

STRATEGIES TO PREVENT BULLYING BEHAVIOUR AMONG SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ALIMOSHO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, LAGOS, NIGERIA

Agboola Oluwamumibori, Covenant University
Christiana Adetunde, Covenant University
George Olatayo, Covenant University
David Imhonopi, Covenant University
Matthew Egharevba, Covenant University
Ajibade Jegede, Covenant University
Mofoluwake Ajayi, Covenant University

ABSTRACT

Bullying is inappropriate behaviour that children and adolescents face daily in schools all around the world. It is prevalent in today's schools and is commonly found in secondary schools. It is a complicated social problem that can have serious negative implications for both bullies and victims, especially when the victim is physically or psychologically harmed. The study utilized the Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura to explain the causes of bullying among students. Therefore; the study examines the effective strategies that could be used to curb bullying in secondary schools among selected secondary schools in Alimosho local government area, Lagos, Nigeria. A survey method was utilized using the structured questionnaire as an instrument of data collection. Utilizing a simple random sampling, three hundred and fifty questionnaires were administered to students in the four secondary schools. Quantitative data was analyzed utilizing the descriptive statistics with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23. The analysis of the questionnaire was based on descriptive analysis with the use of frequency counts and percentages. Findings of the study shows that one of the strategies that can curb bullying is by educating teachers, parents, and teachers on the dangers of bullying, and setting distinct rules against bullying is another strategy to prevent bullying in schools. Therefore, teaching empathy and encouraging victims to make timely reports on incidence of bullying are crucial to mitigating bullying and its consequences in secondary schools in Lagos state.

Keywords: Bullying, Teaching Empathy, Prevention of Bullying, Strategies to Curb Bullying.

INTRODUCTION

Students associate with their colleagues while at school and work in groups for their growth. However, students may find it hard to develop morally, socially, academically, or emotionally as it should be if the school climate is less fascinating, safe, and secure. According to Olabiyi (2021), study, only a few students can relate faultlessly with their colleagues without experiencing classroom violence. Bullying is one kind of violence that has seriously endangered students' lives in Nigerian schools. Bullying is prevalent in today's schools. It is uncommon to find a secondary school that does not experience bullying (Tambawal & Rukayya, 2017). According to Ekumah

(2018), approximately 30% of more than 15,000 public school students in the United States said they were bullied regularly.

Bullying is becoming more prevalent in schools worldwide (Kim et al., 2021). In the United States, (Guo et al., 2021; Alshobramy, 2019) argue that in less than two months, as much as 20.8 percent of students take part in physical bullying, 53.6 percent in verbal bullying, 51.4 percent in social bullying, and 13.6 percent in cyberbullying in a school of 7,182 youths (level 6 to 10). In the United Kingdom, the British School Health Education unit discovered that their classmates consistently bullied a quarter of 10-11-year-olds (Corfe et al., 2021). Similarly, another report indicated that 15 percent of Australian students reported being bullied every week (Bayer et al., 2018). In Nigeria, a cross-sectional review was conducted on students in grades 10 and 11. According to the review, more than half (56.8%) of students in the sample have been bullied in the previous month (Adeosun et al., 2015).

Bullying has now been related to an increase in mental health issues (Van Ryzin et al., 2018). Ttofi & Farrington (2021) found that school bullying is related to higher rates of violence later on in life. These negative consequences make it clear that bullying needs to be curtailed. Over the year, there has been significant growth in creating antibullying initiatives, urging teachers and other school administrators to take a proactive role in preventing bullying incidents in their classrooms (Waasdorp et al., 2021). Despite the rising cases of bullying in Nigerian secondary schools, the Federal Ministry of Education (2007) stated that preventing bullying in schools remains a significant problem since bullying incidents in Nigerian schools are rarely reported. This is because most students believe that if they report cases of bullying to school officials, nothing will be done (Bradshaw et al., 2015). Even though bullying has been extensively examined, the similarity of students' and teachers' definitions of bullying remains a topic of academic debate. According to Van Verseveld et al. (2021) students are less likely than teachers to believe that current antibullying initiatives and techniques are effective. Understanding students' definitions of bullying are different from how teachers and school administrators view the definition of bullying and how to apply workable strategies to reduce the activity. These strategies have varying degrees of success, ranging from reducing bullying to worsening the problem. The significant reasons these programs fail could be due to a lack of consistency in the strategies roll-out and a lack of support from teachers and school administrators in reducing the incidences of bullying in school. According to Borge & Larsson (2018), bullying will continue to be condoned in schools unless there is a change among school officials in how they interpret and respond to aggressive behaviour among students in the classroom.

According to Portnow et al. (2018) many schools attempt to reduce bullying by using programs that lack the support of teachers and do not meet the school's specific needs. They suggested that getting support from teachers and school administrations must be the first step in a successful intervention. Empowering students to intervene on behalf of victims is essential in most bullying prevention programs. A variety of factors influence whether a student will intervene in a bullying incident. When bullying is directed against a close friend (Patterson et al., 2017) when they are empathic toward others (Murphy et al., 2018), and when peers have similar antibullying attitudes, students are more likely to intervene (Gini et al., 2020). Those who have witnessed bullying directly are more likely to intervene when other students experience bullying in the classroom (Jiang et al., 2022).

The bystander's relationship with the victim, the severity of the situation, and their personal experiences are also factors to consider (Patterson et al., 2017) discovered that when bullying is directed at a close friend. Students are more willing to intervene than other victims. Bystanders who have witnessed bullying are more likely to intervene, regardless of the type of bullying (eg.,

verbal, social, or physical). The severity of the bullying and whether or not they need to intervene are influenced by a child's interpretation of the situation (Patterson et al., 2017; Pronk et al., 2021). Teachers are sometimes confused about whether certain behaviours exhibited by students should be considered bullying; therefore, it is understandable if students cannot detect when they are being bullied. When bullying occurs between friends, a child gets disturbed (Bjereld et al., 2021). A student may be unwilling to separate themselves from peer interaction since it is difficult to distinguish between the forms of bullying that occur in school (Thompson, 2019).

One of the most effective strategies for reducing bullying is to train teachers and school administrators on the consequences of bullying and how to stop it. If there could be more support from teachers and school authorities, bullying would be reduced in schools (Xu et al., 2022). Increased playground monitoring and improved classroom management have also helped to reduce the number of bullying incidences (Ttofi & Farrington, 2019; Boge & Larsson, 2018). An integrated school approach is suitable for maximizing positive benefits and preventing bullying (Braithwaite & Ahmed, 2019). Despite the various strategies used to prevent bullying in schools, there remains a dearth in how teachers and school administrators respond to bullying and how they are aware of bullying incidents among their students. This study examines the effective strategies that could curb bullying in selected secondary schools in Alimosho local government area, Lagos state.

Research Question

What strategies may be used to prevent bullying in secondary schools?

Objective of the Study

Identify the strategies that could be used to prevent bullying in secondary schools

LITERATURE REVIEW/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptualization of Bullying

Bullying can be described as a pattern of negative behaviour by one person, or a group directed at a typically weaker individual, where the adverse action includes any intentional inflicting of pain or distress on another or an effort to do so. It is a subset of aggressive behaviours, such as social exclusion, spreading rumours, making obscene gestures, and any other forms of behaviour that are in contradiction with another person's wishes, that are carried out verbally and physically (Olweus et al., 2019; Gaffney et al., 2021). According to Olweus et al. (2019) bullying is an aggressive behaviour characterized by two specific criteria: repetition (a victim is frequently exposed to unpleasant actions over time) and power imbalance. An encounter is not deemed bullying if there is no difference in physical or psychological strength between two quarrelling or fighting people.

Bullying is defined as deliberately harming someone verbally, psychologically, and physically. Bullying is a type of behaviour that is frequently repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power. Teasing and name-calling, sending threatening messages, and spreading harmful rumours are some of the acts. It could be a threat or use of physical force directed at an individual, another person, or a specific group, with the potential for injury, death, physical damage, or mental disturbance. It is a common practice found in many places in the world.

Strategic Interventions for Bullying Problems Management

Effective intervention measures can be implemented on various levels, from institutional to individual. As school administrators and teachers try to prevent acts of violence from occurring in their schools, they increasingly look to school counsellors and other helping professionals, particularly school psychologists, for leadership and assistance in formulating safety rules (Freedman, 2018). School counsellors and psychologists are essentially agents of change and prevention within the educational system (Hailes et al., 2021; Zaky, 2018). As a result, school counsellors and psychologists are responsible for improving their intervention skills, particularly those tactics that can aid with bullying issues in schools. As a result, school counsellors and psychologists in Nigerian schools should consider implementing the solutions provided therein to address bullying issues effectively. School counsellors and psychologists will need to provide treatments to raise pupils' degree of compassion and empathy, according to (Tuttle et al., 2019), because bullies tend to demonstrate little empathy for their target. These could include activities that promote empathy for others' feelings. Role reversal strategies, in which students role-play situations in which they put themselves in the shoes of another, may aid in developing empathy. Furthermore, teaching empathy to school children at a young age can assist them in avoiding becoming bullies later in life. As a result, school counsellors and psychologists may help both bullies and victims by teaching them a new type of education known as "empathy training." which teaches students as early as five years old to empathize with others' feelings and treat others with respect. Compared to individuals who have not received this empathy training, those who have are more likely to be less aggressive.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura founded the social learning theory. According to him, Modelling is the main perspective that influences learning (Bandura & Hall, 2018; Tanrikulu, 2018). Observing others and imitating their practical way of behaving as their own is how individuals learn differently. Observing others will learning process (Huston, 2018; Mcleod, 2014). Learning can be defined as a shift in mental processes that results in the ability to display different behaviours because of observing others from a social learning perspective. Attention, retention, production, and motivation are the four variables that must be met for social learning to occur. Direct, symbolic, and synthetic modelling are the three types of modelling. Social learning theory can improve teaching and learning by assisting with classroom management.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey techniques were utilized in gathering data from the field with the use of a questionnaire to help the researcher test the strategies for preventing bullying among selected secondary school in command secondary school, Elias secondary school, Good shepherd secondary school, and Ikotun high school. This method involves the collection of data, through the use of a structured questionnaire. The objective populace for the examination were the students at the selected secondary schools which in the long run helped to estimate the sample size. Quantitative data was analysed utilizing the descriptive statistics with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23. The total number from the selected secondary school was 6,490.

RESULTS

This section presents the distribution based on the characteristics of the respondents of the study, which include gender, age, class, religion; parents' marital status, parents' income level, and weight are presented in this section (Table 1).

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Male	162	49.1
Female	167	50.6
No Response	1	0.3
Total	330	100.0
Number Of Siblings		
1-2	92	27.9
3-4	131	39.7
5-6	52	15.8
7-8	18	5.5
8 And above	13	3.9
No Response	24	7.3
Total	330	100.0
Age Of Respondent		
10-13 Years	128	38.8
14-16 years	157	47.6
17-19 years	36	10.9
20 And above	3	0.9
No Response	6	1.8
Class In School		
Jss1	76	23.0
Jss2	83	25.2
Jss3	53	16.1
Sss1	41	12.4
Sss2	53	16.1
Sss3	24	7.3
Religion		
Christianity	224	67.9
Muslim	101	30.6
Others	2	0.6
No Response	3	0.9
Parents Marital Status		
Single	61	18.5
Married	234	70.9
Separated	16	4.8
Divorced	2	0.6
Widowed	10	3.0
No Response	7	2.1
Parents Income		
N 11,000	66	20.0
N 11,000-N 30,000	73	22.1
N 31,000-60,000	50	15.2
N 61,000-90,000	34	10.3
N 91,000 and above	74	22.4
No Response	33	10.0

Source: Field Survey,2021

The table above shows the frequency distribution for the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. About half (50.6%) of the population of this survey were female while the

remaining were male and only 1(0.3%) respondent did not answer the question. Apart from 7.3% who did not respond to the number of siblings they had. 40% of the respondents have between 3 and 4 siblings and 27.9% have 1 to 2 siblings only less than 4% of respondents had more than 8 siblings. A tenth of the respondents were between the ages of 17-19 years while most (39.7%) were between the ages of 14-16 years old. Out of the total respondents, 23.05 were from JSS1 class, 25.25 are from Jss2 class, 16.1% of the respondents are in Jss3, 12.4% are in Ss1, 16.1% of the respondents are in Ss2, while 7.3% of the respondents are in Ss3. Most (70.9%) of the respondent's parents were married, while 18.5% were from a single parenting household. About 2/3rd of all respondents were Christians, while 30.6% reported being Muslim. Majority of the respondents' parents earned between N91,000 and above, while 20.0% earn N11,000, 22.1% of the respondent's parent earn 11,000-30,00, 15.2% earn N31,000-N60,000, 10.3% earn N61,000-N90,000 and 10.0% did not give their response.

Descriptive Statistics for the Research Question

Research Question: What are the strategies that could be used to prevent bullying behaviour in schools? (Table 2).

Item	Count (N)	Percentage (N%)
Teaching Empathy and Kindness in schools	66	18.3
Educating parents, teachers, and students about the dangers of bullying	89	24.7
Reporting cases of bullying	62	17.2
Set distinct rules against bullying	26	7.2
Building a positive and safe environment for learning	3	0.8
Threatening bullies with a potential jail term	8	2.2
Punishing bullies	18	5
Suspension of bullies	25	6.9
Expulsion of bullies	25	6.9
Punishing bullies by engaging them in manual labour such as sweeping the school compound	1	0.3
Publicly embarrassing bullies on the school assembly ground	4	1.1
Giving bullies names	1	0.3
Inviting the parents of bullies to flog their bullying children	3	0.8
Inviting the parents of bullied victims to flog their children's bullies	1	0.3
Flogging bullies as a form of punishment	5	1.4
Taking immediate action whenever a case of bullying is reported	1	0.3
Juvenile imprisonment of bullies	1	0.3
Giving bullied victims whips to flog their bullies	1	0.3
Bullies should be made to pay the bills of hospitalized bullied children	4	0.3
Due documentation of acts of bullying should be done in bullies' testimonials and records	1	1.1
Installation of security cameras within school premises	4	0.3
Capital punishment	1	1.1
Corporal punishment	1	0.3
Reorientation of all students via talks and seminars	1	0.3
Antibullying campaigns should be done periodically	2	0.3

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The study portrayed that 66 (18.3%) of the respondents stated that teaching empathy and kindness among students is one of the other strategies to curb bullying among secondary school students in Lagos state. 24.7% of the respondents agree that educating parents, teachers, and students on the dangers of bullying can curb bullying in school. 17.2% say that reporting bullies can curb bullying among secondary school students. Out of the total respondents in the sample area, 7.2% stated that distinct rules should be set to curb bullying, and 0.8% of the few respondents suggested that building a positive and safe environment can curb bullying.

The result in Table 2 shows that 8 (2.2%) of the respondents stated that threatening bullies with a potential jail term will curb bullying among secondary school students. 5% of the respondents say that bullies should be punished to curb bullying, 6.9% suggest that bullies should be suspended while 15 (6.9%) say that bullies should be expelled from school. Few respondents 1 (0.3%) also suggest punishing bullies by engaging them in manual labour such as sweeping the school compound. 1.1% of the respondent in the survey area stated that bullies should be publicly embarrassed on the school assembly ground to curb bullying, 0.3% of the respondents say giving bullies names might curb bullying in secondary schools.

From the Table 2, 0.8% of the respondents suggested that inviting the parents of bullies to flog the bullying children, 0.3% of the respondents stated that inviting the parents of bullied victims to flog their children's bullies, 0.3% of the few respondents say taking immediate action whenever a case of bullying is reported can curb bullying. (0.3%) of the respondents stated that Juvenile imprisonment of bullies might also stop bullying incidences in schools. 0.3% of the few respondents stated that giving bullied victims whips to flog their bullies and also (0.3%) of the respondents say bullies should be made to pay the bills of hospitalized bullied children, 1 (1.1%) stated that due documentation of acts of bullying should be done in bullies' testimonials and records, 4 (0.3%) also stated that installation of security camera within the school premises, 1 (1.1%) say capital punishment can curb the act, while 1 (0.3%) of the respondents stated that capital punishment will curb bullying among secondary school students. 1 (0.3%) expressed that reorientation of all students via talks and seminars, 0.3% suggested that antibullying campaigns should be done periodically, 0.5% stated that antibullying flyers should be pasted everywhere in school to serve as a reminder of the dangers of bullying, while 2(0.5%) of the respondents say that junior students should be separated from senior students to curb bullying from secondary school students in Lagos state.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study reveals that the students suggested that one of the strategies that could be used in preventing bullying is by educating parents, teachers, and students about the dangers of bullying. This statement corroborates with that of (Hochschild et al., 2019). They also stated that educating students can be done by pasting fliers on notice boards on the school premises about the dangers of bullying other students. More so, the respondents stated that teaching empathy and kindness in school is another measure of addressing bullying in school. The study also stated that reporting cases of bullying are one of the strategies for dealing with bullying in school. The respondents suggested that distinct rules should be set to curb bullying and building a positive and safe environment can curb bullying. The study reveals that threatening bullies with a potential jail term will curb bullying among secondary school students and respondents say that bullies should be punished to curb bullying.

The result of the study reveals that suspending and expelling bullies are other strategies to stop bullying. This statement corroborates with (Hall, 2017), who stated that suspending and

expelling bullies can reduce bullying incidences in schools. The other strategies, as suggested by the respondents are punishing bullies by engaging them in manual labour such as sweeping the school compound, giving bullies names, inviting the parents of bullies to flog their bullying children, inviting the parents of bullied victims to flog their children's bullies, flogging bullies as a form of punishment and taking immediate action whatever, a case of bullying is reported are strategies of curbing bullying. The study stated that juvenile imprisonment, giving bullied victims whips to flog their bullies, bullies should be made to pay the bills of hospitalized bullied children, due documentation of acts of bullying should be done in bullies' testimonials and records, installation of security cameras within the school premises, capital punishment, corporal punishment, reorientation of all students via talk seminars and antibullying campaigns should be done periodically are the other strategies to stop bullying in schools

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the strategies that could be used to prevent bullying behaviour in school is by educating teachers, parents, and students on the dangers of bullying. Teaching empathy and kindness is another strategy that could be used in addressing bullying in secondary schools. Teachers, school administrators, and the government should put efforts in place to ensure all forms of bullying must not be condoned as the school environment must be safe, secure, and conducive to ensure that students grow both morally and socially academically, and physically. The study recommends that teaching empathy and encouraging victims to make timely reports on incidences of bullying are crucial to mitigating bullying and its consequences in secondary schools in Lagos State.

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Received: 29-Jun-2022, Manuscript No. JIACS-22-12272 ; **Editor assigned:** 30-Jun-2022, PreQC No. JIACS-22-12272 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 14-Jul-2022, QC No. JIACS-22-12272 ; **Revised:** 18-Jul-2022, Manuscript No. JIACS-22-12272(R); **Published:** 22-Jul-2022