test-re-test method. The questionnaire was administered to a group of individual students that were not part of participants and re-administered to the same group after two weeks. The first test and second test scores were correlated. High correlation was obtained between the first and second test scores. This implies that the questionnaire is reliable.

### **4. RESULTS**

**Hypothesis One:** Male university students will have a significant high score on violent behaviour than female university students.

**Table 1:** Summary of t – test for independent samples showing gender influence on violent behaviour among University students.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>P</b>
Male	111	35.2703	3.5750	280	-.232	>.05
Female	171	35.3801	4.0760			

Result on table 4.1 shows that gender had no significant influence on violent behaviour among university students, confirm at [t (280) = -.232; p>.05]. This implies that there is no significant difference between male students (35.2703) and female students (35.3801) on violent behaviour. However, this result does not support the tested hypothesis that states that: Male university students will have a significant high score on violent behaviour than female students. Therefore, the hypothesis is hereby rejected.

**Hypothesis Two:** Students with agreeableness personality traits will have a significant high score on violent behaviour than students with neuroticism, extraversion, openness or conscientiousness personality traits.

**Table 2:** Showing multiple regression analysis of influence of five personality traits (Neuroticism, Openness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness) on violent behaviour among university students.

Predictors	$\beta$	t	P	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P
Neuroticism	-.314	-2.659	< .05				
Openness	.352	2.303	< .05				
Extraversion	-.333	-1.875	> .05	.585	.343	26.581	< .05
Agreeableness	.825	4.203	< .05				
Conscientiousness	-.037	-.744	> .05				

Table 2 shows that personality traits (Neuroticism, Openness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness) jointly predicted violent behaviour among University student at [ $R = .585$ ;  $R^2 = .343$ ;  $F(5, 274) = 26.581$ ;  $P < .05$ ]. This implies that personality traits jointly accounted for about 34.3% variance in violent behaviour among university students. However, the result of the independent prediction indicates that neuroticism, openness, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness independently predicted violence behaviour among university students as shown on table 2, such that Neuroticism ( $\beta = -.314$ ;  $t = -2.659$ ;  $p < .05$ ), this implies that neuroticism independently accounted for about 31.4% variance in violent behaviour among University students. Openness ( $\beta = .352$ ;  $t = 2.303$ ;  $p < .05$ ), this implies that openness independently accounted for about 35.2% variance in violent behaviour. Extraversion ( $\beta = .333$ ;  $t = -1.875$ ;  $p > .05$ ), this also implies that extraversion independently accounted for about 33.3% variance in violent behaviour. Agreeableness ( $\beta = .825$ ;  $t = 4.203$ ;  $p < .05$ ), this implies that agreeableness accounted for about 82.5% variance in violent behaviour. Conscientiousness ( $\beta = -.037$ ;  $t = -.744$ ;  $p < .05$ ), this implies that conscientiousness independently accounted for only 3.7% variance in violent behaviour among university students. Therefore, students with agreeableness personality traits has higher contribution to violent behaviour among university students at 82.5% compared to students with neuroticism, openness, extraversion and conscientiousness personality traits at 31.4%, 35.2%, 33.3% and 3.7%. Meaning that respectively small quantity of students with conscientiousness personality traits will involve themselves in violence behaviour while many students with agreeableness personality traits will get themselves involved in violent activities. Conscientiousness and extraversion did not predict violent behaviour at .05 probability level. Therefore, based on the hypothesis tested which says; students with agreeableness personality traits will have a significant high score on violent behaviour than students with neuroticism, extraversion, openness or conscientiousness personality traits, the hypothesis is hereby accepted, because of is higher contribution to violence behaviour ( $\beta = .825$ ;  $t = 4.203$ ;  $p < .05$ ) which was revealed in the analysed data. Meaning that conscientiousness personality traits predict violence behaviour compared to other personality traits.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study examined the influence of gender and personality characteristics on violent behaviour among university students. Two hypotheses were tested with one hypothesis accepted and one was rejected on the probability level of .05.

The first hypothesis tested for the influence of gender on violent behaviour among university students, was rejected. The result indicated that there is no significant difference between male students and female students on violent behaviour. The result of the study is similar to prior research carried out by Esbensen et al (1993) & Thornberry et al (1993), comparing delinquency rates of gang and non-gang youth (Esbensen *et al.*, 1993; Thornberry *et al.*, 1993). They made use of self-report scale in which both male and female gang members appear to be equally involved in violence, this might have contributed to the difference between this study and their studies. And more so than non-gang members, although there are still differences in the rate of the violence done among them i.e. there continues to be a gender difference (e.g., male violence is higher than female violence). And going by the result of this research, the mean value of this study indicates the gender difference in the level of violence carried out among university students [male students (35.2703) and female students (35.3801)]. Therefore, the rate of violence among university students is not gender -based, both male and female students are involved in violence behaviour. Meaning that anyone in the university system as a student can involve in violence activities ranging from student protest against the school management, fight over personal belongings/property, fighting between two friends, cult group clashes e.t.c. Violence in the university system is being carried-out by both genders, not only male or female

The second hypothesis tested that students with agreeableness personality trait will have a significant high score on violent behaviour than students with neuroticism, extraversion, openness or conscientiousness personality traits. The hypothesis was accepted based on the result obtained, which showed that students with agreeableness personality traits had higher level of significance in violent behaviour compared to other personality traits. This result is in accordance with the study of Heaven [1996] who posited that low agreeableness was correlated with violence in men and women and the result showed, which also supports the research of Zhaleh Refahi & Najme Aganj (2012) carried out on personality traits and driving violation, they suggested that agreeableness as strong predictors of risky behaviours among the drivers

who do violate the laws, and this could be due to the individuals' general orientations and whether these orientations lead to risky behaviours or not depends on environmental factors and other individual characteristics. But this study negates the research done by Graziano & Eisenberg (1997), who agreed there is a negative relationship between agreeableness and deviant behaviour. The negation could be due to recent exposure to new inventions and discoveries that might have influenced the behaviour of the participants and also environmental factors could have also influenced the study. The environmental factor could influence adolescents and bring negative effect that an adolescent absorbed or acquired in his/her relationship with the environment. Environmental influence could be association with bad peers who negatively influence their (adolescents) actions, the home front in which the adolescent might have been exposed to during his/her developmental stages, the type of parenting style that is being used by parents at home where he/she grew-up. All these factors could influence the behaviour of the adolescent either positively or negatively. Environmental factor has a strong power to influence any kind of behavioural characteristics or personality make-up of an adolescent either positively or negatively, depending on the environment he/she finds him/herself and how he/she cognitively interprets the daily messages being communicated from the society/environment during the course of his/her relationship with the environment.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Violence on the media should be discouraged and media education should be encouraged and make it widely available.
- All parents should have access to culturally appropriate parenting programs designed to discourage the early development of aggressive behaviour.
- Students with violent behaviour should be well handled and must be introduced to an appropriate counselling section with the help of a school counsellor or a psychologist and with the involvement of the school management.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The study investigated the influence of gender and personality traits on violence behaviour among university students. Based on the result of this study, the following conclusions were proffered:

1. Gender has no significant influence on violence behaviour. Meaning that, based on the study, any gender either male or female can be involved in violent behaviour. Irrespective of the gender of an adolescent/student in a university system, there is no one who can not involve in university violence. This research will serve as an eye opener to university management to focus their attention not only on a particular gender but on both gender when they are on the look-out for students who carried-out violence activities in the school. Because according to the result of this research, gender is not a significant factor in violence behaviour among university students. Therefore gender has nothing to do with attitude/actions of students towards violence behaviour.
2. Personality traits (agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience, extraversion and conscientiousness) significantly influence violent behaviour among university students. Personality characteristic trait has a higher significant influence on the attitude/behaviour of human being. And this can not be waived-off in knowing the major or basic factors that do cause or influence violence behaviour among university students. This research has shown a significant positive result in this aspect, by revealing that personality traits of an adolescent have a positive significant influence on his/her violent behaviour. In view of this the violent activities being carried-out in our university environment are being significantly influenced by the personality make-up of the students in the university environment. Therefore personality has its own role(s) to play in violence behaviour in the university.

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