

THE EXPERIENCE AND EFFECTS OF BULLYING AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ILISAN-REMO, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Bullying which is a form of aggressive behaviour in which someone intentionally or repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort is on the front burner among the social issues faced by adolescents nowadays, especially among secondary school students. This has impacted negatively on the psychosocial development of the adolescents and has also impacted on the academic wellbeing of the students. There has been little or no attention drawn towards this lately and it is gradually becoming the order of the day. This study, therefore, examined the experience and effects of bullying on secondary school students in Ilisan High School, Ilisan. A self-developed questionnaire with reliability index of 0.724 was used as the main research instrument. A sample size of 332 students was drawn from various secondary schools to elicit information for the study. Data collected were analyzed and findings revealed that secondary school students are being bullied and it is negatively affecting their wellbeing. The study concluded that various stakeholders in education of the adolescent should wake up to their responsibilities in curbing the menace of bullying. All hands must be on deck to curb this menace among secondary school students.

Keywords: *Bullying, secondary school, adolescents, psychosocial development*

Introduction

Over the last 20 years, great attention has been directed towards bullying and its negative impact on students, both in Nigeria and the world at large (Adeoye, 2018). Most secondary school students in Southwestern Nigeria experienced high levels of peer victimization (Popoola, 2017). Data

collected on the prevalence of this phenomenon among secondary school students revealed that 70.6% of the study sample reported high level of peer victimization while 27% and 2.1% reported moderate and low levels of peer victimization respectively. Studies also

revealed attack on property as the most frequent form of peer victimization, followed by physical victimization and social manipulation. The high proportion of students who reported high level of peer victimization with regard to attack on property and physical victimization appears worrisome. This suggests the existence of a serious problem that may have far-reaching effects on children's emotional and social development and by logical extension, impact negatively on the psychosocial wellbeing of the entire Nigerian society (Owoaje and Ndubisi, 2017).

Peer victimization is a social issue requiring the immediate attention of school authorities in Nigeria. According to Popoola (2017), it is reasonable that the exposure of young people to bullying and victimization while in school normally generates high level of social aggression which may persist into adulthood in the form of criminality, marital violence, child abuse and sexual harassment. These negative impacts extend beyond the victims of peer victimization to their family members, the community and the entire nation. The high level of peer victimization is probably one of the early signs of anti-social behaviour that eventually culminates in youth violence and violent crimes in the Nigerian society.

Bullying occurs mostly among children and adolescents in any setting like workplace, schools and others (Owoyemi and Oyelere, 2016). During elementary schools, bullying is consistently more prevalent among boys than among girls. However the prevalence in each sex decreases during junior high school and continues to decrease into high school. Boys tends to use physical and verbal bullying while girls use more subtle and psychologically manipulative behaviour such

as alienation, ostracism and character deformation (Asamu 2016).

Bullying is the most common form of violence in our schools. Studies show that this violence makes schools unsafe places for children and has contributed to the perception that some schools are not safe anymore (Maliki, 2018). Bullying behaviour may be referred to a repeated aggressive behaviour perpetuated by a bully or a group of bullies who systematically victimize weaker peers (Olweus, 2016). It is also bullying when a student is teased repeatedly in a way he or she does not like. It is not bullying when two students about the same strength quarrel or fight (Omoteso, 2016). Bullying is a common problem that is gradually increasing in every part of the society and in schools (Maliki, 2018). Incidents of bullying have always come to occur from time to time and they have negative impacts, especially, on students' academic, emotional and social development during the school period and some involve a gradual increase of violence that leads to some fatalities (Kartal, 2018).

Bukowski, (2016) pointed out that transition periods are problematic among secondary school students because they face two major transitions of entering puberty and starting a new school. As such, they suddenly have new peer group and different school system (Pellegrini and Long, 2015). Secondary school students are faced with complex rules, less integrated and more discrete curriculum and assessment regime (Bukowski, 2016). In Tanzania, for example, bullying behaviour among secondary schools is widespread and has a negative impact on students' right to learn in a safe and secure environment without fear. Mgalla (2018) conducted a study in rural and urban Tanzania; and the investigation revealed that the incidences of bullying were real and

some of the pupils had been adversely affected following the acts which are normally done to both male and female pupils. Moris (2018) claimed that bullying is not only a case of school children bullying their peers, teachers are also involved either as victims or as bullies. Bullying is commonly characterized as aggressive behaviour that is intended to cause distress or harm. It involves an imbalance of power or strength between the aggressor and the victim, and commonly occurs repeatedly over time (Nansel, 2016).

Similarly, Olweus, (2016) described bullying as any repeated harmful acts and imbalance of power against a victim who cannot properly defend himself or herself because of size or strength. Bullying in secondary schools can take many forms; including physical, verbal or psychological. Physical bullying involves physical injury or threat of injury to someone, verbal bullying refers to teasing or insulting someone while psychological bullying refers to the use of peer rejection or exclusion to humiliate or isolate a victim (Moris, 2018). A wide range of physical or verbal behaviours of an aggressive or antisocial nature are encompassed by the term bullying and these include: insulting, teasing, abusing verbally and physically, threatening, humiliating, harassing and mobbing.

Most studies conducted in some African countries were gender-based studies, focusing largely on sexual bullying or harassment of female students. Such studies have been conducted in Ghana (Afenyadu and Lakshmi, 2016), Ethiopia (Terefe and Desere, 2017), Cameroon (Mbassa and Daniel, 2017) and Tanzania (Mgalla, 2018). The studies on bullying in Turkey demonstrated that about 30% of the students are involved in bullying either as a bully or a victim, or both a bully and victim

(Nansel, 2017). In the studies carried out in the U.S. (Nansel, 2017), and in England and Germany (Wolke, 2015), the frequency of bullying was reported to be in the region of 15% to 20%. In Africa, the prevalence of bullying behaviour has been reported by Asamu (2016) that 22.5% of the students she studied in Ibadan, Nigeria were below 15 years of age. She found that bullying behaviour was peculiar to junior secondary schools 21% of male students had bullied other students.

Research on cyber-bullying is at an early stage. In the UK, Oliver and Candappa, (2013) briefly mentioned text message bullying of students aged 12–13 years; 4% had received nasty text messages, and 2% had received nasty email messages. Balding, (2015) gave a health-related questionnaire with one question on cyberbullying to pupils aged 10–11 years; 1% had been bullied through mobile phone. Child health report (2015) surveyed 770 young people aged 11 to 19 years; 20% reported ever having been cyberbullied (14% by text message, 5% through chat rooms, 4% by email) 28% of victims told no one they had been bullied. Noret and Rivers, (2016) surveyed 11,000 English pupils from 2002 to 2005; nearly 6% said they had received nasty or threatening text messages or emails ‘once in a while’ or more, in 2012 and 2013, but this rose to 7% or more in 2014 and 2015. Girls reported this more than boys, increasingly over the four years. This increase in cyberbullying contrasts with the rates for general bullying in England, which appear to be going down slowly, as anti-bullying work has an impact (American Bullying Prevention Association Factsheet, 2016).

Bullying is not just a child’s play but a terrifying experience faced by many school children every day (Thornbery, 2016).

According to Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, and Cooper, (2015), bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts. All these characteristics are inimical to productive growth and academic development of students. Against this background, the study examines bullying and its psychosocial effects on secondary school students in Ilisan High School, Ilisan.

Statement of the Problems

Bullying has become a major problem facing adolescents nowadays. The most common form of bullying for both sexes is verbal such as teasing, harassment and name-calling. It is the most painful form and has the longest-lasting impact on secondary school students. Other forms of bullying experienced by adolescents include cyber and physical bullying. However, extortion, physical violence, nasty rumors, exclusion from the group, damage to property and threats are also regarded as bullying. The playground of secondary school students is the most common place for bullying and most children believe that bullying cannot be stopped. Hence, the study examines the effect of bullying on psychosocial wellbeing of students in Ilisan High School, Ilisan.

Research questions

- 1) What are the effects of cyber bullying on wellbeing of secondary school students?

- 2) What are the effects of physical bullying on the wellbeing of secondary school students?
- 3) What are the effects of verbal bullying on the wellbeing of secondary school students?

Methodology

Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. It was used to identify characteristics of the variables of bullying and its effects on psychosocial wellbeing of students in Ilisan High School, Ogun State. The total population of the study consisted of 1970 students of Ilisan High School, Ilisan Remo, Ogun state. A sample size of 332 was derived, using the Taro Tamane (1967) formula. A stratified sampling technique was used to select 332 students that served as the participants of the study.

A self developed questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants. It was divided into two sections, A and B. Section A featured demographic characteristics while section B dealt with experience and effect of bullying.

A pilot test was conducted to establish reliability of the instrument using, 20 students of Babcock University High School, Ilisan Remo, Ogun state and was subjected to Chronbacs Alpha analysis to ensure reliability of the instruments which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.724. With this, the instrument was deemed reliable for the study. Data obtained from the participants were analyzed using distribution tables and percentage.

Result of Findings

Research Question One: What are the effects of cyber bullying on wellbeing of secondary school students?

Table 1: Frequency Distribution Showing Cyber-Bullying and its Effects

S/N	Measure of Cyber-bullying	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	X
1	Pictures of myself has been shared on social media and mocked by friends and classmates	16(4.8%)	78(23.5%)	103(31%)	121(36.4%)	14(4.2%)	3.12
2	My friends don't understand my feelings and emotions so the emoji are abusive	94(28.3%)	89(26.8%)	14(4.2%)	91(27.4%)	44(13.3%)	2.71
3	I sometimes receive abusive messages on social media	59(17.8%)	124(37.8%)	59(17.8%)	46(13.9%)	44(13.3%)	2.67
4	My friends sent me some abusive emoji which has made me look down on myself	76(22.9%)	105(31.6%)	46(13.9%)	105(31.6%)	0(0%)	2.54
5	I feel unsafe with messages from opposite sex on social media	133(40.1%)	60(18.1%)	91(27.4%)	16(4.8%)	32(9.6%)	2.26

Table 1 presented above showed that 36.4% of the respondents strongly disagreed that pictures of their pictures have been shared on social media and they were mocked by friends and classmates". 28.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that their friends do not understand their feelings and emotions so the emoji are abusive. 37.8%

agreed that they sometimes receive abusive messages from opposite sex on social media, also 31.6% of the respondents agreed that their friends send them some abusive emoji which have made them look down on themselves. Also, 40.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that they feel unsafe with messages from opposite sex.

Research Question Two: What are the effects of physical bullying on the wellbeing of secondary school students?

Table 2: Frequency Distribution Showing Physical Bullying and its Effects

S/N	Measure of Physical-bullying	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	X
1	Sometime, I have been bullied because of my physical body	135(40.7%)	48(14.5%)	59(17.8%)	76(22.9%)	14(4.2%)	2.89
2	My friends have bullied me several times because of my health condition	62(18.7%)	107(32.2%)	62(18.7%)	101(30.4%)	0(0%)	2.69
3	I have been physically harassed	85(25.6%)	78(23.5%)	75(22.6%)	62(18.7%)	32(9.6%)	2.63
4	I sometimes feel traumatized from been physically bullied	119(35.8%)	78(23.5%)	16(4.8%)	92(27.7%)	27(8.1%)	2.49
5	I don't have the coping skills to cope with physical bullying	92(27.7%)	108(32.5%)	89(26.8%)	43(13%)	0(0%)	2.25

Table 2 presented above showed that majority of the students agreed that sometimes they have been bullied because of their physical body, 30.4% strongly disagreed that their friends have bullied them several times because of their health

condition, 25.6% strongly agree that they have been physically harassed, 35.8% strongly agreed that sometimes feel traumatized from been physical bullied, 32.5% agree they do not have coping skills to cope with physically bullied.

Research Question Three: What are the effects of verbal bullying on the wellbeing of secondary school students?

Table 3: Frequency Distribution Showing Verbal-Bullying and its Effects

S/N	Measure of Physical-bullying	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	X
1	Verbal bullying limits my performance as a student	78(23.5%)	75(22.6%)	62(18.7%)	55(16.6%)	62(18.7%)	3.05
2	When bullied, I usually think of taking alcohol or drugs to calm me down	41(12.3%)	75(22.6%)	94(28.3%)	90(27.1%)	32(9.6%)	2.99

3	I have experienced verbal bullying from my teacher because of my performance in class	80(24.1%)	46(13.9%)	48(14.5%)	115(34.6%)	43(13%)	2.98
4	I have once had some verbal bullying from a friend in my class	59(17.8%)	80(24.1%)	64(19.3%)	72(21.7%)	57(17.2%)	2.96
5	I have been verbally bullied because of the way I spoke in class	44(13.3%)	75(22.6%)	78(23.5%)	124(37.3%)	11(33.3%)	2.95
6	My parents have verbally bullied me because of my bad behaviours	74(22.3%)	59(17.8%)	62(18.7%)	89(26.8%)	48(14.5%)	2.94
7	Bullying result to me being unfriendly towards other people	42(12.7%)	107(32.2%)	78(23.5%)	89(26.8%)	16(4.8%)	2.79
8	When being bullied I usually think of committing suicide	60(18.1%)	94(28.3%)	59(17.8%)	119(35.9%)	0(0%)	2.72
9	I usually harm myself after I have been bullied	57(17.2%)	91(27.4%)	106(31.9%)	78(23.5%)	0(0%)	2.62
10	Bullying has led to me becoming depressed and having a low-self esteem	123(37%)	107(32.2%)	44(13.3%)	0(0%)	58(17.5%)	2.11

Table 3 presented above indicated that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that verbal bullying limits their performance as students. Also, 27.3% were undecided that when bullied, they usually think of taking alcohol or drugs to calm down. 34.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they have experienced verbal bullying from their teachers because of their performance in class. Most of the respondents 24.1% agreed that they have once been verbally bullied from friends in their class, 37.3% disagreed that they have been verbally bullied because of the way they spoke in their class, 26.8%

disagreed that their parents have verbally bullied them because of their bad behaviours, 32.2% agreed that bullying may result in being unfriendly towards other people, 35.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that when been bullied they usually think of committing suicide, 31.9% of the respondents were undecided that they usually harm themselves after they have been verbally bullied. 37% of the respondents strongly agreed that bullying may result in being depressed and having low-self-esteem

Discussion of Findings

The result of Research Question One indicated the impact of cyber-bullying on adolescents in secondary. This is consistent with the findings of Hoover, (2015) that Cyber bullying can be viewed as repetitive

when a message, photograph or video-clip is taken once and sent to more than one individual who, in turn, forward this to other people, or alternatively upload the material onto a website. Ogedebe (2012) said cyber

bullying is a significant predictor of psychological wellbeing of secondary school students in low and middle income countries like Nigeria as students were seen to be pervasive in the use of Facebook and what roles this played in students' academic success. Additionally, Adaja and Ayodele, (2013) reported that cyberbullying is a significant factor influencing social wellbeing of students using several social media application in low and middle income countries. Further study reported the need to encourage Nigerian youths to harness the potentials of social media for academic undertakings. Considering the use of Facebook and its impacts on students' performance in the context of Nigeria, the contributions of Olowu and Seri, (2012) are highly significant. They considered studying the addiction aspect of using social media by Nigerian youths.

The result of Research Question Two showed the negative impact of physical bullying on wellbeing of secondary school students in Ilishan-Remo. The result is consistent with finding that physical bullying is the most visible and, therefore, the most readily identifiable form of bullying, it accounts for less than one – third of bullying incidents reported by children. Salivalli, Kaukiainen and Langerspertz, (2018) stressed that physical bullying involves behaviours whereby the perpetrator might punch, hit or steal money from the victim. Larsen (2015) stated that the problem for a school is that physical bullying presents a challenge for that school to maintain a safe and orderly learning environment. The researcher was once called to witness a male student who was asked to sleep in his trunk that he had brought to school for storage of his clothing at a school in which the researcher was teaching. Unfortunately, the time attention was drawn to the heinous

crime, the boy was so weak that the authorities had to rush him to the hospital for medical care. This was just because he had a small body frame and also could not provide things requested by the bullies. To Limber and Small (2016), physical bullying tends to receive more attention from school personnel than other types of bullying.

The result of Research Question Three showed that there is an impact of verbal bullying on wellbeing of adolescents. This corroborates with the findings of Lee, (2014) that verbal bullying victims are affected in several ways. Verbal bullying can affect one's self image, and in emotional and psychological ways. This type of bullying can lead to low self-esteem, as well as depression and other problems. It can aggravate problems that a victim may already be experiencing at home or in other places (Cowie & Jennifer, 2008). In some cases, verbal bullying can reach a point where the victim is so depressed, and wants to escape so badly, that he or she may turn to substance abuse or, in some extreme cases, suicide. The realities of verbal bullying can have very physical consequences, even if the aggressor never lays a finger on the victim (Coloroso, 2018). Verbal bullying can be hard for teachers, counsellors and other school authorities to detect, since no physical harm takes place (Kaar, 2019). The result corroborates the findings of Jeffrey (2015) who indicated that for bullies, victims, and bystanders of bullying incidents, bullying is a social experience that can carry long-term social, emotional, developmental, and academic implications. Longitudinal studies have suggested that bullying is considered a risk factor leading to conduct problems and other violent behaviours (Alikasifoglu, 2017). In addition, victims of bullying were noted as at risk for the development of mental health issues such as anxiety,

depression, and suicidal ideations (Alikasifoglu, 2017). Victims often develop psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches, and sleeping difficulties and struggle with issues of loneliness, isolation, and refusal to attend school. Bullying victims tend to seek out peers who experience similar issues, and they tend to lack the interpersonal skills needed to develop friendships that protect them from victimization (Rock, 2014).

Conclusion

This study has shown that there is no gainsaying the fact that secondary school students experience bullying in their various schools and the forms varying from physical to cyber and verbal bullying. These forms of bullying have several effects on the students, impacting their psychological and social wellbeing.

Recommendation

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The secondary school authorities should develop a safe and supportive school climate.
2. There should be at least a school social worker in each secondary school in Nigeria to attend to issues of bullying and other social issues that affect the adolescents.
3. Policies against bullying should be developed by relevant stakeholders and strictly enforced.
4. Parents, teachers, counselors, school workers, should provide all children with the opportunities to develop good interpersonal skills;
5. Create a social environment, which is supportive and inclusive, in which aggressive bullying behaviour is not tolerated by the majority.

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