



**BULLYING AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN  
ALIMOSHO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, LAGOS STATE:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR  
COUNSELLING INTERVENTIONS**

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**Abstract**

*The study investigated bullying among secondary school students in Alimosho Local Government Area, Lagos State and its implications for counselling interventions. A total number of Two hundred and one students participated in the study. The participants were drawn from two public and two private secondary schools in Alimosho Local Government Area, Lagos State. Two research instruments were adopted for the study and they are Olweus bully/victim questionnaire and Rosenberg self-esteem scale. Independent t-test and analysis of variance were used to analyse the data at 0.05 level of significance. Result showed that there was no significant difference in bullying between the private and public school students. The result also showed that bullying among male students is not significantly different from bullying among female secondary school students. It was shown that there was a positive relationship between bullying and self-esteem. Family structure was found to have no significant influence on bullying behaviour of students. It was recommended that Government should make the provision of school counsellors in both private and public schools compulsory and the school counsellors should plan intervention programmes that will both prevent and manage bullying in secondary schools.*

**Keywords:** Bullying, Victim, Bully, Counselling interventions.

**Introduction**

The school is supposed to be a safe place for learning, but unfortunately this is not the case because of reported cases of bullying. Bullying is a global, multi-faceted issue with negative consequences. The consequences could be long term and short term. Bullying can be defined as ongoing verbal, physical, or written harassment/abuse that occurs commonly in community or school settings. According to Nansel, Overpeck and Pilla (2001), bullying can include a verbal,

physical, and or psychological aggressive behaviour which is intentionally harmful to another person. Bullying occurs repeatedly over a period of time to an individual who is perceived to be less physically or psychologically powerful. Bullying can be done through many different outlets. The most common outlets are: spreading rumours, tormenting victims, verbal harassment, shouting down on, physical harassment, threats, gossiping, inappropriate use of technology to hurt another, intentional exclusion from peer groups. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines bullying as a form of aggressive behaviour in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort. Lee (2017) identified some forms of bullying behaviour such as issuing of threat, stealing, injuring someone, destroying of property, issuing an embarrassing statement, peddling false rumour against another person, humiliating another person, physical attack and several other dehumanizing actions against people.

School bullying is a type of bullying that occurs in any educational setting. Bullying affects students' well-being and development. Bullying can have a wide spectrum of effects on a student including anger, depression, stress and suicide. The bully can develop different social disorders or have a higher chance of engaging in criminal activity. School bullying has the tendency to affect academic, physical and mental well-being of the bullied as well as the bullies because it makes the academic environment unsafe. This may in turn make the victims have difficulty in concentrating on their school work and may also show signs of loneliness which could result in depression (Mokuolu, 2015). According to Margaret (2012), many bullies exhibit one or some of the following behaviours and characteristics: teasing and ridiculing other students, an impulsive and hot temper, even with adults, whom they are often deviant toward and inflated view of themselves. Many times, but not always, bullies are physically stronger than their peers and use their physical domination in their bullying. They are generally not concerned with others' feelings and do not display empathy toward their peers. Bullying significantly impacts the mental and physical health of the students involved; specifically, individuals who are at risk of developing conduct disorder, additional aggressive behaviours, and future problems with the law. Targets of bullying are at risk of developing depression and anxiety disorders and experiencing suicidal ideation (Olweus, 1993; Ross, 2002). Victims of bullying are also at risk of experiencing a negative school climate which could impact their ability to learn and subsequently affect their academic engagement and academic achievement. Nansel, et al (2001) outlined some of the negative outcomes of bullies:

- Bullies demonstrated poor psycho-social functioning compared to their non-involved peers
- They often become antisocial adults
- Bullies tend to be less successful academically

- They are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, both in their youth and as adults
- They are more likely to become violent adults
- They are more likely to commit acts of domestic violence and child abuse in their adult life.
- Bullies tend to beget bullies, having children who are more likely to become bullies themselves
- Bullies are more likely to commit crimes with a 4-fold increase in criminal behaviour by age twenty-four.

The impact of bully 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 complicit and unable or unwilling to control bullies' behaviour (Olweus, 2001).

Self-esteem has been described as a significant form of well-being and an assessment of the value or importance that one gives to him or herself, ratified by individuals that are significant in the education of children and adolescents, especially parents, teachers and friends. A good degree of self-esteem is crucial to the adolescents' good social relations, as it helps them to believe in and trust themselves. It is estimated that if relationships are based on violence, they are likely to be associated with low self-esteem of those involved. The family situation of bullies can often be a contributory factor. Lack of emotional support, authoritarian parenting, divorces, domestic violence and poor parental communication are all potential factors in the lives of bullies. A dysfunctional family is not necessarily a guarantee that a child will become a bully. However, a large number of bullies come from homes where there is little affection and openness. They may often witness their parents being aggressive toward friends, siblings or other members of the family.

### **Counselling Interventions**

Programmes that are designed to reduce bullying are more effective when bullying is addressed from both prevention and intervention standpoint. The intervention programmes that can prevent and manage bullying in secondary schools include:

**Social Skills Training:** This is a counselling technique which involves assisting the school bullies to acquire skills for healthy and effective social interactions, for example, starting conversation, eye contact, tone of voice, etc. Social skills training programmes are needed in schools to have positive and healthy relationships. A socially skilled person is someone who can develop and maintain friendship easily and resolve difficult social problems.

**Assertiveness Skills Training:** Assertive communication carries respect for the feelings, needs, wants, and opinion of others. This training is an important personal and interpersonal skill which will enable students to express feelings, wishes and desires appropriately thereby reducing bullying. Assertive people have control over their anger.

**Cognitive Behavioural Therapy:** Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is one of the most effective therapies in addressing the emotional distress caused by bullying. Bullying has been correlated with anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, poor self-image, substance abuse and suicide. Cognitive behaviour therapy teaches individuals to better understand their thoughts and feelings in relation to the situation. Furthermore, it teaches individuals how their thoughts and feelings influence their actions and ultimately their behaviour. In regard to bullying, often times students who are bullied are not aware of their self-defeating thought and destructive behaviour. Cognitive behaviour therapy has many benefits with students: improving communication with others, coping with fears, confronting and challenging destructive thoughts, improve self-esteem, identifying positive coping mechanisms and changing negative thoughts.( Berg, 2005)

### **Statement of the Problem**

Bullying remains one of the largest problems in schools most especially secondary schools. It has been observed as a serious social and moral problem facing our young people in secondary schools. This menace has existed in schools and the society for quite a long time. In the view of Owuamanam and Makinwa (2015), the menace has probably been ignored or regarded as a normal rite of passage for children, especially in secondary school level. The negative consequences of bullying are far reaching and extend beyond those students who are directly involved either as bullies or targets. Students who observe bullying as bystanders also experience problems themselves, including emotional distress and substance use. Bullying is a serious issue that is not going to go away until parents, teachers and administrators address the reasons why students bully, prevent and manage bullies in schools. Studies showed that students who are often bullied tend to develop severe psycho-social adjustment and emotional problems which may persist and extend into adulthood (Olweus, 1993, Rigby, 1998, Kum-pulainen, Ruefaenen & Puura, 2001). Bullying in schools has the tendency to affect academic, physical and mental well-being of the bullied and even the bullies themselves because it makes the academic environment unsafe. This may in turn make the victims have difficulty concentrating on their school work and may also show signs of loneliness which may result in depression (Mokuolu, 2015). Bullying has been associated with negative mental health consequences including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, suicidal behaviour, aggressive behaviour, social withdrawal and hyperactivity. The impact of bullying extends

well beyond the bully and the victim, to the peer group, school and community. This study, therefore sets out to investigate Bullying among secondary school students and its implications for counselling intervention.

### **Research Questions**

**The following research questions guided the study.**

1. Is there any difference in the prevalence of bullying in private and public secondary schools in Alimosho Local Government Area, Lagos State?
2. Is there any gender difference in bullying among secondary school students in Alimosho Local Government Area, Lagos State?
3. What is the relationship between bullying and self-esteem?
4. What is the relationship between bullying and family status?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between school bullying in private and public secondary schools in Alimosho Local Government Area, Lagos State.
2. There is no significant gender difference in bullying among secondary school students
3. There is no significant relationship between bullying and self-esteem of students
4. There is no significant relationship between bullying and family status.

### **Methods**

The research design that was adopted for this study was the descriptive survey method because it examined existing variables as they exist. A total number of two hundred and one students participated in the study. The participants were drawn from both public and private secondary schools in Alimosho Local Government Area, Lagos State. Simple random sampling method was used to select two public schools and two private schools. The research instruments used in collecting data for this study were Olweus Bullying scale (Olweus, 2006) and Rosenberg self-esteem scale (1965). The research instruments were adapted.

### **Result of the Findings**

Hypothesis one: There is no significant difference between bullying in private and public secondary schools in Alimosho Local Government Area, Lagos State.

Table 1: Descriptive Data of Bullying and School Types

	School type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bullying	Public	100	26.39	3.5015
	Private	101	26.0099	4.21306

Table 2: Independent Samples T-Test of Bullying between the Two School types

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Bully	Equal variances assumed	0.695	199	0.488	0.3801
	Equal variances not assumed	0.696	193.212	0.487	0.3801

Ho1: from the table 1, the study above found there was no significant difference in bullying between the private and public school students. The study showed bullying among public school students (M=26.39, S=3.50) and among private school students (M=26.01, S=4.21);  $t(199) = 0.695$ ,  $p = 0.488$ . This result suggests that bullying tendency among secondary school students does not significantly differ in the two school types. Bullying among private school students is not different from that of public school students. Ho1 is retained.

**Hypothesis Two: There is no significant gender difference in bullying among secondary school students in Alimosho Local Government Area, Lagos State.**

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Bullying and Gender.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bullying	Male	115	26.0696	4.03868
	Female	86	26.3721	3.64949

**Table 4: Independent Samples T-Test of Bullying and Gender**

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Bullying	Equal variances assumed	-0.547	199	0.585	-0.30253
	Equal variances not assumed	-0.555	191.946	0.579	-0.30253

Ho2: The table 3 revealed bullying among male students (M=26.07, S=4.04) and female students (M=26.37, S=3.65);  $t(199) = -0.547$ ,  $p=0.585$ . The results imply that bullying among male students is not significantly different from bullying among female secondary school students. In other words, there's no significant gender difference in bullying among the boys and girls in the sampled secondary schools. Ho2 is retained.

**Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between bullying and self-esteem of students.**

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Bullying and Self-Esteem**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Bully	26.199	3.87043	201
Self-esteem	22.8706	3.36499	201

**Table 6: Correlations of between Self-Esteem and Students' Bullying**

		Bully	Self-esteem
Bully	Pearson Correlation	1	.171*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.016
	N	201	201
Self-esteem	Pearson Correlation	.171*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.016	
	N	201	201

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



H03: The correlation between self-esteem and students' bullying (n=201,  $r=+0.171$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) shows a significantly weak positive association or relationship between bullying tendency and self-esteem of the students, implying that as self-esteem increased bullying tendency increased. H03 rejected.

**Hypothesis Four: There is no significant relationship between bullying and family status.**

**Table 7: Descriptive Analysis of Bullying and Family Status**

<b>Bully</b>			
	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Living together	149	26.2013	4.02355
Separated	22	25.9091	3.46285
Divorced	30	26.4	3.45014
Total	201	26.199	3.87043

**Table 8: One-way Anova of Bullying and Family Status**

<b>Bully</b>					
	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Between Groups	3.062	2	1.531	0.101	0.904
Within Groups	2992.978	198	15.116		
Total	2996.04	200			

Ho4: The table 4 presents analysis of difference in students' bullying due to different family status, namely: students whose parents are living together; separated or divorced. A cursory look at the above tables indicates that family status had no significant influence on bullying behaviour of the students as the calculated  $F = 0.101$  (2,198),  $p = 0.904 > 0.05$  level of significance. This implies that students whose parents are living together, separated or divorced exhibited similar or the same bullying behaviours.

### **Discussion of Findings**

It was shown from the result of the analysis that there was no significant difference in bullying between private and public secondary school students. This finding is supported by Brito and Oliveira (2013) that bullying is a worldwide problem that can be observed in any school; it is not limited to one type of institution, public, private, primary or secondary, urban or rural and brings, as consequences, fear, reduced school performance, and school absenteeism, and can even result in the suicide of victims. The result further indicated that bullying among male students is not significantly different from bullying among female students. This finding is in contrast with Mokuolu (2015) in his report that female students scored significantly higher in bullying than male students.

The result of the findings also showed a positive relationship between bullying and self-esteem. This result is in accordance with the findings of Brito and Oliveira (2013). It was also found that there is no significant relationship between family structure and bullying. This finding is in contrast to Steven, Bourdeauelhuji and Van-oost (2002) findings on the relationship of the family environment to children's involvement in bully/victim problems at school.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. There was no significance difference in bullying between the private and public school students.
2. Bullying among male students is not different from female students.
3. There was a positive relationship between bullying and self-esteem.
4. Family structure has no significance influence on bullying behaviour of students.

### **Recommendations**

1. Government should make the availability of school counsellors in both private and public schools compulsory.
2. School counsellors should plan intervention programmes that will both prevent and manage bullying in secondary schools in Lagos State.

3. Parents should also be involved in the counselling interventions so as to take care of the parental factor which is one of the most important causes of bullying in schools.

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