

# Manifestation of Aggressive Behaviour Based on Gender in Secondary Schools in Bungoma County, Kenya

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**Abstract:**-Gender substitutes a structure of social practice that establishes relations of power, attitudes and hierarchies, not only among people, but also among groups and institutions, which would simply overcome the analysis or individual perception of being male or female. Studies done on adolescents indicate that there are gender differences in the manifestation of aggressive behaviour and these differences are more significant during adolescence than at any other stage in development. Further studies done indicate that boys are more likely to exhibit physically aggressive behaviours, while girls are more likely to exhibit relationally aggressive behaviours. Therefore, this study attempts to explain if there is a difference in manifestation of aggressive behavior based on gender in secondary schools in Bungoma County.

**Key words:** Aggressive behaviour, Gender

## I. INTRODUCTION

According to the explanation of Bansel (2010), boys tend to be more aggressive than girls because traditionally boys are taught to stand up for themselves. Emphasis is laid on male power masculinity and success. The male adolescent student is groomed for the world of proving his masculinity through domination and aggression. The author says that male children are allowed more opportunities for learning and performing aggressive acts for example, willingness to inflict pain on others to win. As Bansel (2010) says, independence, aggression, fearlessness, leadership, tenacity, anger, stoicism are the psychological bricks and mortar of male gender roles geared for powerful, controlling adult position. These views are furthered by the assertion that males have gender preparedness for aggression than females and this is reinforced from time to time by parents, peer groups and even teachers. On the other hand, women may feel more anxiety, guilt and avoidance when faced with aggression. According to the above authors, girls appear to learn very quickly that aggressive behaviour is punished socially while the same behaviour in boys is accepted and often rewarded. Girls are socialized away from aggression a strategy, which explains why they are less prepared to negotiate direct conflict. Research conducted by Walters, Cross and Show (2010) found that teenage female typically displays greater levels of self control and lower levels of spontaneity compared to male. According to Meichenbaum (2011) adolescent boys commit

the majority of violent crimes with a prevalence ratio in comparison to girls because boys have higher drug use than girls.

According to Navarro, Larranaga and Yubero (2011) in a school situation boys engage in physical aggression than girls do. In school, girls are commonly known to create fewer problems than boys. The authors say that very few girls may use physical forms of aggression but are experts at using verbal expression to hurt others. Boys generally harm with both physical and verbal aggression because this behaviour is consistent with their physical dominance and peer group goals (Bansel, 2010). Girls tend to focus their aggression on matters of relationship with their peers with the intention of damaging another's friendship or feelings of inclusion within a social group (Povedano, Jemenez & Musitu, 2012). The authors indicated that boys tend to use more physical than verbal aggression because they are physically stronger than girls and so are able to defend themselves.

A study conducted by Vassalo (2011) on Australian Adolescents found that a proportion of males who reported aggressive behaviour of physical nature were higher than those of females. Other findings of the study were that expression of anger was the same between sexes but females used more obliging, avoidance and compromise methods. Yet another finding from their study indicated that child rearing styles also contribute significantly to how adolescents view themselves. For instance, the expression of affection and punishment by parents are used in different ways towards girls and boys. Girls are likely to be handled more gently compared to the boys, which tends to encourage a healthier social adjustment for the girls than for boys. Parents tend to encourage boys to interact with the environment while protecting the girls from it (Vassallo, 2011).

Pereira, Goncalves and Silva (2013) sampled 1500 Spanish students in secondary school during 2007-2008 academic years. It was revealed that concerning bullies, boys are involved in all kinds of bullying incidents to a significantly higher degree than girls. For victims too, the boys experience direct experience of bullying, such as physical aggression and girls are more involved in situations of indirect violence such as malicious gossip. This study verified that stereotypical characteristics of masculinity are strongly related to the

perpetration of bullying and violence in relation to both sexes, whereas feminine characteristics are negatively related to the maintenance and perpetration of bullying. The study found that feminine traits are more related to victimization than are male students.

Brisbane (2010) in his study in New Zealand to explore whether gender and age influenced the relationship between impulsivity and aggression randomly selected high school students aged 12-15 years. As expected, impulsivity was found to significantly influence the relationship between both overt and covert aggression. This relationship was only found in females and not males. The study further confirmed that impulsivity predicted female overt and covert aggression. It was concluded that the females in this study had a higher tendency to engage in impulsive aggression particularly between the ages of 15 and 16 years. The most unexpected result found however was that the female sample of teenagers appeared to engage in impulsive aggressive behaviour that was exclusively overt in nature. That is behaviour driven by anger, physical or verbal aggression. These results contribute to the belief that female teenagers are increasingly engaging in stereotypically male behaviours. A Possible explanation for these results leads to the fact that impulsivity can act as contributing factor responsible for moderating the expression and therefore consequently responsible for the increase of overt aggression in female teenagers. A study in Indonesia by Darmawan (2010) investigating the prevalence of bullying among students in two secondary schools in the city of Parlu using a sample of 97 boys and 149 girls revealed that in general boys were more involved in bullying than girls. Girls were more involved in relational aggression.

Few researches have been documented in Africa and Kenya on gender differences in the expression of aggression in secondary schools. However, an exploratory study conducted by Kemunto (2011) set out to investigate these differences among 36 Kenyan schools. Findings were that boys are more aggressive than girls. Boys are more physically confrontational and are more likely to approve aggression. Girls on the other hand use damaging relationships inflicting discomfort on others. Boys are more reactive and engage in more destructive activities than girls. The researcher goes on to say that girls have stronger capacity to withhold a lot of feelings. Boys experience a lot of outbursts that are brought out in aggressive behaviour. Muchiri (2013) while investigating the relationship between parental nurturing and student problem behaviour in school in (5) counties in Kenya found that male students express externalized problem behaviours than female students. Aloka and Bujuwoye, (2013) concluded that despite the growing amount of research over recent decades, contradictory findings on sex differences in adolescent aggression continue to be published. The present researcher is in agreement with this statement because there are factors like differences in physical and emotional development during adolescence that may determine whether children are going to be aggressive in school or not and

aggressive strategies may be used for different purposes for boys and girls. The present study sought to find out if there were any differences in the manifestation of aggression by male and female students in secondary schools in Bungoma County.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted correlational research design with mixed approaches. According to Mugenda (2008) a correlational research design is a study that describes the degree to which the variables are related. This type of research assesses the relationships among variables with the researcher being interested in using information obtained from one variable to estimate the variation in a related variable. This study adopted this method because it was interested in establishing the difference in manifestation of aggressive behaviour based on gender of students in secondary schools. In the study data was collected on psycho social factors and aggressive behaviour among students in order to test the nature and extent of the relationship between the two variables.

The study was conducted in Bungoma County in Kenya. The County was purposively selected because it has many public secondary schools which are a mixture of girls' only schools, and boys' only schools, as well as mixed schools. This was essential for comparison purposes. Furthermore, this County has had a number of incidents of students' aggressive behaviour and regular disturbances witnessed. These incidents have been reported in the print and electronic media and have caused concern among parents, teachers, counsellors and Ministry of education officials and other education stakeholders in the recent past (Makabila, 2010). The target population of this study was 110,000 students in all public secondary schools in Bungoma County. The population consists of 60,000 male students and 50,000 female students (source: Bungoma County Director of Education's Office, 2014). Both probability and non-probability sampling was used to select the study sample.

The sample size of students in form two who were selected for the current study was determined using a formula that was developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Using this formula, 379 students in form two were selected. The study employed questionnaire and interview schedule in data collection. To enhance the trust worthiness of the study, the research data collection tools were validated and reliability determined.

## III. RESULTS

The objective of this study sought to determine if there was a significant difference in manifestation of aggressive behaviour between boys and girls. To achieve this objective, the mean aggression indices based on bullying, fighting, vandalization of school property and overall aggression for the boys and girls were compared.

3.1 Test for Difference in the Manifestation of Bullying Behaviour between Boys and Girls

The independent samples t-test which tests if there is a significant difference between the means of any two groups

says boys and girls in this case was used. First, the mean bullying indices for boys and girls were computed and the results are as shown in Table 1.

Table 11: Group Statistics

|                | Gender | N   | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|----------------|--------|-----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| Bullying index | Boys   | 154 | 27.5909 | 9.81503        | .79092          |
|                | Girls  | 154 | 26.6169 | 10.04968       | .80983          |

The results show that boys had a higher bullying index of 27.5909 with a standard deviation of 9.81503 than girls who had a mean bullying index of 26.6169 with a standard deviation of 10.04968. This implies that bullying was more predominant amongst boys than girls in secondary schools in Bungoma County. To determine if the means significantly differed between the boys and girls, the hypothesis tested was:

H<sub>01</sub> There is no significant difference in bullying behaviour between boys and girls in secondary school

Before testing the hypothesis, homogeneity of variance assumption was tested. This tests whether the variances are equal across the two groups. This was done using the box plot and the Levene’s test. The results of the Box plot show that the lengths were different implying that the spread of observations for girls was much greater than that of boys hence the variance of boys’ and girls’ bullying aggression were quite different as shown in Figure 1.

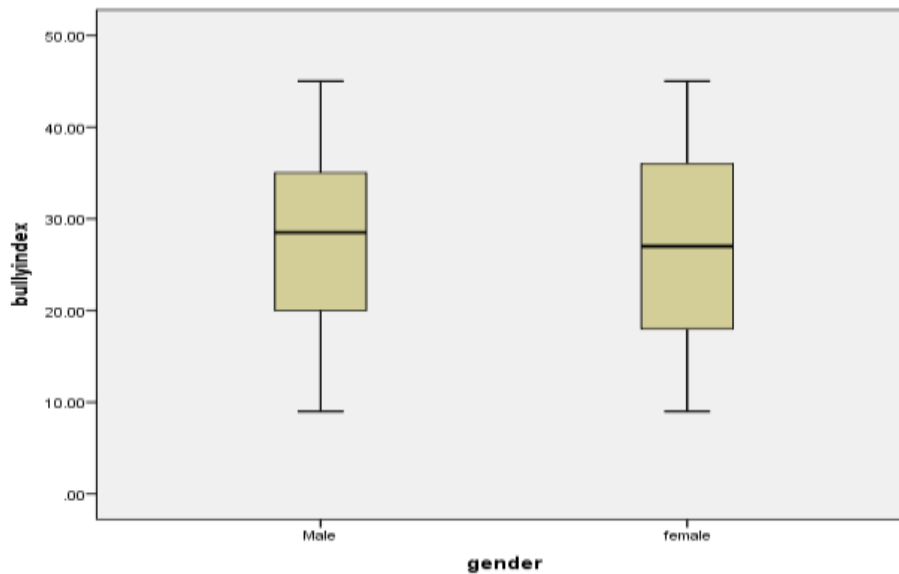


Figure 1: Box plot for Bullying Behaviour between Boys and Girls

This was supported by the results of the Levene’s test which yielded a P-value of 0.138 which is greater than 0.05 hence we fail to reject the null hypothesis of the Levene’s test and

conclude that variances of boys and girls bullying indices are not equal hence we assume variances not equal in the t-test as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Independent Samples Test of the difference in mean between boys and girls in bullying

|                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |     |                 |                 |                       |
|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
|                             | F                                       | Sig. | T                            | Df  | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| Equal variances assumed     | 2.209                                   | .138 | -1.560                       | 306 | .120            | -1.88961        | 1.21161               |
| Equal variances not assumed |   |      | -1.560                       | 304 | .120            | -1.88961        | 1.21161               |

The t-test value of -1.560 was established together with  $p > 0.05$ . The study concludes that there was no significant difference in bullying as aggressive behaviour between boys and girls in secondary schools. This implies that there is much bullying amongst boys as in girls.

The results are in line with Bansel (2010) findings that boys tend to be more aggressive than girls because traditionally boys are taught to stand up for themselves. Also Meinchenbaum (2011) established similar results and stated that adolescent boys commit the majority of violent crimes with a prevalence ratio in comparison to girls. Better still,

findings by Navarro, Larranaga and Yubero (2011), Vassalo (2011) and Pereira, Goncalves and Silva (2013) that boys are involved in all kinds of bullying incidents to a significantly higher degree than girls but stress the study findings.

3.2 *Difference in the Manifestation of Fighting in Secondary Schools Between Boys and Girls*

Based on the group statistics, the mean fighting index for boys was 21.8442 with a standard deviation of 8.32363. The mean fighting index for girls was 19.9805 with a standard deviation of 8.28770. Fighting as a form of aggression is higher amongst boys than girls as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Group Statistics for Fighting as Aggression Behaviour

|                | Gender | N   | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|----------------|--------|-----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| Fighting index | Male   | 154 | 21.8442 | 8.32363        | .67074          |
|                | Female | 154 | 19.9805 | 8.28770        | .66784          |

To determine whether the difference in fighting as aggressive behaviour was statistically significant, the t-test for difference in means for independent samples was used. The following hypothesis was tested:

$H_{01}$  There is no difference in fighting behaviour between boys and girls in secondary school

To determine whether to assume equal variances or not in the t-test, a test for homogeneity of variance was carried out using the Box plot and Levene’s test as shown in Figure 2.

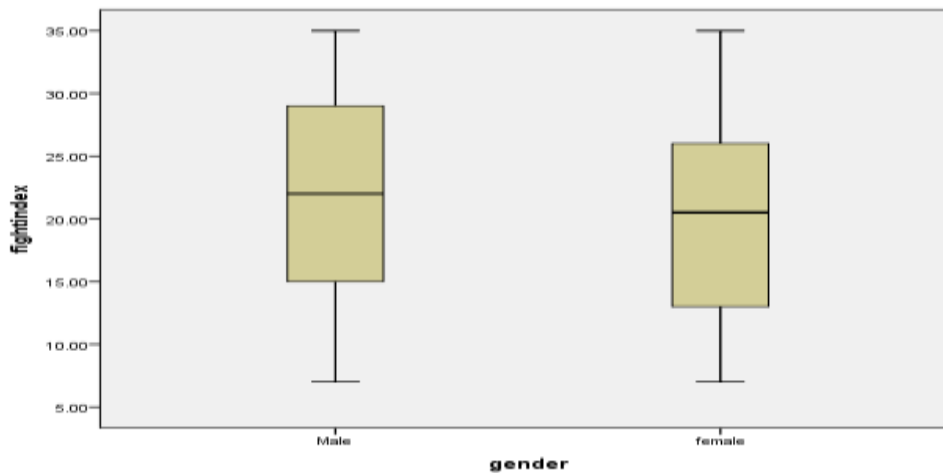


Figure 2: Box plot for Fighting Behaviour between Boys and Girls

The box plot shows that the total length of the box plots for boys and girls are about the same length. This implies that the spread of observations for boys and girls was almost the same hence the variances of their levels of aggression in terms of fighting are not that different. The Levene’s test yielded an F

value of 0.414 and a P-value of 0.520. Since the P-value is greater than 0.05, the variability for boys and girls is the same meaning that in the two groups is not significantly different. For the t-test we will read from the ‘equal variances assumed row as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Independent Samples Test of the difference in mean between boys and girls in fighting

|                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |        |                 |                 |                       |
|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
|                             | F                                       | Sig. | T                            | df     | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| Equal variances assumed     | .414                                    | .520 | 1.969                        | 306    | .050            | 1.86364         | .94652                |
| Equal variances not assumed |   |      | 1.969                        | 305.99 | .050            | 1.86364         | .94652                |

The results of the independent samples t-test yielded a t-value of 1.969 and a p-value of 0.05. at 0.05 level of significance we conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between boys and girls in aggressive behaviour manifested in the form of fighting in secondary schools. These results corroborate findings by Aloka and Bujuwoye (2013) who established that boys are more likely than girls to engage in physical fighting at rate double than that of girls. The authors say that girls who fight and who engage in cruel behaviours are most likely to direct anger towards themselves rather than towards others. Such self-directed anger may be manifested in the form of self-injurious behaviours. Also, Walters, Cross

and Show (2010) found that teenage female typically display greater levels of self-control and lower levels of spontaneity compared to male hence are less likely to engage in fighting.

3.3 Difference in the Manifestation of Vandalization of Property in Secondary Schools between Boys and Girls

Based on the group statistics, the mean vandalization of property index for boys was 48.7468 with a standard deviation of 17.31091. The mean vandalization of property index for girls was 43.5390 with a standard deviation of 14.81747. Vandalization of property as a form of aggression is higher amongst boys than girls by 5.2177 units as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Group Statistics for Vandalization of Property

|                               | Gender | N   | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|-------------------------------|--------|-----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| Destruction of property index | Male   | 154 | 48.7468 | 17.31091       | 1.39495         |
|                               | Female | 154 | 43.5390 | 14.81747       | 1.19403         |

To determine whether the difference in vandalization of school property as aggressive behaviour was statistically significant, the t-test for difference in means for independent samples was used. The following hypothesis was tested:

H<sub>01</sub> There is no difference in vandalization of property behaviour between boys and girls in secondary schools  
 Before the actual test, test for homogeneity of variance was carried out using the Box plot and Levene’s test. The results of the box plot test are illustrated in Figure 3.

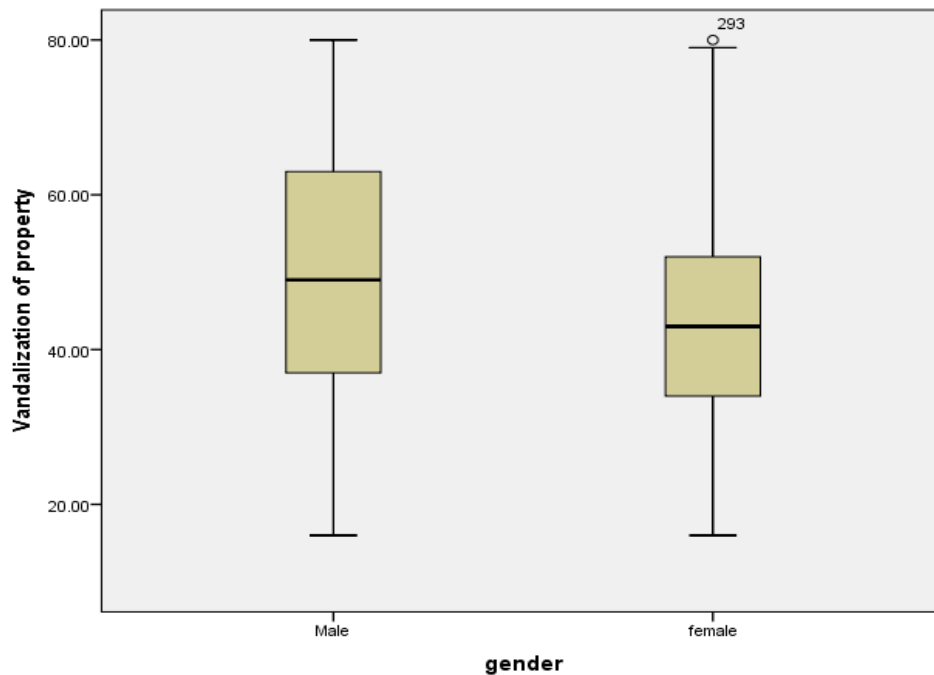


Figure 3: Box plot for Destruction of property Behaviour for Boys and Girls

The box plot shows that the total length of the box plots for girls was of a shorter length implying that the spread of observations for girls was lesser compared to the spread of observations for boys hence the variances of their levels of aggression in terms of vandalization of school property were

different. The Levene’s test yielded an F value of 8.015 and a P-value of 0.005. The P-value is less than 0.05 meaning that the variability for boys and girls is significantly different. For the t-test we will read from the ‘equal variances not assumed’ row. The results of the t-test are shown in Table 6.

**Table 2: Independent Samples Test** of the difference in mean Vandalization Aggression between boys and girls 2

|                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |        |                 |                 |                       |
|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
|                             | F                                       | Sig. | t                            | df     | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| Equal variances assumed     | 8.015                                   | .005 | 2.836                        | 306    | .005            | 5.20779         | 1.83619               |
| Equal variances not assumed |   |      | 2.836                        | 298.89 | .005            | 5.20779         | 1.83619               |

The results of the independent samples t-test yielded a t-value of 2.836 and a p-value of 0.005. At 0.05 level of significance we conclude that there is a statistically significant difference in the levels of aggression in terms of vandalization of school property between boys and girls in secondary schools. The results are consistent with findings by Darmawan (2010) who revealed that in general boys were more involved in vandalization of school property than girls.

*3.4 Difference in the Manifestation of Overall Aggressive Behaviour in Secondary Schools between Boys and Girls*

Based on the group statistics, the mean overall aggression index for boys was 98.7468 with a standard deviation of 21.77588. The aggression index for girls was 90.1169 with a standard deviation of 18.46634. The aggression behaviour for boys was greater than the average of 96 while that for girls was below 96. This implies that aggression was higher amongst boys than amongst girls by 8.0749 units as shown in Table 7.

Table 3: Group Statistics for Overall Aggression Behaviour

|                    | Gender | N   | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--------------------|--------|-----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| Overall Aggression | Male   | 154 | 98.1818 | 21.77588       | 1.75475         |
|                    | Female | 154 | 90.1169 | 18.46634       | 1.48806         |

To determine whether the difference in overall aggression between boys and girls was statistically significant, the t-test for difference in means for independent samples was used. The following hypothesis was tested:

$H_{01}$  There is no difference in overall aggression between boys and girls in secondary schools

Before the actual test, a test for homogeneity of variance was carried out using the Box plot and Levene's test as shown in Figure 4.

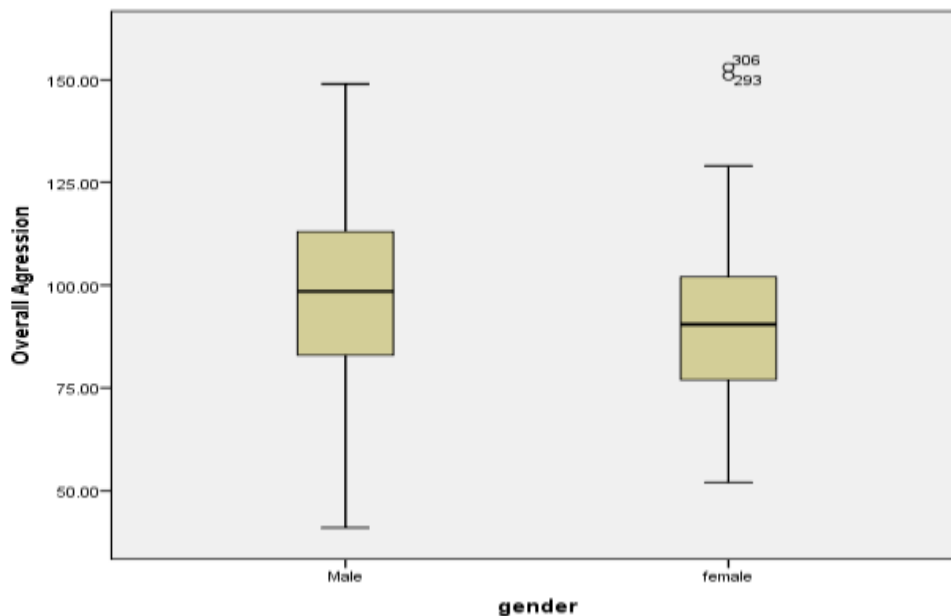


Figure 4: Box plot for Overall Aggression Behaviour for Boys and Girls

The Levene's test yielded an F value of 4.627 and a P-value of 0.032. The P-value is less than 0.05 meaning that the variability for boys and girls is significantly different. For the

t-test we will read from the 'equal variances not assumed row as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Independent Samples Test of the difference in mean aggressive behaviour between boys and girls

|                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |         |                 |                 |                       |
|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
|                             | F                                       | Sig. | T                            | df      | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| Equal variances assumed     | 4.627                                   | .032 | 3.505                        | 306     | .001            | 8.06494         | 2.30075               |
| Equal variances not assumed |   |      | 3.505                        | 298.045 | .001            | 8.06494         | 2.30075               |

Since  $p(0.032) < 0.05$ , we reject the null hypothesis of the Levene's test and conclude that variances of males and females aggression indices are significantly different hence we assume variances not equal in the t-test.

The results of the independent samples t-test yielded a t-value of 3.505 and a p-value of 0.001. At 0.05 level of significance, we conclude that there is a statistically significant difference in the levels of aggression between boys and girls in secondary schools. These results are in line with Bansel (2010) who established that boys are more likely to exhibit physically aggressive behaviours than girls who are more likely to exhibit relationally aggressive behaviours. According to the explanation of Bansel (2010), boys tend to be more aggressive than girls because traditionally boys are taught to stand up for themselves. Meinchenbaum (2011) also established that boys commit the majority of violent crimes with a prevalence ratio higher than that to girls a view that was also expressed by Navarro, Larranaga and Yubero (2011) and Kemunto (2011) who established that boys were more aggressive than girls. Boys are more physically confrontational and are more likely to approve aggression. Girls on the other hand use damaging relationships inflicting discomfort on others. Boys are more reactive and engage in more destructive activities than girls. The low levels of aggression amongst girls can be attributed to a finding by Walters, Cross and Show (2010) that teenage females typically display greater levels of self-control and lower levels of spontaneity compared to male.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The study established that bullying was more predominant amongst boys than girls in secondary schools in Bungoma County and based on the independent samples t-test, the difference in bullying among boys and girls was not statistically significant implying that there is much bullying amongst boys as in girls. Fighting as a form of aggression was found to be higher amongst boys than girls and based on the independent samples t-test the difference was statistically significant. Vandalization of school property as a form of aggression was found to be higher amongst boys than girls by 5.2177 units and this was established to statistically significant implying that boys vandalized school property

more than girls. Based on the school type, aggressive behaviour was higher in boys' secondary schools than in girls' and mixed secondary schools and Girls' schools reported the lowest overall aggressive behaviour. This difference in aggression was found to be statistically significant at 5% level of significance.

#### V. RECOMMENDATION

Adolescents need knowledge and skills to cope with aggressive behaviour. Although different levels of anger, aggressive or violent behaviour exists, it is the duty of parents, teachers and the community to identify behaviour problems, implement effective behaviour modification and preventive programmes. Teachers and parents need empowerment to be able to fulfil this role. The study recommends that teachers put emphasis on life-skills.

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