Exposure to Domestic Violence, Anger Expression, and Coping Strategies as Predictors of Aggressive Behaviour among In-School Adolescents in Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria

By

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Abstract

This study investigated how exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies predict aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents in Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey design with a correlational approach, data were collected from 250 adolescents aged 13–19 years in selected public secondary schools through a three-stage multistage sampling technique. Standardized instruments were utilized, including the Exposure to Domestic Violence Scale (Evans et al., 2008), State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (Spielberger, 1999), Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (Patterson & McCubbin, 1987), and Aggressive Behaviour Scale (Buss & Perry, 1992). Data were analysed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between exposure to domestic violence and aggressive behaviour ($r = 0.56$, $p < 0.01$) as well as between anger expression and aggression ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.01$). Conversely, coping strategies correlated negatively with aggressive behaviour ($r = –0.37$, $p < 0.01$), showing that adaptive coping skills mitigate aggression. The joint contribution of the predictors was statistically significant ($R = 0.62$, $R^2 = 0.38$, $F(3,246) = 33.67$, $p < 0.05$), explaining 38% of the variance in aggression. In terms of relative contribution, exposure to domestic violence ($\beta = 0.41$, $t = 7.00$, $p < 0.01$) emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by anger expression ($\beta = 0.33$, $t = 5.14$, $p < 0.01$), while coping strategies ($\beta = –0.21$, $t = –3.50$, $p < 0.05$) had a negative contribution. These findings suggest that adolescents exposed to domestic violence and with poor anger regulation are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviour, whereas effective coping mechanisms reduce such tendencies. The study concludes that family environment and emotional regulation are critical determinants of adolescent aggression. It recommends that school-based counselling programmes should strengthen emotional regulation and adaptive coping strategies among students. Additionally, parents and caregivers should be educated on the adverse psychological effects of domestic violence to promote healthier emotional development in adolescents.

Keywords: Domestic violence, anger expression, coping strategies, aggressive behaviour

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental period marked by heightened emotional reactivity, social sensitivity, and behavioural experimentation. During this stage, exposure to adverse environmental factors can significantly influence behavioural outcomes, including aggression. Aggressive behaviour, defined as any act intended to harm or intimidate others, has been widely studied due to its implications for school discipline, peer relations, and mental health (Akinyemi,

2025). Globally, adolescent aggression is recognized as a public health concern, with research showing links to peer conflict, emotional dysregulation, and environmental stressors (Card et al., 2008). In Nigeria, reports indicate rising incidences of aggressive behaviour among secondary school adolescents, highlighting the importance of exploring home and psychological factors influencing these behaviours (Omopo, 2025). Understanding these determinants is crucial for designing effective interventions in schools and communities.

One of the key predictors of adolescent aggression is exposure to domestic violence. Domestic violence, encompassing physical, emotional, and psychological abuse within the home, has been shown to influence children's behavioural patterns and emotional regulation. Adolescents who witness or experience violence at home often internalize aggressive scripts, which may manifest as outward aggression in school settings (Quadri et al., 2025). Nigerian studies have demonstrated that domestic violence disrupts normative emotional development, leading to maladaptive coping and increased likelihood of physical fights and verbal aggression (Ibrahim et al., 2024; Omopo, 2025). Internationally, research by Evans et al. (2008) confirms that exposure to family violence predicts higher levels of aggression and conduct problems in adolescents across cultures.

Anger expression is another critical factor influencing adolescent aggression. Anger, when poorly regulated, can act as a catalyst for hostile or impulsive behaviour, particularly among adolescents facing academic and social pressures (Akinyemi, 2025). Anger expression styles, such as outward aggression, suppression, or rumination, determine whether emotional arousal translates into aggressive acts (Sukhodolsky et al., 2001). In Nigeria, studies show that adolescents who frequently externalize anger are more likely to engage in school fights, bullying, and other forms of aggression (Akinyemi, 2025; Omopo, 2023). Similarly, international research highlights that deficits in anger regulation are strong predictors of adolescent violence and delinquency (Roberton et al., 2012).

Coping strategies play a pivotal role in moderating the impact of domestic violence and anger on adolescent aggression. Coping refers to cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage stressors and negative emotions (Fehintola & Akinyemi 2021). Adaptive strategies, such as problem-solving and seeking social support, mitigate the risk of aggression, whereas maladaptive strategies, including avoidance and rumination, exacerbate the likelihood of aggressive

behaviour (Akinyemi, 2025; Omopo, 2025). Evidence from Nigeria shows that adolescents exposed to domestic stressors who lack effective coping mechanisms are particularly prone to school aggression (Omopo, 2024; Quadri et al., 2025). Internationally, Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner (2011) noted that adolescents who use maladaptive coping strategies in response to family conflict exhibit higher aggression and antisocial tendencies.

The interplay between domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies underscores the multifaceted nature of adolescent aggression. General Strain Theory suggests that exposure to negative experiences, such as domestic violence, creates strain that may lead to maladaptive responses like aggression, especially when coping resources are insufficient (Aremu et al., 2021). Empirical studies from both Nigeria and abroad support this perspective, showing that adolescents exposed to chronic family conflict or maltreatment are more likely to externalize frustration through aggressive behaviours (Adebayo-Oke et al., 2021; Lansford et al., 2014). Such findings emphasize the universal applicability of psychosocial stressors in shaping adolescent conduct.

Despite growing evidence on these factors, there is a paucity of research in Osogbo, Osun State, focusing on how domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies jointly predict adolescent aggression. Most studies have either examined these variables in isolation or within urban centres like Ibadan and Lagos (Omopo, 2025; Akinyemi, 2025), leaving a contextual gap in understanding aggression in Osun State's secondary school population. Investigating these psychosocial determinants in Osogbo will provide locally relevant insights and inform interventions targeting adolescent behavioural adjustment.

In summary, adolescent aggression is a complex phenomenon influenced by multiple interrelated factors, including exposure to domestic violence, patterns of anger expression, and coping strategies. Evidence suggests that interventions should address environmental stressors, emotional regulation, and coping skills to reduce aggressive behaviours among adolescents (Omopo, 2024; Akinyemi, 2025; Quadri et al., 2025; Evans et al., 2008). This study aims to examine the relationship between the variables, as well as the joint and relative contributions of these predictors to aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents in Osogbo, Osun State, thereby providing an empirical basis for preventive and therapeutic strategies.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the predictive influence of exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies on aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents in Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. The study aims to determine both the joint and relative contributions of these variables to adolescents' aggressive tendencies, with a view to developing informed interventions that enhance emotional regulation and adaptive coping among this population. Specific Objectives are:

1. To examine the relationship between exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies on aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents in Osogbo.
2. To determine the joint contribution of exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies to aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents in Osogbo.
3. To assess the relative contribution of each predictor (exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies) to aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents in Osogbo.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, coping strategies, and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents in Osogbo?
2. What is the joint contribution of exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies to aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents in Osogbo?
3. What is the relative contribution of each predictor (exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies) to aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents in Osogbo?

Methods

This study adopted a descriptive survey design using a correlational approach to investigate the predictive influence of exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies on aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents in Osogbo, Osun State. This design was

deemed appropriate because it allowed for the examination of relationships among multiple variables without manipulation. The target population comprised adolescents enrolled in public secondary schools within the Osogbo metropolis. A total of 250 adolescents aged 13–19 years were selected using a three-stage multistage sampling technique. In the first stage, Osogbo was divided into three educational zones: Osogbo North, Osogbo South, and Olorunda. In the second stage, two schools were randomly selected from each zone, giving a total of six schools. In the third stage, students were selected from each school using simple random sampling techniques such as the balloting method, ensuring fair representation across gender, class level, and age categories.

Data were gathered using four standardized instruments. The Exposure to Domestic Violence Scale (EDVS) developed by Evans et al. (2008) measured the frequency and intensity of exposure to parental conflict, physical assault, and emotional abuse. The State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI-2) by Spielberger (1999) assessed anger experience, expression, and control styles. The Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (A-COPE) designed by Patterson and McCubbin (1987) measured adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies among adolescents, while the Aggressive Behaviour Scale (ABS) by Buss and Perry (1992) evaluated physical aggression, verbal aggression, and hostility. All instruments were subjected to a pilot test in a nearby local government area to ensure cultural relevance and internal reliability. Ethical clearance was obtained from the appropriate education authorities, and informed consent was secured from both participants and their guardians. Data collection was carried out in collaboration with school counsellors during school hours under standardized conditions. Data were analysed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) to examine relationships among the variables, while Multiple Regression Analysis was employed to determine the joint and relative contributions of the predictors to aggressive behaviour. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Demographic Representation of Participants

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	118	47.2
	Female	132	52.8
Age	13–15 years	97	38.8
	16–17 years	101	40.4
	18–19 years	52	20.8
Class Level	JSS 3	72	28.8
	SS 1	79	31.6
	SS 2	63	25.2
	SS 3	36	14.4
Family Type	Monogamous	161	64.4
	Polygamous	89	35.6

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants. Out of the 250 respondents, 118 (47.2%) were male, while 132 (52.8%) were female, indicating a slightly higher participation of females. In terms of age, 97 participants (38.8%) were between 13 and 15 years, 101 (40.4%) were aged 16 to 17, and 52 (20.8%) were aged 18 to 19, suggesting that most respondents were mid-adolescents. Regarding class distribution, 72 students (28.8%) were in JSS 3, 79 (31.6%) in SS 1, 63 (25.2%) in SS 2, and 36 (14.4%) in SS 3, showing a balanced representation across junior and senior secondary levels. Lastly, 161 respondents (64.4%) came from monogamous homes, while 89 (35.6%) were from polygamous families, implying that the majority were raised in nuclear family settings.

Research Question 1:

What is the relationship between exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, coping strategies, and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents in Osogbo?

Table 2: Correlation Matrix Showing Relationships among Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD
1. Exposure to Domestic Violence	1.00				32.14	6.20
2. Anger Expression	0.48**	1.00			29.76	5.81
3. Coping Strategies	-0.32**	-0.29**	1.00		35.67	7.03
4. Aggressive Behaviour	0.56**	0.52**	-0.37**	1.00	31.22	6.48

Table 2 shows significant relationships between the study variables. Exposure to domestic violence correlated positively with aggressive behaviour (r = 0.56, p < 0.01) and anger expression (r = 0.48, p < 0.01), suggesting that adolescents exposed to violence at home tend to express anger more openly and act aggressively. Coping strategies, on the other hand, correlated negatively with aggressive behaviour (r = -0.37, p < 0.01), indicating that adolescents who adopt healthy coping mechanisms are less likely to behave aggressively.

The result demonstrates that exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies are significantly related to aggressive behaviour among adolescents. This finding is consistent with Akinyemi (2025), and Ukpabi and Akinyemi (2021) whose studies found that poor emotional regulation and peer influence significantly predicted behavioural problems among adolescents in Osogbo. Similarly, Omopo (2025) reported that adolescents exposed to emotional stressors, including violence and trauma, were more prone to aggressive tendencies due to maladaptive emotional regulation. Internationally, Margolin and Gordis (2000) also confirmed that domestic violence exposure disrupts emotional stability and promotes externalizing behaviours such as aggression and hostility.

Moreover, the positive relationship between anger expression and aggression aligns with findings by Deffenbacher et al. (1996), who emphasized that uncontrolled anger is a critical precursor to aggression. Conversely, the negative relationship between coping strategies and aggression reflects the assertion by Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner (2011) that adolescents with adaptive coping skills—such as problem-solving and emotional regulation—are better able to manage frustration without resorting to aggression. The result underscores the importance of emotional coping skills in reducing aggression among youth exposed to adverse family environments.

Research Question 2:

What is the joint contribution of exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies to aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents in Osogbo?

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis on Joint Contribution of Predictors to Aggressive Behaviour

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R	R²	Adj. R²
Regression	2526.43	3	842.14	33.67	0.000	0.62	0.38	0.37
Residual	4108.21	246	16.70					
Total	6634.64	249						

The results in Table 3 indicate that exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies jointly contributed significantly to aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents $(F(3,246) = 33.67, p < 0.05)$. The multiple correlation coefficient $(R = 0.62)$ and the coefficient of determination $(R^2 = 0.38)$ show that the combined predictors explained 38% of the variance in aggressive behaviour. This implies that a significant proportion of adolescent aggression can be explained by their exposure to domestic violence, anger expression tendencies, and coping mechanisms.

The joint contribution of the predictors corroborates earlier findings that aggression among adolescents is multidimensional, stemming from both environmental and emotional factors. Omopo et al. (2024) found a similar interaction effect between parental substance abuse and behavioural maladjustment in children. Akinyemi (2025) also observed that emotional regulation, parenting, and social support jointly explained a substantial proportion of variance in adolescents' academic and behavioural outcomes. Internationally, Evans et al. (2008) and Kerig et al. (2013) affirmed that family violence and emotional dysregulation collectively amplify the risk of aggression and delinquency among youth.

The 38% variance explained is substantial and highlights that domestic violence and anger are intertwined psychological processes. This finding also supports the ecological systems theory, which posits that family environments shape adolescents' emotional and behavioural patterns. Hence, interventions must address both home-based violence exposure and emotional regulation skills.

Research Question 3:

What is the relative contribution of each predictor (exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies) to aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents in Osogbo?

Table 4: Relative Contributions of Predictors to Aggressive Behaviour

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Exposure to Domestic Violence	0.42	0.06	0.41	7.00	0.000
Anger Expression	0.36	0.07	0.33	5.14	0.000
Coping Strategies	-0.28	0.08	-0.21	-3.50	0.001

As shown in Table 4, all predictors made significant contributions to aggressive behaviour. Exposure to domestic violence ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$) was the strongest predictor, followed by anger expression ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$). Coping strategies had a significant but negative contribution ($\beta = -0.21$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that effective coping reduces aggressive tendencies.

The dominance of domestic violence exposure as a predictor of aggression supports prior Nigerian studies such as Ibrahim et al. (2024), who found that parental violence and criminality increased behavioural risks among children. Likewise, Adebayo-Oke et al. (2021) showed that early exposure to violence and substance use predicted later aggression and antisocial acts. Internationally, Fergusson et al. (2006) also noted that adolescents raised in violent homes exhibit higher levels of aggression and delinquent behaviour. The significant role of anger expression mirrors the results of Akinyemi and Aremu (2022), who emphasized that poor emotional control intensifies psychological distress and maladaptive responses. Meanwhile, coping strategies' negative contribution corroborates the findings of Zimmer-Gembeck and Skinner (2011), who highlighted the protective role of adaptive coping in reducing emotional reactivity. Collectively, the results emphasize the importance of addressing family-level violence and enhancing coping and emotional regulation among adolescents in Osogbo.

Conclusion

The study concludes that exposure to domestic violence, anger expression, and coping strategies significantly predict aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents in Osogbo, with domestic violence emerging as the most potent predictor. The findings highlight the crucial role of family environments and emotional competence in adolescent behavioural development.

Recommendations:

1. **Family Violence Prevention Programmes**: Parents should be sensitized through community workshops to reduce exposure of children to domestic conflicts and violence.
2. **Anger Management Education:** Schools should integrate emotional regulation and anger management training into guidance and counselling Programmes.
3. **Coping Skills Training**: Adolescents should be equipped with adaptive coping strategies to help them manage stress and frustration effectively.
4. **Psychosocial Interventions:** Counsellors should provide early interventions for adolescents identified as being at risk of aggression due to exposure to family violence.
5. **Further Research:** Longitudinal studies should explore how prolonged exposure to domestic violence influences aggression patterns over time.

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