

# Peer Culture, Conformity Pressure and Adolescent Aggression in Some Public Secondary Schools in the North West and Center Regions of Cameroon.

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## ABSTRACT

Adolescents in Cameroonian public secondary schools increasingly exhibit aggressive behaviours that deviate from expected social norms. This study examined how peer culture, alongside psychosocial determinants including shifts in parental role, quality of parental nurturing, peer influence, and conformity pressure shapes the social learning of aggression among adolescents. The study was guided by Erikson's psychosocial development theory, Bandura's social learning theory, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. A concurrent mixed-method research design was employed, collecting quantitative data from 435 Form Three and Four students using questionnaires and qualitative data from 100 parents through structured interviews. Findings revealed that 58.0% of students displayed various aggressive behaviours, 60.8% were significantly influenced by peers, 68.0% conformed to peer norms, 35.8% experienced shifts in parental roles, and 30.3% reported inadequate parental nurturing. Regression analyses indicated that peer influence and conformity pressure significantly increased adolescents' aggressive behaviours, while improved parental nurturing decreased them. The study highlights that peer culture plays a central role in socializing adolescents toward aggression, particularly when parental support is limited. Recommendations include fostering positive peer interactions, strengthening parental engagement, and restructuring school disciplinary systems to prevent and manage adolescent aggression effectively.

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Aggression, Peer Culture, Social Learning, Conformity Pressure, Parental Influence, Psychosocial Determinants, Cameroon

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Psychosocial determinants are developmental factors that influence an individual both psychologically and socially, shaping their capacity to cope with life events (Carson, Butcher & Mineka, 2000). Adolescents interact continually with their environments teachers, peers, and family members and negative experiences within these relationships may trigger psychosocial responses that manifest as aggression in schools (Izuchi & Anetoh, 2014).

These determinants combine psychological and social influences, representing the interplay between behavior and social context (Stansfeld & Rasul, 2007). Psychological determinants involve internal processes shaping thought and emotion, while social determinants refer to broader societal conditions (Arnett, 2000; Smith, 1999; Luckman, 2007). Together, they form the foundation of adolescent behavior, with variables such as age, gender, peer pressure, parental care, and social conditions contributing significantly to aggression (Crick, 2006; Berk, 2007).

Adolescent aggression arises from multiple causes genetic, environmental, and socialization factors (Dodge et al., 2006). Within families, parenting remains especially influential. Studies have explored harsh discipline and coercive practices (Prinz et al., 2006; Reid et al., 2000), yet less attention has been given to parental neglect and role shifts when caregiving is delegated to others (Rubab et al., 2009; Kemper, 1978).

Aggressive behavior among adolescents manifests as fighting, bullying, vandalism, and verbal hostility (Izuchi & Anetoh, 2014). In Cameroon, the move from extended to nuclear family systems has weakened traditional

parenting structures, intensifying psychosocial challenges (Tchombe, 2001; Nsamenang, 1992). A shift in parental roles where caregiving is outsourced reduces emotional availability and supervision, leaving adolescents vulnerable to peer pressure, substance abuse, and aggression (Griffin et al., 2000; Baron & Richardson, 1994; Bell & Baron, 1976). Inconsistent discipline and low parental warmth are linked to antisocial tendencies (Bamow et al., 2005), while nurturing parenting fosters emotional stability and social adjustment (Arim et al., 2011; Hassan et al., 2015; Hameed-ur-Rehman et al., 2012; Teoh, 2010).

Peer influence and conformity are equally powerful psychosocial forces. Peer pressure can shape either positive or negative behavior depending on the nature of the influence (Moyer, 1976; Tiina et al., 1998). Adolescents frequently imitate peers to gain social validation, which may lead to risk-taking or aggression (Berne, 1966). Conformity the alignment of attitudes and behaviors with group norms reveals the pressure to belong and fit in (Baumeister, 1998).

During adolescence, individuals undergo rapid psychological and social change, facing insecurity and conflict in their quest for identity (Lohman & Jarvis, 2000; Jaworski, 2000; Polak, 2010). Tensions with peers, teachers, and parents, coupled with competition for status, may trigger aggression whether physical (hitting, pushing) or verbal (mockery, threats) (Espelage, 2013; Voisin & Neilands, 2010). Adolescents mirror peer behavior to maintain social approval, a dynamic that, in contexts of aggression, encourages bullying and hostility (Tiina et al., 1998; Baumeister, 1998).

In Cameroon, socio-economic stress, weakened family systems, and limited school support have pushed adolescents toward peer groups for identity formation (Nsamenang, 1992; Tchombe, 2001). Overcrowded schools and inadequate counseling amplify these effects (Zinkeng & Daru, 2018; Rami & Daru, 2020). Aggression thus becomes a tool for asserting dominance or coping with frustration (Izuchi & Anetoh, 2014; Stansfeld & Rasul, 2007).

Theoretical frameworks reinforce these findings. Social Learning Theory posits that aggression is acquired through observation and imitation of peers (Bandura, 1973). Erikson's psychosocial model emphasizes that weak parental bonds and excessive peer reliance hinder identity formation, fostering maladaptive behavior such as aggression (Erickson, 1959; Nyaga, 2019).

Peer pressure, defined as the influence compelling individuals to conform to group behavior (Moos & Trickett, 1973), intensifies during adolescence when belonging and social acceptance become paramount (Arnett, 2000). Dishion and Dodge (2005) and Brown et al. (2008) found that fear of rejection often overrides moral reasoning, increasing susceptibility to deviance.

In Cameroon, negative peer influence is particularly common in urban and semi-urban schools where weak supervision normalizes aggression as dominance (Tchombe et al., 2014; Nkengasong, 2017). Gender expectations further shape these dynamics: boys often display physical aggression, while girls express relational aggression through exclusion or gossip (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974).

Conformity, the adoption of group norms for social acceptance (Cornell & Mayer, 2010), is rooted in adolescents' need for belonging and identity (Brown & Larson, 2009). When group norms reward aggression, conformity promotes violence rather than prosocial behavior (Salmivalli et al., 2011). This often manifests as bullying or physical fights reinforced by fear of rejection (Espelage et al., 2003). Cultural norms associating masculinity with aggression heighten these pressures (Tchute, 2018; Nyaga, 2014).

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) explains how adolescents internalize aggression by observing peers who are rewarded for such behavior. Similarly, the Normative Influence Model (Gao & Fung, 2015) shows how social acceptance pressures embed aggression into identity formation. Protective factors like parental attachment, role modeling, and mentoring programs help counter conformity to deviant norms.

Empirical studies affirm this connection. Espelage and Holt (2001) found that adolescents in aggressive peer groups were significantly more likely to engage in bullying and physical aggression ( $\beta = 0.47$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Wang et al. (2016) reported similar correlations across cultural contexts. In Cameroon, Atanga and Fon (2019) revealed

that adolescents in conflict-affected zones normalized aggression as a survival strategy ( $\beta = 0.39, p < 0.01$ ). Dishion et al. (1999) and Nwankwo & Akpan (2020) also confirmed that deviant peer clusters reinforce aggression through social rewards.

Further, Nkeng and Tabe (2021) and Tchombe (2006) emphasized that adolescents conform to peer norms to gain acceptance, often using aggression as a mark of maturity or power. Atanga and Tabe (2022) found that conformity to aggressive peer norms predicted physical aggression among students in Bamenda and Buea ( $\beta = 0.41, p < 0.01$ ). Agbor and Ndivi (2021) observed similar patterns among adolescents in groups that condoned violence ( $\beta = 0.58, p < 0.05$ ). Qualitative studies (Tchombe, 2011; Nkeng & Fon, 2021) show that Cameroonian peer cultures often glamorize aggression particularly among boys where physical dominance equates to status. Nsamenang (2004) observed that peer conformity can reinforce either prosocial or antisocial behavior, depending on cultural expectations.

Cameroon's socio-political instability and economic strain intensify adolescents' dependence on peers for belonging (McDougall & Vaillancourt, 2015; Tchombe, 2011). However, interventions like Peace Clubs (Njim & Tchente, 2018) and the Ministry of Secondary Education's School Safety Campaign have demonstrated success in reducing aggression through empathy-building and non-violence. Community-based initiatives and extracurricular programs (Mahoney et al., 2005) also provide constructive outlets that encourage positive peer identification.

Overall, peer culture and conformity pressures are powerful determinants of adolescent aggression in Cameroon. Addressing these influences through strengthened parental involvement, mentoring systems, and school-based psychosocial programs can foster healthier peer norms and reduce aggression among secondary school students.

## METHODS

This study adopted a concurrent mixed-method design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture both measurable patterns and lived experiences of aggression among adolescents. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires, while qualitative data came from semi-structured interviews. The dual approach provided comprehensive insights into how peer pressure and conformity foster aggression within schools.

The study was carried out in selected public secondary schools in Mezam Division (North West Region) and Mfoundi Division (Centre Region), representing both conflict-affected and urban environments. The population comprised students in Forms Three and Four, representing middle adolescence a stage characterized by heightened conformity and peer influence. Ten schools were selected five each from Bamenda I and III, and Yaoundé I and III subdivisions.

A total of 441 students were sampled using Epi-Info 7.0 (95% confidence, design effect 1.2), alongside 100 purposively selected parents for qualitative interviews. Probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to ensure representativeness and depth. Questionnaires contained 36 items across six sections, rated on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree–Strongly Disagree). The semi-structured interview guide had seven open-ended questions exploring parental views on peer influence and aggression. Instruments were bilingual (English/French) and validated for face, content, and construct validity. Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha  $\geq 0.70$ ) confirmed internal consistency.

Data were collected using the Direct Delivery Technique (DDT) with authorization from the University of Bamenda. Ethical principles of consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly followed. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 27, with descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson's correlation, linear regression, Gamma tests), while qualitative data were thematically analyzed to identify patterns of peer conformity, family environment, and social learning.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of findings began with the dependent variable before presentation of the independent variables that constitute the different research questions. The reason behind this approach was avoid presentation of hypotheses results between the independent and dependent variable while descriptive result of the dependent variable is at the end of the chapter. Therefore, it was logical to present descriptive findings for both variables before inferential findings (hypotheses) and finally findings derived from the qualitative data.

Table 1: Appraisal of Aggressive Behaviours by Students

Items	Stretched				Collapsed		Mean	Std. Dev
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD		
I often bully my mates	8 (1.8%)	60 (13.8%)	33 (7.6%)	334 (76.8%)	68 (15.6%)	367 (84.4%)	1.41	.793
It is okay for me to pinch my friends	44 (10.1%)	143 (32.9%)	224 (51.5%)	24 (5.5%)	187 (43.0%)	248 (57.0%)	2.48	.751
I often attack people for no specific reasons	16 (3.7%)	230 (52.9%)	75 (17.2%)	114 (26.2%)	246 (56.6%)	189 (43.4%)	2.54	.908
I often team up with friends against others	373 (85.7%)	37 (8.5%)	17 (3.9%)	8 (1.8%)	410 (94.3%)	25 (5.7%)	3.78	.600
I often carry along weapons (knife, nails, bottles, guns, blade etc.) to school	18 (4.1%)	9 (2.1%)	385 (88.5%)	23 (5.3%)	27 (6.2%)	408 (93.8%)	2.05	.487
I often use abusive language on people	26 (6.0%)	394 (90.6%)	7 (1.6%)	8 (1.8%)	420 (96.6%)	15 (3.4%)	3.81	.387
I often intimidate my mates	21 (4.8%)	387 (89.0%)	19 (4.4%)	8 (1.8%)	408 (93.8%)	27 (6.2%)	3.72	.406
<b>MRS and overall mean</b>	<b>506 (16.6%)</b>	<b>1260 (41.4%)</b>	<b>760 (25.0%)</b>	<b>519 (17.0%)</b>	<b>1766 (58.0%)</b>	<b>1279 (42.0%)</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>.619</b>

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree and SD= Strongly Disagree.

### Std. Dev; Standard Deviation

Findings showed that majority of students 96.6% (420) agreed to often use abusive language on people while 3.4% (15) disagreed. Similarly, 94.3% (410) of students accepted to often team up with friends against others while 5.7% (25) do not. More so, 93.8% (408) of students accepted to often intimidate mates while 6.2% (27) disagreed. Furthermore, 56.6% (246) of students agreed to often attack people for no specific reasons while 43.4% (248) disagreed.

To elucidate, 43.0% (187) of students finds it normal to pinch friends while 57.0% (248) disagreed. More so, 15.6% (68) of students agreed to often bully mates while 84.4% (367) do not. Finally, 6.2% (27) of students accepted to often carry weapons to school while 93.8% (408) do not.

In summary, 58.0% of students display several aggressive behaviours toward others while 42.0% do not and the overall mean of 2.83 above 2.5 confirm the significant presence of aggressive behaviours among students. This overall finding is also presented on figure below.

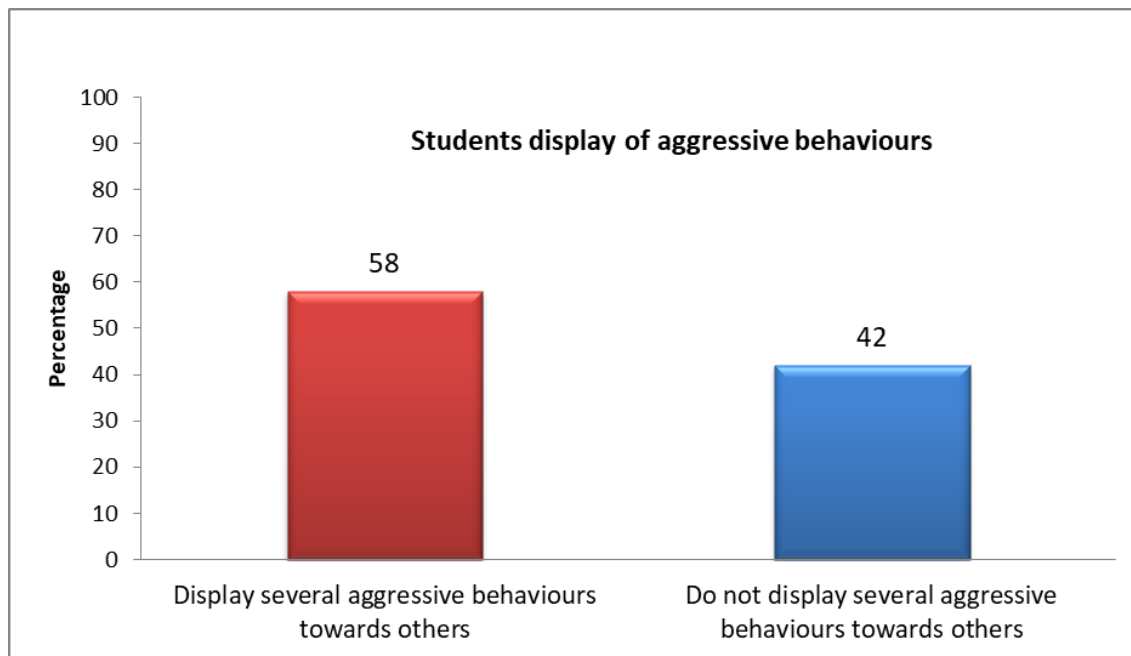


Figure 1: Distribution of Students by Display of Aggressive Behaviours

Table 2: Comparing Students' Aggressive Behaviour by Marital Status, Level of Education and Economic Status of Parents

Parents demographic data			Students' aggressive behaviour		Total based on MRS	Gamma Test of Association
			Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree		
Marital Status of Parents	Married	n	789	618	1407	G=0.091 p-value= 0.875
		%	56.1%	43.9%		
	Single	n	926	628	1554	
		%	59.6%	40.4%		
	Divorced	n	51	33	84	
		%	60.7%	39.3%		
Level of parent's Education	FSLC	n	440	337	777	G=0.101 p-value= 0.491
		%	56.6%	43.4%		

	GCE O/L	n	611	432	1043	
		%	58.6%	41.4%		
	GCE A/L	n	445	311	756	
		%	58.9%	41.1%		
	University Degree	n	248	186	434	
		%	57.1%	42.9%		
	Others	n	22	13	35	
		%	62.9%	37.1%		
Economic Status of Parents	Working	n	976	725	1701	G=0.124 p-value= 0.317
		%	57.4%	42.6%		
	Jobless	n	688	488	1176	
		%	58.5%	41.5%		
	Retired	n	65	40	105	
		%	61.9%	38.1%		
	Others	n	37	26	63	
		%	58.7%	41.3%		

Furthermore, when students' display of aggressive behaviour was examine by marital status, level of education, and economic status of parents, findings showed that in as much there were no significant differences (p-values > 0.05), by marital status, students from divorced home display aggressive behaviours more 60.7%, followed by those from single parents 59.6%. And by economic status of parents, more students from retired parents 61.9% display several aggressive behaviours followed by jobless parents 58.5%.

### Research Question 1: How does peer influence, affects adolescents' aggressive behaviour?

Table 3: Appraisal of Peer Influence

Items	Stretched				Collapsed		Mean	Std. Dev
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD		
My friends want me to agree to what they say.	39 (8.9%)	376 (86.4%)	17 (3.9%)	3 (0.7%)	415 (95.4%)	20 (4.6%)	3.89	.394
I believe strongly in what my friends say to me.	378 (86.9%)	28 (6.4%)	17 (3.9%)	12 (2.8%)	406 (93.3%)	29 (6.7%)	3.87	.647
My friends expect me to join them in	60	94	233	48	154	281	2.41	.857

leaving school before time.	(13.8%)	(21.6%)	(53.6%)	(11.0%)	(35.4%)	(64.6%)		
I always agree with my friends even if they are wrong.	39 (9.0%)	378 (86.9%)	13 (3.0%)	5 (1.1%)	417 (95.9%)	18 (4.1%)	3.84	.406
I prefer taking advise from my friends than my parents.	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.5%)	399 (91.7%)	33 (7.6%)	2 (0.5%)	433 (99.5%)	1.93	.278
My friends are more important to me than family members.	17 (3.9%)	33 (7.6%)	372 (85.5%)	13 (3.0%)	50 (11.5%)	385 (88.5%)	2.12	.497
I often do things with my friends that are socially unacceptable	23 (5.3%)	383 (88.0%)	15 (3.4%)	14 (3.2%)	406 (93.3%)	29 (6.7%)	3.75	.463
<b>MRS and overall mean</b>	<b>556</b> <b>(18.3%)</b>	<b>1294</b> <b>(42.5%)</b>	<b>1066</b> <b>(35.0%)</b>	<b>129</b> <b>(4.2%)</b>	<b>1850</b> <b>(60.8%)</b>	<b>1195</b> <b>(39.2%)</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>.506</b>

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree and SD= Strongly Disagree.

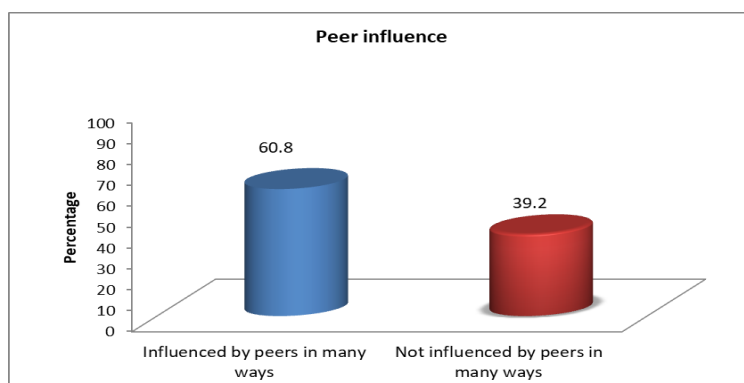
### Std. Dev; Standard Deviation

Findings showed that majority of students 95.9% (417) accepted of always aligning with friends even when they are wrong while 4.1% (18) do not. Similarly, 95.4% (415) of students accepted that they friends always want them to agree with that they say while 4.6% (20) disagreed. More so, 93.3% (406) of students of equal proportion agreed to strongly believe in that they friends say and often do things with friends that are socially unacceptable while 6.7% (29) do not.

Again, 35.4% (154) of students accepted that their friends expect them to join them in leaving school before time while 64.6% (281) disagreed. Moreover, 11.5% (50) of students see their friends more important to them than family members while 88.5% (385) disagreed. Finally, majority of students 99.5% (433) disagreed to prefer taking advice from their friends than their parents.

In summary, 60.8% of students are influence by peers in many ways while 39.2% are not and the overall mean of 3.16 above 3.0 on 4 implies that peer influence is highly visible among the students. This overall finding is also presented on the figure below.

Figure 2: Distribution of Students by Peer Influence



**Table 4: Comparing Students' Fall to Peer Influence by Marital Status, Level of Education and Economic Status of Parents**

Parents demographic data			Peer influence		Total based on MRS	Gamma Test of Association
			Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree		
Marital Status of Parents	Married	n	867	540	1407	G=0.092 p-value=0.864
		%	61.6%	38.4%		
	Single	n	931	623	1554	
		%	59.9%	40.1%		
	Divorced	n	52	32	84	
		%	61.9%	38.1%		
Level of parent's Education	FSLC	n	465	312	777	G=0.98 p-value=0.811
		%	59.8%	40.2%		
	GCE O/L	n	645	398	1043	
		%	61.8%	38.2%		
	GCE A/L	n	454	302	756	
		%	60.1%	39.9%		
	University Degree	n	263	171	434	
		%	60.6%	39.4%		
	Others	n	23	12	35	
		%	65.7%	34.3%		
Economic Status of Parents	Working	n	1031	670	1701	G=0.186 p-value=0.392
		%	60.6%	39.4%		
	Jobless	n	710	466	1176	
		%	60.4%	39.6%		
	Retired	n	69	36	105	
		%	65.7%	34.3%		
	Others	n	40	23	63	
		%	63.5%	36.5%		

Comparatively, when students' fall for peer influence was examined by marital status of parents, their level of education, and economic status, no significant differences were observed ( $p$ -values  $> 0.05$ ). In fact, our findings showed that majority of students ranging from 59.9% to 65.7% irrespective of whether their parents are married, single, divorced, high or low level of education, rich or poor were more prey to peer influence.

### Testing of Hypothesis 1

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Peer influence does not influence adolescents' aggressive behaviours.

**H<sub>a3</sub>:** Peer influence influences adolescents' aggressive behaviours

Table 5: Predictive Influence of Peer Influence and Adolescents Aggressive Behaviours

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	18.544	1.253		14.794	.000
Peer influence	.427	.065	.420	5.911	.003
Zero-order correlation	.420				
<b>Model Summary</b>					
R	.420 <sup>a</sup>				
R Square	.400				
Std. Error of the Estimate	1.949				
<b>ANOVA<sup>a</sup></b>					
F	5.169				
p-value	.003 <sup>b</sup>				
n	434				

Dependent Variable: Aggressive behaviour

Statistically, the findings showed that peer influence does has a significant influence on the adolescents' aggressive behaviour (Zero order correlation value = 0.420,  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ ). The coefficient value revealed that for every unit of peer influence, adolescents' aggressive behaviours is more likely to increase by 0.420, significant at 1% level. In other words, the adolescents were predicted more likely to develop unhealthy behaviours by 40.0% (R Square = 0.400) when peer influence significantly increases negatively. Therefore, the hypothesis that states peer influence influences adolescents' aggressive behaviours was accepted.

Table 6: Parents' Opinion on Whom their Children Listen More to and Why

Who the children listens more to and why	Justifications	
	Themes	Quotations
Parents	Well-disciplined/	"They listen more to me. This is can observed from the level of discipline they portray. Also, seldom do violate my orders or

	respect instructions	<p>instructions, but there are instances they are overwhelmed by peer pressure though.”</p> <p>“I think they listen more to me because I told them no one comes home after 5pm. So, they should make sure when they close from school, they hurry up. I also told them to carry drinking water every morning before going to school and all these instructions have always been followed.”</p> <p>“Yes, because they listen to my instructions.”</p> <p>“My children listen to me more because when I am not around, I give them instructions and they always obey them.”</p> <p>“I think they pay more attention to the trainings I give them because I don’t allow them to interact very closely with friends.”</p> <p>“I have the impression that they listen to me more because whenever I give instructions, they follow and strictly respect them.”</p>
	Build trust	<p>“They listen to me because I have created them to confide and trust me only.”</p> <p>“They listens more to me because I have make them to have trust in me during our interactions.”</p> <p>“Yes, we are more like friends and they trust me with their problems.”</p> <p>“They listen to me more because I have made them to have complete trust in my words and actions.”</p>
	Advice	<p>“My children listens more to me than their friends because most at times, they bring relevant friends for me to advise them and so, as a parent, I treat my children friends like mine.”</p> <p>“They listen to me more as a parent because I always advise them on the disadvantages of disobeying.”</p> <p>“They listen to me more reason being that I give them advised.”</p>
	Good care and concern	<p>“They listen more to their parents because of the good care and concern I show to them more than their friends.”</p> <p>“My children listen to me more because despite that I close late from work, I still create time to give them the care they deserves and listen to them.”</p>
	Control friendship	<p>“Yes, they do because we don’t allow them to associate with bad friends.”</p> <p>“Yes, my children spend more time with me because I always create a friendly atmosphere with them while communicating.”</p>

	Listen to children	<p>“They listen to me more because I give them listening ear at all times and when we are home from our ends, I discuss with them on the disadvantages of listening to friends who are of bad influence.”</p> <p>“They listen to me more as their parent.”</p>
Friends	Occupy more with work	<p>“My children listen to me but sometimes influence by peers especially as they are adolescent.”</p> <p>“Friends because I am often busy with work and spend less time with the children.”</p> <p>“They listen more from their friends than me because I spend less time with them.”</p>
	Hardly be around	<p>“I think they listen more to their friends because I am never there to spend time with them.”</p> <p>“The listen to me but sometimes as children because of stubbornness, they listen to friends.”</p>
	Influence by peers	<p>“Yes, they listen to me but sometimes influence by their peers.”</p>

Furthermore, assessing peer influence from the perspective of some parents in their children, many said their children listen more to them (their parents) while few said their children instead listen more to friends over their parents.

Among the parents that said their children listen more them and not their friends, their dominant reason is that their children are well-disciplined and respect their instructions as narrated in some of their statements “..They listen more to me. This is can observed from the level of discipline they portray. Also, seldom do violate my orders or instructions, but there are instances they are overwhelmed by peer pressure though...”, “...I have the impression that they listen to me more because whenever I give instructions, they follow and strictly respect them...”

Another reason is that they have made their children to have trust in them as explained in the statements “...Yes, we are more like friends and they trust me with their problems...”, “...They listen to me more because I have made them to have complete trust in my words and actions...”

Another reason put forward is that they advise their children as explained “..My children listens more to me than their friends because most at times, they bring relevant friends for me to advise them and so, as a parent, I treat my children friends like mine...”

Moreover, some parents opined that they take good care and show concern to their children as depicted in the statement “...They listen more to their parents because of the good care and concern I show to them more than their friends...”

Furthermore, some parents justified that their children listen to them because they control their friendship as narrated “...Yes, they do because we don’t allow them to associate with bad friends...”

Finally, some children listen to the parents and not their friends because their parents listen to them as children as explained “...They listen to me more because I give them listening ear at all times and when we are home from our ends, I discuss with them on the disadvantages of listening to friends who are of bad influence...”

On the other hand, for children that do listen more from their friends and not their parents, one of the reason was that their parents are too occupy with work and spend less time with them as explained "...They listen more from their friends than me because I spend less time with them because of my work schedule..."

Another reason is that their parents are hardly around /home to spend time with their children as explained "...I think they listen more to their friends because I am never there to spend time with them..."

The last reason is that the children listen more from their friends because of peer influence as narrated "...Yes, they listen to me but sometimes influence by their peers..."

In conclusion, children who listen more to the parents over friends was because they are well-discipline, their parents listen to their problems, control their friendship, advise them, build trust with them, and receive good care and concern from parents while for children who listen more from friends over their parents, their reasons were that their parents were too occupy with work, spend less time with them, are hardly present at home because of work, and are influence by peers. Thus, we could see that some parents who spend less time with their children has caused their children to listen more to their friends resulting to peer influence as reported.

Table 7: Parents' Opinion if their Children Spend More Time with Family Members or Friends and Why

Themes	Quotations
Friends	<p>"They spend more time with friends. This is because they are always in school."</p> <p>"They spend much time with friends because I and other family members are hardly at home when they need us."</p> <p>"Out of home, my children spend more time with friends since they are always with them in the school."</p> <p>"Friends because school takes more of their time and as such, they have more time with their friends."</p> <p>"Since I am here with the children and close late most of the time, they spend more time with friends."</p> <p>"My children spend more time with friends in the school and even when they are back home and spend little time with family members."</p> <p>"My children do not spend more time with family members, rather, they spend more time with classmates who are their friends."</p> <p>"They spend more time with friends because they are always in school."</p> <p>"My children spend more time with the nanny and sometimes with friends given that family members are not around."</p>
Family members	<p>"Family members living with us and they have opportunity to go for holidays."</p> <p>"Aside school period, the rest of the time, they are home with family members, but they might once a while visit their friends."</p> <p>"They spend much time with family."</p> <p>"Family members leaving in the house because they are always ready to assist in their school work. Their needs and expectations are even frequently expressed to the family members."</p>

	<p>“My children spend much time with the family because we don’t have neighbours.”</p> <p>“They spend more time with family members. They seldom go out to visit friends.”</p> <p>“My children spend more time with family members than friends.”</p> <p>“Family members because of the short time they have around friends which is when they are in school.”</p> <p>“They spend more time with family members than friends.”</p>
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Furthermore, when parents were asked between family members and friends, who do their children spend more time with, many of them said friends and some said family members.

For parents that said their children spend more time with friends over family members, their dominant reason is because their children spend more time with friends at school as narrated in the statements “...Out of home, my children spend more time with friends since they are always with them in the school...”, “...Friends because school takes more of their time and as such, they have more time with their friends...”

Another reason is that because they as parents close late from work most often which makes it difficult to spend more time with their children as explained “...Since I am here with the children and close late most of the time, they spend more time with friends....”

On the other hand, for parents that said their children spend more time with family members over friends, their reason was that their children spend time more with family members at home as narrated in the statements ‘...Aside school period, the rest of the time, they are home with family members, but they might once a while visit their friends...’, “...Family members leaving in the house because they are always ready to assist in their school work. Their needs and expectations are even frequently expressed to the family members...”

In conclusion, findings showed that between family members and friends, the children spend more time with friends with reasons been that they spend more time with friends in school and their parents are rarely available at home due to work for them to spend quality time them and family members.

## Research Question 2: How does conformity pressure influences adolescents’ aggressive behavior in adolescents?

Table 8: Appraisal of Conformity Pressure

Items	Stretched				Collapsed		Mean	Std. Dev
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD		
I agree with my friends to take cigarettes	4 (0.9%)	6 (1.4%)	3393 (90.3%)	32 (7.4%)	10 (2.3%)	425 (97.7%)	1.96	.350
I accept to drink alcohol to please my friends	27 (6.2%)	380 (87.4%)	13 (3.0%)	15 (3.4%)	407 (93.6%)	28 (6.4%)	3.80	.479
The first time I took a drug is when my friends introduced me to.	9 (2.1%)	377 (86.7%)	23 (5.3%)	26 (6.0%)	386 (88.7%)	49 (11.3%)	3.55	.539
I will not entertain anyone who opposes my relationship with my	12 (2.8%)	14 (3.2%)	21 (4.8%)	388 (89.2%)	26 (6.0%)	409 (94.0%)	1.20	.623

friends even they did something very harmful to others.								
I always agree with my friends even if everyone thinks they are wrong	15 (3.4%)	401 (92.2%)	17 (3.9%)	2 (0.5%)	416 (95.6%)	19 (4.4%)	3.90	.303
I always feel bad when prevented from seeing my friends.	21 (4.8%)	390 (89.7%)	14 (3.2%)	10 (2.3%)	411 (94.5%)	24 (5.5%)	3.87	.415
To maintain my status in my group of friends, I pressurize my parents to buy me things.	386 (88.7%)	29 (6.7%)	7 (1.6%)	13 (3.0%)	415 (95.4%)	20 (4.6%)	3.88	.604
<b>MRS and overall mean</b>	<b>474</b> <b>(15.6%)</b>	<b>1597</b> <b>(52.4%)</b>	<b>488</b> <b>(16.0%)</b>	<b>486</b> <b>(16.0%)</b>	<b>2071</b> <b>(68.0%)</b>	<b>974</b> <b>(32.0%)</b>	<b>3.17</b>	<b>.473</b>

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree and SD= Strongly Disagree.

### Std. Dev; Standard Deviation

Findings showed that majority of students 95.6% (416) accepted to always agree with friends even when others think they are wrong while 4.4% (19) disagreed. Similarly, 95.4% (415) of students agreed to maintain status in their group of friends by pressurizing their parents to buy them things while 4.6% (20) do not. More so, 93.6% (407) of students accepted to drink alcohol to please friends while 6.4% (28) do not. In a similar trend, 94.5% (411) of students accepted to feel bad when prevented from seeing friends while 5.5% (24) disagreed.

Furthermore, 88.7% (386) of students accepted that their first time they take drug was due to introduction from friends while 11.3% (49) disagreed. On the contrary, 94.0% (409) indicated that they will entertain anyone who opposes their friends for doing something very harmful to others while 6.0% (26) did not. Finally, 2.3% (10) of students agreed to smoke cigarettes because of friends while 97.7% (425) denied of smoking.

In overall, 68.0% of students conform to pressure from others in many aspects while 32.0% do not and the overall mean of 3.17 implies that conformity to pressure is significant among the students. This overall finding is also presented on the figure below.

Figure 3: Distribution of Students by Conformity to Pressure

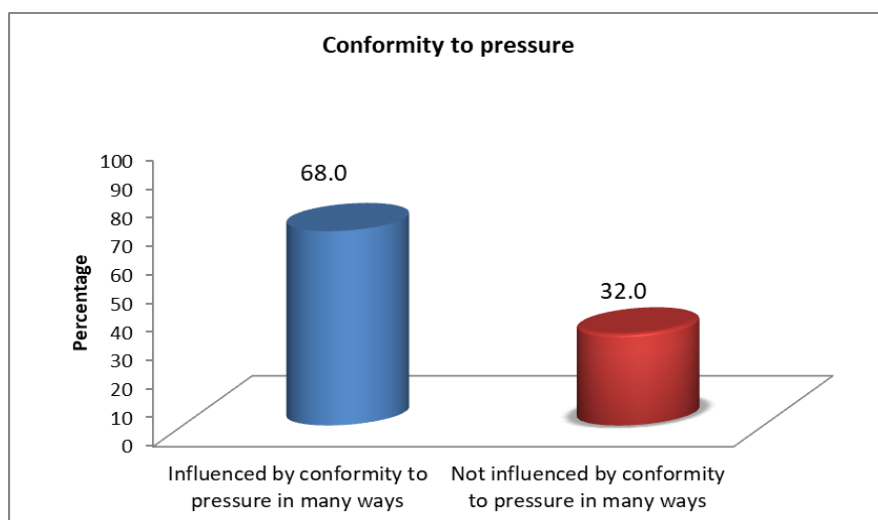


Table 9: Comparing Students' Fall to Conformity Pressure by Marital Status, Level of Education and Economic Status of Parents

Parents demographic data			Conformity pressure		Total based on MRS	Gamma Test of Association
			Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree		
Marital Status of Parents	Married	n	953	454	1407	G= 0.094 p-value=0.873
		%	67.7%	32.3%		
	Single	n	1062	492	1554	
		%	68.3%	31.7%		
	Divorced	n	56	28	84	
		%	66.7%	33.3%		
Level of parent's Education	FSLC	n	533	244	777	G=0.095 p-value=0.879
		%	68.6%	31.4%		
	GCE O/L	n	713	330	1043	
		%	68.4%	31.6%		
	GCE A/L	n	510	246	756	
		%	67.5%	32.5%		
	University Degree	n	292	142	434	
		%	67.3%	32.7%		
	Others	n	23	12	35	
		%	65.7%	34.3%		
Economic Status of Parents	Working	n	1152	549	1701	G=0.162 p-value=0.365
		%	67.7%	32.3%		
	Jobless	n	801	375	1176	
		%	68.1%	31.9%		
	Retired	n	71	34	105	
		%	67.6%	32.4%		
	Others	n	47	16	63	
		%	74.6%	25.4%		

Comparatively, when students' conformity to pressure was examined by marital status of parents, their level of education, and economic status, no significant differences were observed ( $p$ -values  $> 0.05$ ). In fact, our findings showed that majority of students ranging from 65.7% to 74.6% irrespective of whether their parents are married, single, divorced, high or low level of education, rich or poor were more exposed to conformity to pressure from mates.

### Testing of Hypothesis 2:

**H<sub>04</sub>:** Conformity pressure does not influence adolescents' aggressive behaviours

**H<sub>a4</sub>:** Conformity influences adolescents' aggressive behaviours

Table 10: Predictive Influence of Conformity Pressure and Adolescents Aggressive Behaviours

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	16.878	1.361		12.404	.000
Conformity pressure	.461	.072	.441	7.949	.002
Zero-order correlation	.441				
Model Summary					
R	.441 <sup>a</sup>				
R Square	.402				
Std. Error of the Estimate	1.948				
ANOVA <sup>a</sup>					
F	7.120				
p-value	.002 <sup>b</sup>				
n	434				

### Dependent Variable: Aggressive behaviour

Statistically, the findings showed that conformity pressure does has a significant influence on the adolescents' aggressive behaviour (Zero order correlation value = 0.441,  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ ). The coefficient value revealed that for every unit of conformity pressure, adolescents' aggressive behaviours is more likely to increase by 0.441, significant at 1% level. In other words, the adolescents were predicted more likely to develop unhealthy behaviours by 40.2% (R Square = 0.402) when conformity pressure significantly increases negatively. Therefore, the hypothesis that states conformity pressure influences adolescents' aggressive behaviours was accepted.

Table 11: Parents' Opinion if their Children Take Side with Friends even When Wrong and Why

Children taking friends side even when wrong	Justifications	
	Themes	Quotations

Yes	Friends to ensure protection	<p>“My children always speak good about their friends and will always want to hide and protect their friends.”</p> <p>“In the school setting, they will site with their friends, but back home, I have not observed a situation where they deliberately site with friends.”</p> <p>“Yes, my children prefer to take side with their friends even when they know that their friends are wrong because they are afraid that their friend will be punished and because they wanted their friends to also hide them when they do wrong.”</p>
No	Instil good morals	<p>“No, they don’t. I have schooled them against telling lies.”</p> <p>“No, they can’t take side with their friends when they are wrong because the little time I spend with them, I make sure I instil in them to know what is wrong from what is good.”</p> <p>“They don’t because I give them good home trainings”.</p> <p>“No. My children have been trained to do morally upright and would not accept wrong.”</p> <p>“No, they will hardly take side with their friends. They use their discretion to judge and by blame where is due.”</p> <p>“Not at all because I have brought them up morally.”</p> <p>“I don’t think so because I have made them to put family first.”</p> <p>“They don’t take side with bad friends because of the good training I try to give them.”</p>
	Listen by parents	<p>“My children cannot team up with friends against me because I always give them a listening ear.”</p> <p>“I listen to what they share with friends and try to advise them on what is good and bad.”</p> <p>“No because they have been always groom to listen to their parents.”</p>
	Report bad friend	<p>“I don’t think so because they report friends to me when they do something wrong and also because I bring them in a Godly way so that they have a healthy conscience.”</p>
	Seek advice	<p>“I don’t think so because I noticed they change always. They ask my opinion before doing anything.”</p>
Not sure	Don’t know	<p>“I do not know.”</p> <p>“I can’t give a concrete answer to that because I am not with them when they are with friends.”</p>

With reference to conformity pressure, when parents were asked if their children take side with friends even when they are wrong, some accepted while many denied and some undecided. Among the parents that accepted, they said their children sometimes take side with friends even when their friends have done wrong because they want to protect them and themselves as narrated in the statements "...My children always speak good about their friends and will always want to hide and protect their friends...", "...In the school setting, they will site with their friends, but back home, I have not observed a situation where they deliberately site with friends..."

On the other hand, for parents that deny their children of siding with friends even when they are wrong, one of their reason is because they have instill good moral in their children as explained "...No, they don't. I have schooled them against telling lies...", "...No, they can't take side with their friends when they are wrong because the little time I spend with them, I make sure I instil in them to know what is wrong from what is good..."

Another reason is that their children listen to them as their parents and their friends as explained "...I listen to what they share with friends and try to advise them on what is good and bad..." Another reason is that their children even report bad friends to them as and seek parental advise as explained "...I don't think so because they report friends to me when they do something wrong and also because I bring them in a Godly way so that they have a healthy conscience..."

In conclusion, there were parents who reported that their children take side with friends even when they know they have done wrong while some parents uncertain and others completely deny that their children do not have such behaviours because they are well trained, take advise, and listen to their parents.

Table 12: Parents' Opinion if their Children are Under Pressure to Team up Against Them

Themes	Quotations
No	<p>"No. I am a good parent."</p> <p>"No, I have also made my children to know that they should never be put under pressure by anyone."</p> <p>"Never."</p> <p>"No."</p> <p>"My children are not any under kind of pressure because they are well trained."</p> <p>"No."</p> <p>"No, I have not observed any trend of that name."</p> <p>"No, they give me the preference over their friends and love me and will never team up."</p> <p>"Capital no."</p> <p>"Not at all. This is because I advise them, pray with them, and culture them properly. I also listen to them to better know their problems or difficulties."</p> <p>"No. I sometimes talk with my children friends to know who they are, their behaviour and mind set."</p>
Don't know	<p>"Not sure."</p> <p>"I don't think."</p>

Finally, when the parents were asked if their children are under pressure by friends to fight against them, their parents, many said so as depicted in the statements "...No, they give me the preference over their friends and love me and will never team up...", "...Not at all. This is because I advise them, pray with them, and culture them properly. I also listen to them to better know their problems or difficulties..." On the other hand, some parents were uncertain about their children and friends.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that peer influence has a significant impact on adolescents' aggressive behaviour. Adolescents exposed to strong negative peer influences were more likely to develop unhealthy and aggressive behaviours. While a few students benefited positively from supportive peers, the majority were affected negatively. This supports the idea that since adolescents spend considerable time with peers, especially in schools, peer influence becomes a major determinant of behaviour.

Some adolescents reported listening more to their parents than to their friends, particularly those from homes where parents were emotionally available, attentive, and disciplined. Such parents provided guidance and open communication, fostering trust and emotional security. Conversely, adolescents whose parents were frequently absent or preoccupied with work were more susceptible to peer pressure. In these cases, peers often substituted parental presence, sometimes leading to undesirable behaviours.

These findings echo Tiina et al. (1998), who noted that peer influence can be either positive or negative, depending on its strength and direction. Adolescents, in their quest for acceptance, often compromise individuality to fit in (Berne, 1966). Steinberg (1990) described peer pressure as one of the most challenging aspects of adolescence, urging parents to adopt friendly and understanding communication. The effects of peer pressure are intensified when adolescents already exhibit behavioural issues such as Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) or Conduct Disorder (Berkowitz, 1993).

As adolescents seek independence from parents, their identification with peers strengthens (Szyndrowski, 1999). They often conform to group norms to gain self-esteem and identity, even when these norms contradict personal values (Brown et al., 1986). However, as identity develops, dependence on peer approval typically decreases. Sutcliffe (1996) further noted that peer relationships combine personal traits, attitudes, and family influences to shape adolescent behaviour.

Although peer influence is frequently viewed negatively, research also highlights its positive aspects. Peer groups can foster empathy, communication skills, and self-awareness (Cava, Musitu & Murgui, 2007; Estévez, 2013). Supportive friendships improve self-esteem and encourage healthy coping mechanisms (Olweus, 1993). Thus, peer influence is not inherently harmful but requires proper guidance and balance.

Individual traits also determine how adolescents respond to peer pressure. Those with anxiety or low self-esteem are more likely to yield to negative influences to avoid rejection (Marshall, 1992; Mestre, 2012). Family characteristics further shape this dynamic: adolescents from homes with low parental monitoring or inconsistent discipline are more vulnerable to antisocial peer pressure (Steinberg, 1987; Moos & Trickett, 1973).

Neurological studies show that adolescents exhibit heightened sensitivity to peer-related stimuli, which increases the likelihood of risky or aggressive behaviour (Burnett et al., 2011; Pfeifer et al., 2011). Arnett (2000) found that social exclusion heightens aggressive responses, while loneliness aggravates them. Similarly, Wakoli (2016) demonstrated that adolescents' desire for peer approval strongly predicts conformity to aggressive norms.

Overall, these findings support the results of the current study, confirming that peer influence plays a dominant role in shaping adolescents' aggressive behaviour especially where parental guidance and supervision are weak.

The study also revealed that conformity pressure significantly influences adolescent aggression. Many adolescents were found to align with peer expectations and group norms even when such norms encouraged aggression or misconduct. A substantial number reported siding with friends despite recognizing their wrongdoing, while only a few resisted.

These findings align with Aluede (2011) and Ang & Goh (2006), who observed that individuals under social pressure tend to conform to group expectations to gain approval. Adolescents, being at a stage where social acceptance is crucial, often prioritize belongingness over moral judgment. Conformity serves as a psychological adjustment that modifies behaviour to align with group expectations (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). The degree of conformity depends on group size, cohesion, and familiarity (Lively et al., 2006; Leets & Sunwolf, 2005).

In this study, conformity emerged both as a social survival strategy and a behavioural vulnerability. Adolescents fearing isolation or bullying often conformed to avoid exclusion, even when it resulted in aggression. Gao, Zhang & Fung (2015) describe this as an internal conflict between personal values and collective norms. Adolescents unable to assert independence often experience stress, anxiety, or depression conditions that may heighten aggression.

Teresa Jiménez and Moreno (2018), in a cross-cultural study, found that opportunities and peer support for aggression significantly predicted adolescent aggression across contexts. Similarly, Adelman (1987) demonstrated that family cohesion and parental monitoring reduce such tendencies, indicating that strong family bonds can buffer conformity pressure.

Erikson's (1959) psychosocial theory helps explain this pattern. During the stage of identity versus role confusion, adolescents strive to define themselves amidst competing social influences. When parental or community guidance is weak, they rely heavily on peers for validation, which heightens conformity and aggressive tendencies.

The findings of this study corroborate these theories and empirical results, confirming that conformity pressure especially when coupled with poor parental supervision and limited emotional support significantly increases aggressive behaviour among adolescents.

From both peer influence and conformity, a clear pattern emerges: the quality of social relationships and parental involvement determines whether adolescents channel their experiences positively or negatively. Those with strong parental guidance, emotional support, and positive peer networks exhibit lower aggression, while those lacking these supports are more vulnerable to peer and conformity pressures.

These results highlight the need for parental engagement, peer education, and school-based programs that promote emotional intelligence, assertiveness, and positive socialization. Such interventions can help adolescents resist negative social pressures and develop healthier behavioural patterns.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that peer culture plays a decisive role in the social learning of aggression among adolescents in Cameroon. The need for belonging and group identity often predisposes them to imitate the behaviours and attitudes of peers. When social environments normalize aggression through teasing, dominance, or competition, adolescents internalize these behaviours as acceptable coping or survival mechanisms.

Conformity itself is not inherently negative but becomes problematic when it compels adolescents to act against personal values. In many Cameroonian schools, limited mentorship, weak moral guidance, and poor parental supervision reinforce peer conformity, making aggression a socially accepted and rewarded behaviour.

The findings reinforce Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which posits that behaviour is learned through observation and imitation of social models. In this case, peers act as powerful models shaping daily interactions and behavioural scripts.

In conclusion, aggression among adolescents in Cameroonian secondary schools is not just an individual issue but a socially conditioned outcome a reflection of the learning that occurs within peer networks and family systems. Addressing it requires strengthening both individual competencies and the wider social environment influencing adolescent behaviour.

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## Contribution to Knowledge and Counselling

This study contributes to existing knowledge by offering a context-specific understanding of how peer influence and conformity pressure operate within Cameroonian schools to shape adolescents' aggressive behaviour. Unlike most studies that generalize Western theories of adolescent aggression, this research situates social learning within a localized socio-cultural framework, where peer approval, communal identity, and family structure play distinct roles.

The study provides the following specific contributions:

### Contextual Insight:

It expands the literature by empirically demonstrating that peer culture in Cameroon is a dominant context for the transmission of aggressive norms, influenced by socio-economic conditions and weak parental presence.

### Integrated Framework for Counselling:

The findings highlight the need for school counsellors to adopt a social systems approach addressing not just individual students but also their peer groups, classroom dynamics, and family background.

### Evidence-Based Guidance for Practitioners:

Counsellors and educators can use the findings to design peer mentoring programmes, assertiveness training, and behaviour modification strategies that help adolescents resist negative social pressures.

### Policy Relevance:

The study informs policymakers and school administrators about the need to strengthen guidance and counselling units in schools, incorporating peer mediation and socio-emotional learning into the curriculum.

From a counselling perspective, the study underlines the importance of group counselling interventions that address conformity tendencies and social identity development. Counsellors should help adolescents:

Build self-awareness and self-esteem,

Develop critical thinking and decision-making skills, and

Learn non-aggressive ways of asserting individuality and coping with peer pressure.

By fostering these skills, counselling can transform peer culture from a breeding ground of aggression into a supportive environment for healthy social learning.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

### For Parents:

Strengthen parental supervision and communication to reduce adolescents' overdependence on peer influence.

Create emotionally supportive home environments where adolescents can express their challenges freely.

### For Schools and Educators:

Establish and equip functional guidance and counselling units to address behavioural and emotional issues among students.

Integrate peer education and life skills training into the curriculum to promote prosocial behaviours.

Encourage teachers to serve as role models and mentors, promoting positive peer interactions and conflict resolution.

For Counsellors:

Implement group counselling and peer mentorship programmes to counteract conformity pressures.

Use behavioural modification and cognitive restructuring techniques to help students understand the consequences of aggression and develop alternative responses.

For Policymakers:

Develop national frameworks for school-based mental health and psychosocial support, emphasizing adolescent development.

Promote awareness campaigns on peer influence and aggression prevention through partnerships between ministries, NGOs, and community leaders.

For Future Research:

Conduct longitudinal studies to explore how peer relationships evolve over time and their long-term impact on aggression.

Examine the intersection of social media, peer identity, and aggression, given the growing digital interaction among adolescents.

Adolescents are not inherently aggressive; rather, they learn aggression as a social response to environmental pressures. The challenge, therefore, lies in transforming those environments homes, schools, and peer networks into spaces that cultivate empathy, respect, and non-violence. When guided effectively, peer culture can become not a source of chaos, but a channel for character building, resilience, and positive social learning in Cameroon.

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