

# Gender as a Moderator of the Association Between Exposure to Violent Media Contents and Aggressive Behaviour in a Sample of Nigerian In-School Adolescents

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## Abstract

This is a correlational survey research which was carried out to find out if gender is a moderator of the association between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour in a sample of Nigerian in-school adolescents. The respondents were 603 senior secondary class 2 adolescents in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State. Two self-report questionnaires measuring violent media contents consumption and aggressive behaviour respectively were used for collection of data. Chart, partial correlation, and regression statistics were utilized to analyze and interpret the data. The research hypothesis was considered significant at .05 probability level. Results indicate that, to a very high extent, gender moderated the relationship between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents. Also, it was found that gender significantly moderated the relationship between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents. It is recommended that Nigerian secondary schools should initiate and promote gender-friendly and gender-transformative school-based interventions that would help mitigate aggression among in-school adolescents.

**Keywords:** gender, violent media contents, aggressive behaviour, in-school adolescents

## 1. Introduction

Gender determines our perception of men and women and the way they are expected to reason and behave. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2005; Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, 2001). Kirsh and Olczak (2002) observed that gender could influence the relationship between violent media contents consumption and aggressive behaviour. Exposure to violent media contents has been considered a significant contributory risk factor for increased aggression (Bushman & Anderson, 2015). Among Nigerian in-school adolescents, aggressive behaviour is often displayed through bullying, knife attack, arson, and peer victimization (Adefunke, 2010; Aluede 2011; Obikeze & Obi, 2015). The fact that violent media contents consumption seem to be an everyday issue for the Nigerian in-school adolescents necessitated this study.

Studies indicated that several violent media contents seem to dominate the Nigerian entertainment markets making them easily accessible to in-school adolescents (Eseadi, 2016; Onuigbo, Eseadi, Onwuasoanya, & Eze, 2019). Of more concern is that there is dearth of government policy in Nigeria regarding violent media contents distribution and consumption which could help to curtail access to them. Results from previous studies points to the fact that early life exposure to violent media contents could be predictive of violent behaviours at adulthood stage of life compared to a scenario in which individuals were not exposed to such contents (Eseadi, 2016; Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski & Eron, 2003). Some in-school adolescents could be more vulnerable to the potential negative effects of consuming violent media contents than others (Onuigbo, Eseadi, Onwuasoanya, & Eze, 2019).

Considering the length of exposure, psychological issues, such as, traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, substance use, antisocial behaviours, and academic difficulties may ensue among adolescents who consume so much of violent media contents (Eseadi, 2016). According to Onuigbo, Eseadi, Onwuasoanya and Eze (2019), there are still lessons to learn from investigating the moderating effect of gender in the association between violent media consumption and aggression. To this end, the objective of this study was to find out if gender is a moderator of the association between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour in a sample of Nigerian in-school adolescents.

### 1.1 Research Question

To what extent does gender moderate the relationship between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents?

### 1.2 Hypothesis

Gender will not significantly moderate the relationship between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents.

## 2. Method

This research is a correlational survey which was carried out among in-school adolescents in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. Out of a population of 34472 in-school adolescents, the study respondents were 603 senior secondary class 2 adolescents obtained through multi-stage sampling procedure. Participating students gave their informed assent. In carrying out this investigation, the American Psychological Association's research principles were put into consideration. The Violent Media Contents Questionnaire (VMCQ, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.88$ ) and the In-School Adolescents' Aggressive Behaviour Questionnaire (IAABQ, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) by Eseadi (2016) were used for collection of data. The research purposes were explained to the participating students before they completed the questionnaires on the spot with the help of a research assistant. To analyze and interpret the data, chart, partial correlation and regression statistics were used. The research hypothesis was tested at 0.05 significant level. Computer software utilized for statistical data processing and analysis was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22.

## 3. Results

**Research Question:** To what extent does gender moderate the relationship between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents?

Table 1. Partial correlation analysis showing the extent to which gender moderate the relationship between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents

Variables	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	$r_p$	Decision
Violent Media Contents	Male	348	3.26±.29		0.82	Very High Extent
	Female	255	3.24±.28			
	Total	603	3.25± .29			
Aggressive Behaviour	Male	348	3.38±.37			
	Female	255	3.37 ±.36			
	Total	603	3.37±.36			

N = number of respondents,  $r_p$  = Partial correlation coefficient.

Results in Table 1 revealed that based on gender, the mean exposure to violent media contents was 3.26 with standard deviation of 0.29 for the male in-school adolescents while mean exposure of 3.24 with standard deviation of 0.28 was obtained for the female in-school adolescents; and the overall mean exposure was 3.25 with standard deviation of 0.29. As shown in the table, the mean exposure for the male in-school adolescents on aggressive behaviour was 3.38 with standard deviation of 0.37; while the mean exposure for the female in-school adolescents on aggressive behaviour was 3.37 with standard deviation of 0.36; and the overall mean exposure was 3.37 with standard deviation of 0.36. The value of the partial correlation coefficient ( $r_p$ ) which is 0.82 indicates that the extent to which gender moderate the relationship between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents is very high.

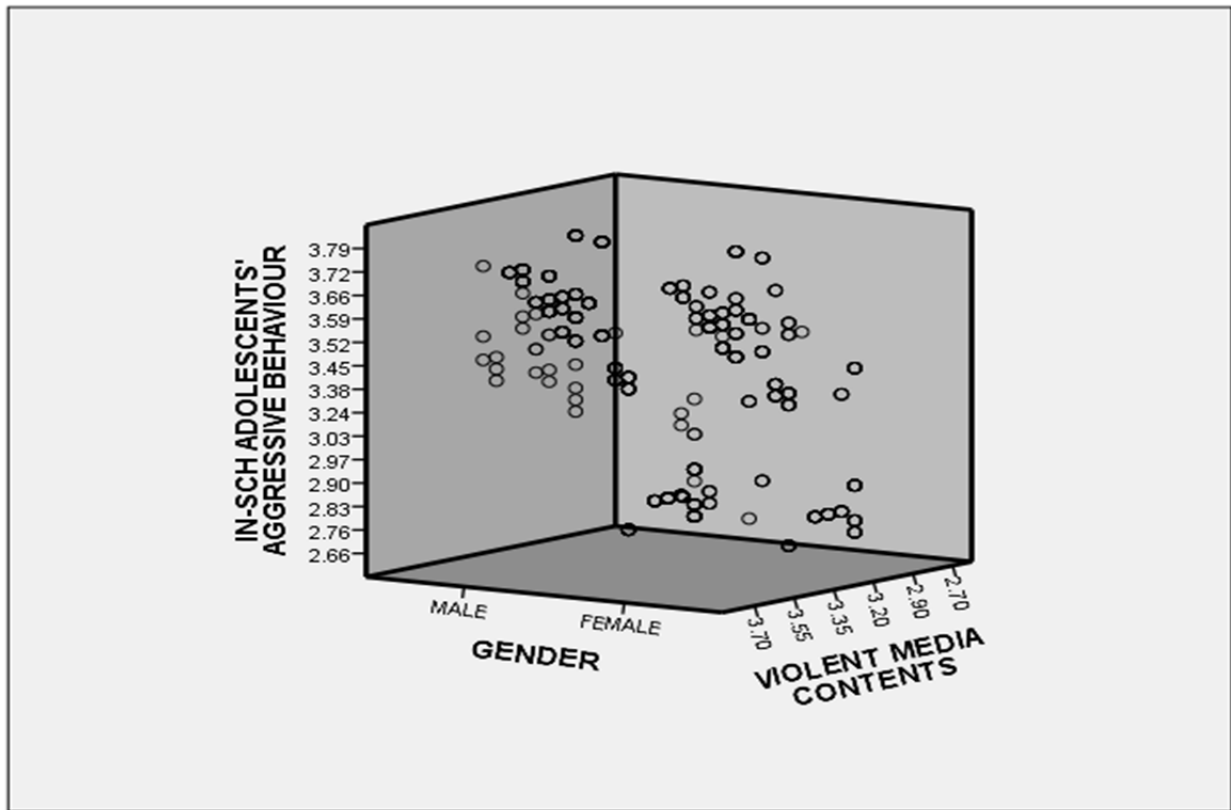


Figure 1. Chart showing gender as a moderator in the relationship between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents

Figure 1 is a chart showing how gender moderates the relationship between violent media contents and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents. The figure confirms that the relationship between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour is being moderated by gender to a very high extent.

**Hypothesis:** Gender will not significantly moderate the relationship between viewing violent media contents and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents.

Table 2. Summary of regression analysis showing gender as a moderator of the relationship between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents

Variables	N	F	R <sup>2</sup>	B	Sig.	Decision
Violent Media Contents						
Gender	603	615.84	.672	.820	.000	Rejected
Aggressive Behaviour						

Results in Table 2 revealed that gender significantly moderated the relationship between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents,  $R^2 = .67$ ,  $F(1, 602) = 615.84$ ,  $\beta = .82$ ,  $p < .05$ . The  $R^2$  value of .67 shows that violent media contents accounts for 67% of the variance in aggressive behaviour when moderated by gender.

**4. Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to find out if gender is a moderator of the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour in a sample of Nigerian in-school adolescents. The study demonstrated that, to a very high extent, gender moderated the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents. Also, it was found that gender significantly moderated the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school

adolescents. Kirsh and Olczak (2002) reported that gender could influence the association between violent media contents consumption and aggression. Krahe, Busching and Möller (2012) reported that violent media contents had larger effect on females compared to their male counterparts; the consumption of violent media is linked to desensitization in females to the extent that they could consider violence as a normal thing, thereby making them vulnerable to aggression. Tarabah, Badr, Usta and Doyle (2016) revealed that gender is a moderator in the association between violent media contents consumption and aggression. Kirsh, Mounts and Olczak (2006) reported that gender could bring about variations in violent media content consumption. However, our finding is inconsistent with recent result by Onuigbo, Eseadi, Onwuasoanya and Eze (2019) which showed that gender is not a significant moderator in the correlation between violent media contents consumption and aggressive behaviour of adolescent students. The disparity could be due to the data analysis approach employed. The implications of the present findings cannot be overstated. A good number of professional counsellors should be employed and older counsellors should be retrained through in-service training programmes, capacity building workshops and refresher courses on media education and emerging violence prevention approaches. Finally, it is recommended that Nigerian secondary schools should initiate and promote gender-friendly and gender-transformative school-based interventions that would help mitigate aggression among in-school adolescents.

## 5. Conclusion

The study concludes that to a very high extent, gender moderated the relationship between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour of in-school adolescents. Gender significantly moderated the relationship between exposure to violent media contents and aggressive behaviour of in-school adolescents. Nigerian secondary schools should initiate and promote gender-friendly and gender-transformative school-based interventions that would help mitigate aggression among in-school adolescents.

## Note/Acknowledgements

This article was drafted based on empirical data of a postgraduate research investigating the relationship of violent video games play and violent media contents with aggressive behaviour among adolescent students. The study sample size and research method are similar with other aspects of the work which are being considered for publication in this and other journals. We sincerely thank the adolescent students who took part in this survey.

## Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that there are no competing or potential conflicts of interest.

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