

BULLYING BEHAVIOUR, ITS ASSOCIATED FACTORS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS AMONG SECONDARY STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined the prevalence and nature of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Nigeria. It also investigated the factors associated with bullying and its psychological consequences. The study adopted a survey design. A sample of 750 secondary school students was selected through stratified random sampling technique using sex, age and class level as strata from five randomly selected secondary schools in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. Information was collected from the students through the administration of an instrument titled "Bullying Behaviour Questionnaire" (BBQ). Results showed that the prevalence of bullying among the students was 67.2%. From this, 88.1% had been bullied and 33.1% were bullies. Many students (64.7%) had been involved in relational bullying. Watching violent films (57.5%) and retaliation for being bullied in the past (51.2%) were some of the factors associated with bullying. The bullied students exhibited fear (63.6%) and depression (58.1%).

Key Words: Bullying, secondary school students, bullied, bullies, violent films, reporting

Introduction

Bullying among school children is certainly a very old phenomenon. Despite many strategies put in places to curb it, the problem persists. School is perceived to be a place where students should feel safe and secure but the opposite is the case. The reality is that a significant number of students are the target of the bullying. Bullying though old is a widespread and worldwide problem. Most adults can remember incidents of bullying in which they were either bullies or bullied. In fact, until recently, the common perception had been that bullying was a relatively harmless experience that many children experience during their school years. However, over the past two decades, an extensive body of research has documented that bullying is a potentially damaging form of violence among children and youth. So, while bullying is not a new phenomenon, what is new is the growing awareness that bullying has serious damaging effects for bullies, victims, schools and communities.

Consequently, concerns of parents, policymakers, educators and the public have escalated in countries around the world with the rise in the reported incidents of violence and the links that have been established between violence and bullying. In the western world much attention has been devoted to stemming the act of bullying but in Nigeria this act goes on in many schools unnoticed

Bullying has been defined variously by researchers. According to Lumsden, bullying occurs when a person willfully and repeatedly exercises power over another with hostile or malicious intent. A wide range of physical or verbal behaviours of an aggressive or antisocial nature are encompassed by the term bully. These include "insulting, teasing, abusing verbally and physically, threatening, humiliating, harassing and mobbing" (Colvin et al, 1998). Bullying may also assume a less direct form (sometimes known as "psychological bullying") such as gossiping, spreading rumours and shunning or exclusion (O'Connell et al, 1999).

A broad definition of bullying as opined by Olweus (1993) is when a student is repeatedly exposed to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. These physical actions can take the forms of physical contact, verbal abuse or making faces and rude gestures. Spreading rumours and excluding the victim from a group are also common forms of bullying. These negative actions are not necessarily provoked by the victim for such action to be regarded as bullying; an imbalance in real or perceived power must exist between the victim and the person who victimizes him or her (Coloroso, 2002). According to Schuster (1996) this power of imbalance and the fact that bullying behaviours are repeated over time are what differentiate bullying from other forms of aggressive behaviour. Pepler & Craig (2000) observed that bullying is the most common form of violence. It is what drives the culture of violence, permitting the most powerful to dominate

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the less powerful. These researchers were also of the opinion that bully starts out very young and small, a push during kindergarten recess or some name callings.

Nickel et al. (2005) also defined bullying as the “intentional”, unprovoked abuse of power by one or more children to inflict pain or cause distress to another child on repeated occasions. Bully is a growing and significant problem in many schools around the world. It is the experience among children of being a target of aggressive behaviour of other children who are not siblings and not necessarily age mates (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Smith (1991) described the act as an unprovoked attack that causes hurt of a psychological, social or physical nature. According to Sutton, Smith & Swettenham (1999), bullying involves an intentional hurtful action directed toward another person or persons, by one or more persons, and involves a complex interplay of dominance and social status. Bullying is typically repetitive and involves a power imbalance between the bully and victim where the victim is unable to defend himself from the bully (Rigby, 2001). This definition agrees with the definition of Lagerspetz, Björqvist, Bert, & King, (1982) which showed the victims to be physically weaker.

Generally, bullying occurs when one or more persons repeatedly say or do hurtful things to another who has problems defending himself or herself. Direct bullying usually involves hitting, kicking or making insults, offensive and sneering comments or threats. Repeatedly teasing someone who clearly shows signs of distress are also recognized as bullying. However, indirect bullying – the experience of being excluded from a group of friends, being spoken ill of and being prevented from making friends – can just be as painful.

Crick, Nelson, Morale, Cullerton-Sen, Casas & Hickman (2001) observed that three forms of bullying exist: physical, verbal and relational. Physical bullying involves behaviours whereby the perpetrator might punch, hit and/ or steal money from the victim. Verbal bullying includes behaviour such as the perpetrator making rude remarks and/ or name calling toward a victim. Relational bullying also known as indirect bullying (Salivalli, Kaukiainen and Lagerspetz, 1998) involves psychological harm and manipulation of social system. This third type involves situations where the perpetrator might spread rumours, backbite and/ or exclude the victim from the peer group. The forms of bullying change with age throughout the lifespan. The most common form of bullying according to Gadin & Hammarrstrom (2005) is verbal harassment – like teasing and name calling. This consistent with the findings of studies conducted on students in Norway (Due et al., 2005) and in England (Due et al., 2009).

Most bullying takes place at the same grade level. However, many times older students bully younger students. Although direct bullying is a greater problem among boys, a good deal of bullying takes place among girls. Bullying between girls, however, involves less physical violence and can be more difficult to discover. Girls tend to use indirect and subtle methods of bullying, such as exclusion from a group of friends, backbiting, and manipulations of friendships (Salivalli et al., 1998). Far more boys than girls bully, and many girls are mostly bullied by boys, but both can be victims of bullying. Asamu (2006) opined that a good deal of bullying is carried out by older students toward younger ones. The older students often exposed the younger and weaker students to the act of bullying. Most bullying occurs on play ground or in the classroom but these behaviours also occur in corridors, and in the school hall. Although a substantial portion of students are bullied on the way to and from the school. Bank (2000) observed that some children are at more risk of becoming bullies and victims than others, although this is in no way predetermined. It depends on a combination of individual, family, peer, and school experiences. Among the characteristics of children at greatest risk of bullying and victimization researchers have identified the following:

Olweus (1993) and Pepler & Craig (2000) observed that those who bully tend to be disruptive and impulsive and are generally aggressive towards their peers, teachers, parents, and others. They tend to be assertive and easily provoked, contrary to general belief. According to Olweus (1993) aggressive males who bully are not anxious and insecure under a tough exterior and they do not suffer from poor self esteem. Typically, males who bully have an aggressive personality combined with physical strength. They have little empathy for their victims and show little or no remorse. Olweus further opined that those who bully may come from families where there is lack of attention and warmth toward the child, poor supervision, and use of physical and verbal aggression. They also had often been bullied themselves by adults and will continue bullying provided there are no consequences, the victim does not complain and the peer group silently colludes.

Generally, students who get bullied can be regarded as being passive or being submissive victims. They are usually quiet, careful, sensitive, and may start crying easily. They are unsure of themselves and have poor self confidence or negative self-image. These boys in this group do not like to fight, and they are often physically weaker than their classmates, especially the bullies, and they have few or no friends

The bullies on the other hand view violence more favourably than most students do. They are often aggressive toward adults, both parents and teachers. They have a marked need to dominate and suppress other students, to assert themselves by means of force and threats, and to get their own way. Boys in this group are often stronger than their peers and, in particular, their victims. They are often hot-tempered, impulsive, and not very tolerant of obstacles and delays. They find it difficult to fit in with rules. They appear to be tough and show little sympathy toward students who are bullied and they are good at talking their way out of difficult situations.

A survey of more than 15,000 sixth through tenth – graders at public and private schools in the U.S. showed that 30% of the sample reported moderate or frequent involvement in bullying- as a bully, as a victim or both. Students in middle school grades 6 and 8 reported greater frequency of bullying than did students in grades 9 and 10. According to a study published by the Free State University as reported by African Christian Action (2003), more than 32% of the learners said that another pupil had hit them in the past. Most people said they were targeted by bullies in buses or taxis on the way to school, or in toilets and showers at school. Others were bullied by teachers. According to the study, 50% of teachers admitted physically bullying their students, 60% of the confessed that they were guilty of acts of “sexual bullying” at least once a month. Only 5% of teachers and 16% of pupils interviewed at secondary schools believed that bullying was “not a problem”.

Asamu (2006) found that 22.5% of the students she studied in Ibadan, Nigeria were below 15 years of age; bullying behaviour was peculiar to junior secondary school (22.5%) and 21% of male students had bullied other students. Various reports and studies in Canada and abroad over the past decade have consistently established that approximately 10-15% of children attending school are either bullied regularly or were initiators of bullying behaviour (Olweus, 1993; Pepler et al; 2001). Research using the National Longitudinal Study for Children and Youth found that a significant proportion of school-aged children in Canada were either bullies (14%) or victims (5%). Data from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Scandinavian countries, Ireland and England, were quite similar to those reported in Canadian studies.

In a survey by National Resource Centre for Safe Schools, Cox (2001) observed that 25% of Ontario students in grades 7-12 had been bullied in the 2001 school year, while one in ten had seriously considered committing suicide. This is consistent with the U.S. studies which estimated that up to 30% of American children are regularly involved in bullying, either as bullies, victims or both with a reported 15% being severely traumatized or distressed by encounters with bullies and 8% victimized.

Researchers’ observations of children on playground and in classrooms confirmed that bullying occurs frequently: once every seven minutes on the play ground and once every 25 minutes in the class. (Craig & Pepler, 1997). Despite these numbers, bullying behaviour is rarely detected by teachers.

Direct bullying seems to increase through the elementary years, peak in middle/junior high school years, and decline through the high school years. However, while direct physical assault seems to decrease with age, verbal abuse is reported to remain fairly constant. School size, racial composition, and school setting (rural, urban, suburban) do not seem to be distinguishing factors in predicting the occurrence of bullying. Boys engage in bullying behaviour and are victims of bullies more frequently than girls. Those who are bullied show higher levels of insecurity, anxiety, depression, loneliness, physical and mental symptoms and low self-esteem bullying more frequently than girls. Boys report more physical forms of bullying; girls tend to bully in indirect ways, such as gossiping and excluding (Craig & Pepler, 1997).

According to Olweus (1993) there are several common assumptions about the causes of bullying for which there is no supporting evidence. They include claims that bullying is a consequence of large class or school sizes, or of the competition of grades through surface bullies. These views are no more accurate than the stereotype that students who are fat, red haired and wear glasses are particularly likely to become victims of bullying.

In reality, other factors are more important. Certain personality characteristics and typical reaction patterns, combined with the level of physical strength or weakness in the case of boys, can help to explain the development of bullying problems in individual students. At the same time, environmental influences, such as teachers’ attitude, behaviour and supervisory routines play a crucial role in determining the extent to which these problems will manifest themselves in a classroom or a school. Also, parents who model aggression as a way of meeting their needs, or who use harsh or aggressive methods of discipline are significantly more likely to have children who engage in aggression or bullying. Therefore, lack of attention and warmth toward the

child, modeling of aggressive behaviour at home, and poor supervision of the child are all associated with bullying behaviour.

The parent-child relationship has also been shown to be important. Children with positive relationships with their parents are less likely to participate in bullying (Rigby, 1994). In other words, children who are insecurely attached to their parents are more likely to bully their peers. In the same vein, it has also been shown that children, who perceive their families to be less cohesive and less caring for each other, are also more likely to participate in school bullying (Bowers, Smith & Binney, 1994). Generally speaking, the family background of children who bully others is characterized by neglect, dominance, hostility, and harsh punishment (Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 1994).

Lack of appropriate resources within schools is also associated with higher levels of school bullying. Bullying often occurs when there is little or no supervision, such as the school playground (Olweus, 1993; Pepler et al., 1997). Bullying often occurs when there is little or no supervision, such as on school playground. Bullying is also more likely to occur during more competitive or aggressive activities, (Olweus, 1993).

Bullying is pervasive and terribly harmful for bullies, victims, schools and communities. The consequences of bullying are far-reaching, ranging from lower attendance and student achievement to increased violence and juvenile crime, and not only does it harm victims and perpetrators, it affects the climate of schools, morale of teachers, and indirectly, the ability of all students to learn to the best of their abilities.

Studies have shown that those involved in prolonged and serious bullying of others experience a wide range of mental health, academic and social problems. Several longitudinal studies conducted over two decades have recognized bullying behaviour in elementary school as precursor of violent behaviour and show significant link between this behaviour and criminal activity in adult life. Recent Canadian studies point to the connection between bullying and sexual harassment and violence in later year, (Craig & Pepler, 1997).

Victims often fear school and consider it an unhappy and unsafe place. Drop out rates and absenteeism are higher among victimized students. Repeated bullying leads to anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression – problems (Olweus, 1991; Pepler & Craig, 2000). Students who are targeted by bullies often have difficulty concentrating on their school work and their academic performance tends to be “marginal to poor” (Ballard et al., 1999). Typically bullied students feel anxious, and this anxiety may in turn produce a variety of physical or emotional ailments. The rates of absenteeism and drop out are higher among victimized students than among their non – bullied peers. Nansel et al. (2001) opined that youths who are bullied generally show higher levels of insecurity, anxiety, depression, loneliness, unhappiness, physical and mental symptoms and low self – esteem.

The impact of bullying extends well beyond the bully and the victim, to the peer group, school and community. Those who are not directly involved, but who regularly witness bullying at school, suffer from a less secure learning environment, the fear that the bully may target them next and the knowledge that teachers and other adults are either unable or unwilling control bullies’ behaviour.

The psychological scars left by bullying often endure for years. Evidence indicates that “feelings of isolation and the loss of self-esteem that victims experience seem to last into adulthood”. (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997). Studies have also found a higher level of depression and lower self-esteem among formerly bullied individuals at age 23, even though as adults these individual were no more harassed socially isolated than a control group (Nansel et al., 2001).

Generally, the findings on bullying indicated that bullying is a physically harmful, psychologically damaging and socially isolating aspect of a large number of children’s school experience. Studies had also highlighted that children who are bullied have higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression and illness, and an increased tendency to suicide (Rigby, 1998; Rigby, 2001). The victims of bullying are two to three times more likely to contemplate suicide than their peers (Rigby, 1998). Psychological well-being had been shown to suffer with bullying, while loneliness and alienation from peers is also linked with victimization. Victims are typically withdrawn and anxious, characterized by tenseness, fears and worries. The anxiety and depression associated with victims has also been linked to lower immunity to illness.

Studies showed that students who are often bullied tend to develop severe psycho-social adjustment and emotional problems which may persist into adulthood (Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 1998; Kum-Pulainen, Ruesanen, & Puura, 2001). These research findings also suggest that many aspects of victimized children lives may be affected. In a meta- analytic review of cross-sectional studies on peer victimization and psycho-

social adjustment over a period of 20 years, Hawker & Boulton (2000) concluded that students who are victimized by peers suffer a variety of feelings of psycho-social distress. They felt more anxious, depressed, lonely and worse about themselves than non-victims.

A study reported in the British Medical Journal showed that children who are bullied suffered health problems such as eating and sleep disorders, headaches and stomach aches (William et al., 1996).

Victims of bullying are not the only ones who are adversely affected. Those who bully are more likely to drop out of school, use drug and alcohol, as well as engage in subsequent delinquent and criminal behaviour.

In Nigeria today, the attitudes of parents, educators and policy makers toward bullying are changing and it is no longer accepted as a part of a normal childhood experiences. Bullying is now considered a marker of serious or violent behaviour and information on how to effectively respond to bullying is not readily available. Of much concern is that thousands of children are afraid of going to school because of teasing and harassments. It is in the light of the above that the researcher has decided to embark upon this study in order to proffer solutions that might be of help to all stakeholders of Education in the country.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to

1. determine the prevalence of bullying behaviour among secondary school students;
2. investigate the nature of bullying among the students;
3. identify the factors associated with bullying behaviour among the students;
4. determine the psychological consequences of bullying among the students; and
5. investigate the strategies the students are using in coping with bullying.

Research Questions

1. What is the prevalence of bullying behaviour among secondary school students?
2. What is the nature of bullying behaviour among the students?
3. What are the factors associated with the bullying behaviour among the students?
4. What are the psychological consequences of bullying on the students?
5. What are the coping strategies the students are using to avoid bullying?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant sex difference in the level of involvement of the students in bullying behaviour.
2. There is no significant age difference in the bullying behaviour of the student.
3. There is no significant difference in the bullying behaviour of the students in junior and senior secondary school classes.

Method

The study adopted a survey research design. A sample of 750 secondary school students was selected through stratified random technique using sex, age and level of school (junior/senior) as strata from five randomly selected secondary schools in Ile-Ife. Ile-Ife is a town in Osun State in the Southwestern geographical zone of Nigeria. There are about 40 public and private secondary schools in this town as at the time of this study. Information was collected from the students through the administration of the instrument titled "Bullying Behaviour Questionnaire" (BBQ) adapted from Asamu (2006) and Forero, Mclellan, Rissel & Bauman (1999). Sections A and B of BBQ were first of all administered on the students to determine those who had been involved in bullying. After this administration, 504 students were found to have been involved in bullying. The questionnaire was divided into six sections. Section A of the instrument was on demographic variables. Section B consisted of items on the prevalence of bullying behaviour among the students. The following definitions were used for bullying behaviour as used by Forero, Mclellan Rissel & Bauman (1999). "Bullying is when another student or group of students says or does nasty and unpleasant things to another student. It is also bullying when a student is teased repeatedly in a way he or she doesn't like. But it is not bullying when two students about the same strength quarrel or fight. Students were asked to respond to two questions: "Have you ever been bullied this term?" and "How often have you taken part in bullying other

students this term?” Section C was made up of items on the nature of bullying engaged in by the students such as physical and emotional bullying. Section D consisted of items on the factors associated with bullying such as watching violent films, copying the aggressive behaviour of parents and feeling older than other students. Section E comprised of items on the consequences of bullying such as being fearful, loniless and depression. Section F asked for the strategies the students are using in coping with bullying such as reporting to the school authority /counselor and bullying the person back. The questionnaire was validated for use by the researcher. The test re-test reliability of the instrument was 0.84 which is significant at .05 level.

Results

The results of the research questions and hypotheses are presented here.

Research Question 1: What is the prevalence of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Nigeria?

In order to answer this question, the information collected from the students on prevalence of bullying behaviour was subjected to percentage analysis. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Prevalence of Bullying

Items	N	Students Involved in Bullying %	Students not Involved in Bullying %	Total
Students	750	67.2 (504)	32.8 (246)	100 (750)

From Table 1, the number of students who participated in the study was 750, out of which 67.2 (504) had been involved in bullying behaviour.

An attempt was made to analyze the prevalence of bullying based on the demographic variables of sex, age and level in school. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Prevalence of Bullying Behaviour based on Demographic Variables

Demographic Variables	Percentage of Prevalence of Bullying Behaviour
Male	48.8 (246)
Female	51.2 (288)
10 – 15 Years of Age	57.1 (290)
16 – 29 Years of Age	42.5 (214)
Above 20 Years of Age	.4 (2)
JSS Class	51.2 (258)
SSS Class	48.8 (246)

Table 2 shows that 48.8% (246) of the students that were involved in bullying were male while 51.2% (288) were female students. The prevalence of bullying behaviour was 57.1% (290) among the students aged 10 – 15 years, 42.5% among 16 – 20 years of age and .4% among the students who were above 20 years of age. The JSS students who were involved in bullying were 51.2% (288) and the SSS students were 48.8% (246).

Further attempt was made to find out the prevalence of students who had been bullied and those who had bullied others. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Prevalence of bullying behaviour

Items	N	Once/More %	Never %
Students who had been bullied by other students	504	88.1 (444)	11.9 (60)
Students who had bullied other students	504	33.1 (167)	66.9 (337)

From Table 3, 88.1% (444) of the students had been bullied by other students while 11.9% (60) had not. Also, 33.19% (167) had taken part in bullying other students and 66.9% (337) had not.

Research Question 2: What is the nature of bullying behaviour among the students?

To answer this question, the information collected from the students on the nature of bullying they had been involved in was categorized into physical, verbal and relational bullying and was subjected to percentage analysis. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Nature of Bullying Behaviour among the Students

Nature of Bullying	% of Involvement	% of Non-involvement
Physical	46.5 (234)	53.5 (270)
Verbal	58.2 (293)	41.8 (211)
Relational	64.7 (326)	35.3 (178)

Table 4 shows that 46.5% of the students had taken part in physical bullying and 53.5% had not; 58.2% had been involved in verbal bullying and 41.8% had not. Also, 64.7% had taken part in relational bullying while 35.3% had not.

Research Question 3: What are the factors associated with bullying behaviour among the students?

In order to answer this question, the responses of the students on the factors associated with the bullying behaviour were subjected to percentage analysis. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Factors Associated with Bullying Behaviour

No	Items	Agree %	Disagree %	Can't Say %
1	Being from a broken home	33.3	57.2	9.5
2.	Being from a monogamous family	39.1	51.6	9,3
3.	Being from a polygamous family	43.8	46.8	9,4
4.	Copying parents' aggressive behaviour	49.6	45.6	4.8
5.	Watching violent films	57.5	36.9	5..6
6.	Teachers' poor classroom management	34.7	54.8	10.5
7.	Retaliation for being bullied in the past	51.2	41.5	7.3
8.	Feeling older than others	50.2	43.1	6.7
9.	Feeling stronger than others	48.2	45.8	6.0

From Table 5, 33.3% agreed that being from a broken home could be associated with bullying behaviour, 57.2% disagreed with this and 9.5% could not say. Being from a monogamous home was considered by 39.1% of the students to be associated with bullying behaviour, 51.6% disagreed with this and 9.3% could not say; 43.8% of the students believed that being from a polygamous family could lead to bullying while 46.8% disagreed and 9.4% could not say. About half 49.6% of the students agreed that copying parents' aggressive behaviour could be responsible for bullying among the students, 45.6% did not agree with this and 4.8% could not say. Watching violent films was considered as a factor associated with bullying behaviour by 57.5%, 36.9% did not agree with this and 5.6% could not say. Also from the table, 34.7% agreed that teachers' poor classroom management could be responsible for bullying behaviour while 54.8% did not agree with this and 10.5% could not say. The students who agreed that retaliation for being bullied could be responsible for bullied were 51.2%, 41.5% did not agree with this and 7.3% could not say. Further, 50.2% of the students agreed that feeling older than others could lead to bullying while 43.1% did not agree with this and 6.7% could not say. Feeling stronger than others was considered to be associated with bullying behaviour by 48.2%, 45.8% did not agree with this and 6.0% could not say.

Research Question 4: What are the psychological consequences of bullying on the students?

In order to answer this question, the responses of the students on the consequences of bullying were analyzed using simple percentages. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Consequences of Bullying

	Items	%	Items	%
1.	Being: fearful	63.6	Not fearful	36.4
2.	lonely	55.2	Not lonely	44.8
3.	happy	27.6	Unhappy	72.4
4.	depressed	58.1	Not depressed	41.9
5.	confident	41.1	Not Confident	58.9

From Table 6, 63.6% of the students were fearful and 36.4% were not fearful after the act of bullying; 52.2% were feeling lonely while 44.8% were not feeling lonely. Also, 27.6% were happy and 72.4% were not happy; 58.1% were depressed and 41.9% were not depressed. Further, 41.1% were confident while 58.9% were not confident.

Research Question 5: What are the coping strategies the students are using to deal with bullying?

In order to answer this question, the information collected from the students on the coping strategies they were using in coping with bullying was subjected to percentage analysis. The results are presented in table 7.

Table 7: Strategies for Coping with Bullying

	Items	%
1.	Reporting to school authority/counselor	81.1
2.	Bullying the person back	18.3
3.	Running away from school for many days	6.3
4.	Telling their parents	64.7
5.	Avoiding the person	52.4

Table 7 shows that 81.1% of the bullied students had been reporting to school authority/counselor the act of bullying perpetrated on them. The strategy used by 18.3% of the students was bullying the bullies back. Running away from school for many days was a strategy used by 6.3% of the students. Telling their parents was done by 64.7% and 52.4% of the students engaged in avoiding the bullies.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant sex difference in the bullying behaviour of the students.

In order to test this hypothesis, the information collected from the students on the bullying behaviour of the students and their sex was analyzed using t-test statistic. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Sex Difference in Bullying Behaviour of the Students

Sex	N	\bar{X}	Sd	Df	t	P
Male	246	28.504	3.230	503	198.148	< .05
Female	258	30.016	3.217			

From Table 8, male students are 246 in number while the female students are 258. The mean for the male student is 3.230 while that of female is 30.016. The t value is 198.148 which is significant at .05 level. This shows that there is a significant difference in the bullying behaviour of the students.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is no significant age difference in the bullying behaviour of the student.

In order to test this hypothesis, the information collected from the students on the age and bullying behaviour was analyzed using One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Age difference in the Bullying Behaviour of the Students

Items	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	P
Between Groups	52.517	2	26.259	2.554	> .05
Within Groups	5151.256	501	10.282		
Total	5203.873	503			

Table 9 shows that the sum of squares and mean squares for between groups are 52.517 and 26.259 respectively while those of within groups are 5151.256 and 10.282 respectively. The F value is 2.554 which is not significant at .05 level. These results indicate that there is no significant age difference in the bullying behaviour of the students.

Research Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the bullying behaviour of the students in junior and senior secondary schools classes.

To test this hypothesis, the information collected from the students on bullying behaviour and class was analyzed using t test statistic. The results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Class Difference in Bullying Behaviour of the Students

Class	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	t	P
JSS	258	30.016	3.217	503	-194.681	< .05
SSS	246	38.528	3.290			

From Table 9, the students in JSS classes are 258 while those in SSS classes are 246. The means for the two groups are 30.016 and 28.528 respectively and standard deviations are 3.217 and 3.290 respectively. The t value is -194.681 which is significant at .05 level. The results show that there is a significant negative difference in the bullying behaviour of the students in JSS and SSS classes.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that bullying behaviour is prevalent among secondary school students in Nigeria. A well over half of the students who participated in this study had either bullied or being bullied. Contrary to the general belief, female students were more involved in bullying than their male counterparts. This is a unique finding unlike the findings of researchers on bullying that male students get involved in bullying more than girls. The truth about this is that girls get involved in indirect or relation bullying and it can be more difficult to discover. There is a lot of this going on in Nigerian schools. This type of bullying involves excluding others from a group, spreading rumours and backbiting (Salivali et al, 1996).

Younger students also took part in bullying more than the older students. This is another finding unique to this study. Many studies conducted in the past had shown that older students bullied more than the younger ones (Olweus, 1993; Asamu, 2006). A study conducted by Asamu (2006) found that older students bullied the younger ones. As a result the students in JSS classes bullied more than the students in the SSS classes because they are younger.

From the test of hypotheses, there also existed a significant difference in bullying behaviour of male and female students. This means that the types of bullying the male students get involved in are different from that of girls. Past studies had also shown that male bullying tends to be physical while that of female is relational or indirect (Salivalli et al., 1998). Female students get involved in less physical violence. They tend to use subtle method like spreading rumours and manipulations and manipulations of friendship while boys can be involved in hitting and kicking.

There existed no significant difference in bullying behaviour of the students according to their age. Though in this study, younger students bullied more the older ones, it is still possible that the types of bullying the younger and the older students get involved in were similar. This might have accounted for the no significant difference we have in the bullying behaviour of the students according to their age.

There was a difference in the bullying behaviour of the students according to their classes. Junior students had been found to get more involved in bullying than those in senior classes. This result is not surprising; it is possible that these younger students are still suffering from carry-over effect from elementary

schools' ways of life and behaviour. This may make them to bully more than the older ones. The older ones might have started to drop this behaviour.

Some factors were found to be associated with bullying behaviour. Watching violent films was the most serious factor that was associated with bullying behaviour by these students. The result is expected since many ills have been associated with watching violent films. The stakeholders in education have also been against watching of violent films on the television and the internet because of their negative influence on the behaviour of children and adolescents who watch them. It has also been found to be the major source of many anti social behaviour in many societies today.

Another serious factor was retaliation, it was believed that many students bully because they want to retaliate for being bullied in the past. This may be as a result of bitterness and bitterness may lead to revenge.

Copying parents' aggressive behaviour could also lead to bullying. Parents' aggressive behaviour can be copied by the children. The children whose parents are aggressive are likely to become aggressive in later years. This finding supports that of Olweus (1993).

Another factor that was highlighted by more than half of the students was feeling older than others. It is possible that if there is a wide gap in the age of the students in the same class, it is more likely that the older students will bully those who are young. The older students may feel the younger students are rude and disrespectful while the younger ones may be teasing the older one because they are in the same class. Consequently, the older students may bully these young ones to force them to respect them.

The findings further indicated the consequences of bullying. Many of the students who participated in the study were unhappy. These unhappy students could be those that were bullied and those that were happy could be those that bullied others and they were happy doing so. Other consequences exhibited by the students were fear, loneliness, depression and lack of confidence. These findings are in line with those of Hawker & Boulton (2000). They also found that students who are bullied suffered from anxiety, loneliness and depression.

In order for the bullied students not to continue to be bullied, they adopted some strategies which they were using in coping with being bullied. The top three strategies being used by the students were reporting to the school authority/counselor, telling their parents and avoiding the person.

Recommendations

As one of the most persistent and destructive forms of aggression in the continuum of violence, bullying deserves the attention of everyone. Reducing and preventing bullying requires the joint efforts of the policymakers, administrators of schools, teachers, students, parents and community members. Thus, for bullying to be reduced to its barest minimum level, the following recommendations are made.

- The schools and home should work collaboratively to instill good values in their children/students
- The parents should model positive behaviours to their children
- The teachers should have skills and knowledge in classroom management and control. As a result, a student friendly environment should be established in the classroom
- There should be school-wide education, training and bullying prevention programmes
- The schools should provide counseling and support for students at risk of being involved in bullying
- Students who bully often need intensive support or intervention, so it is important for schools and social service agencies to work together.
- The parents and teachers must recognize the danger of violent films and discourage their children/students from watching them.

Conclusion

Bullying is a global problem and it can be found in every school all over the world. It is too often seen a way of life for young people in any society. When nothing is done about bullying, it has a lot of negative consequences on the children. The children suffer torments and harassments. It can cause life-long damage to the bullied and the bullies. If a school fails to deal with bullying, it can endanger the safety of all the students and teachers. Consequently, bullying should be seen as the responsibility of everyone including the government, educators, policymakers, police, parents, community organizations, religious organizations and students themselves.

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