

Determinants of Bullying Behaviours Among Secondary School Students in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study examined the determinants of bullying behaviours among secondary school students in Rivers State. The study formulated two research questions and hypotheses. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A sample of 300 parents drawn from population of 1550 parents from the three senatorial district in Rivers State. A stratified random sampling techniques was used. The instrument used was a structured 4-point likert scale questionnaire titled Bullying Behaviour among Secondary School Students Questionnaire (BBASSSQ). The face and content validity were done by an expert in Measurement and Evaluation. A reliability coefficient of 0.80 of the instrument was established through Cronbach Alpha statistics. The data collected was analysed using mean and standard deviation to the answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using independent sample t-test and ANOVA. The following factors or determinants were considered such as family structure, and Gender. Results showed that bullying behaviours among senior secondary school students in Rivers State across the three family structures is high when compared to the criterion mean of 2.5. The null hypothesis which was stated earlier that; there is no significant difference between family structure and bullying behaviour among senior secondary school students in Rivers State was therefore accepted. Following the decision rule, the null hypothesis was rejected since $p < 0.05$. Therefore, it can be inferred that male and female senior secondary school students in Rivers State differ statistically in their bullying behaviour in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The researcher recommends that parents should give proper training to their children and family structures (monogamous, polygamous and single parents) should show love and care to their children not minding the situation they find themselves and these will reduce bully behaviours in schools.

Keywords: Bullying behaviour, Gender, Family structure, Victimization

INTRODUCTION

Bullying among school children is a very old phenomenon with significant number of students being targets of the bullying. It occurs when a person or group of persons repeatedly say or do hurtful things to another person who is unable to defend himself or herself. Bullying among secondary school students have damaging consequences to the students involved, their peers, parents, disrupt school activities if not checked. School bullying is a global problem involving a high proportion of students world-wide. Bullying is defined as aggressive intentional acts carried out by a group or an

individual repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself. Bullying is also a systematic abuse of power by peer. (Olweus2015). Globally bullying is recognized as a complex and serious problem. In 1996, the World Health Organization adopted a resolution declaring violence a leading worldwide public health problem (WHO 49. 28). In the school context peer bullying is the most common form of violence among children and youths. Bullying compromises children” rights including the right to education as requested by the convention on the rights of the child (the United Nations 1989).He defined this behaviour as “aggressive, intentional acts, carried out by a victim or an individual repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself (Olweus, 1993, P. 48) Bullying comprises verbal attack (e.g. name calling, threats,) physical behaviours (hitting, kicking, damaging victims property) and relational social aggression excluding rumour spreading (Smith, 2014).

Bullying also involves unnecessary punishment given to a child as a result of seniority in class. This is done mostly by prefects of a school in order to gain respect from junior students. In school now days, a child is bullied for not releasing his or her lunch pack or money. Therefore, with the fear of not beaten or punished the student releases his money. The victim cries after been bullied by the senior students. World Health Organization defines bullying as a threat or physical use of force, aiming at the individual, another person, a specific community or group which can result in injury, death, physical damage, development disorder or deficiency. The concept of bullying at school is not new, however it has been increasing in recent years. Bullying is defined as continuous and respective actions on the part of one or more of the other students that are focused on hurting and harming others consciously by abuse of power. Bullying in school increases day by day and it is a serious problem to the society. The World Health Organization (WHO) stated that the frequency of bullying is between 1-50%. In several studies, it was found that the frequency of bullying behaviour is between 8 to 30%. It is emphasized that bullying may cause physical and mental problems in junior class. It was observed that students who bully have poor attendance records and do poorly academically in school. Generally, bullying behaviour starts in elementary school and increase in SS1 to SS III. Bullying junior ones can lead to student’s death or injury on the student’s body. Bullying behaviour can put fear in the life of a student leading that child to be afraid of going to school because of fear of not being punished by senior students. The following factors will be discussed.

Family Structure

The family background plays a great role in bullying behaviour among secondary school students. A child that lacks love in their home can see life as a place of punishment and retaliation. Parental style of discipline can lead to bullying behaviour in a child. Most violence is learnt through what happens in the home. People with past or current experience with violence in the home are likely to perpetuate that cycle of violence in other relationships (Olweus, 2015). Home life is a good predictor of future violent or bully behaviour. Parents who often apply negative communication such as sarcasm, the child will get used to this attitude and tend to apply it in their social life. Children will also have a tendency towards bullying if parents do not provide affections and direction regarding positive attitude (Usman, 2013). Parental involvement and high monitoring provide a tendency to decrease adolescent involvement in bullying behaviour (Meter & Bauman 2018). Students who have poor quality of attachment with parents and peers are reported predictors of bullying and victimization (Nikiforou, et al 2013). A child from polygamous home has bullying behaviour than a child from

monogamous home because he feels the riches of his parent covers him and he can bully fellow student as he likes.

Baldry (2003, "713") posits: almost half of all boys and girls reported different types of bullying and victimization..., with boys more involved than girls in bullying others. Explosive to inter-parental physical violence and direct bullying were significant associated especially for girls: girls exposed to father's violence against the mother and those exposed to mother's violence against the father were among the most likely to loudly directly others compassed with girls who had not been exposed to any interpersonal violence.

As to clear from Balding's observation, families whose parental figures have turned their homes into battle fields greatly impact negatively on the psychology of their offspring, one such negative behaviour is bullying behaviour. Children produced from such homes already feel that it in a normal order to abuse, beat and harm. Their aggressive behaviour is high, intense and of course volatile and inflammable, ready to explode at the slightest provocation.

Also, a family relationship that is negative conduces to bullying in secondary schools. A father-mother relationship that is not strong, lasting or bonding creates a very fertile ground for bullying behaviour to grow and matures, which is then exposed in schools. For instance, parents who are divorced or estranged risk having their children called hurtful names by their fellow students in schools. Notably, expression is a defense of the mind under normal and abnormal conditions to neutralize or put out of action unwelcome and unpleasant thoughts. Though defensive as a mechanism for passing oppression resistance, expressed emotions/desires are potentially in action when ignited, especially for the adolescents. It is a method, therefore, to resist these abusive names and reaffirm their family names and identities, the abused students, who are usually angry and aggressive, fight back as retaliation, leading graciously to bullying behaviours.

Gender as a Determinant of Bullying Behaviours in Secondary Schools

Patriarchal psychology, that is a psychology that gives the male gender a dominant power and superiority behaviour as steeped in cultural practices, tends to play out in secondary schools. Children whose families exhibit unchecked patriarchal dominance naturally feel that the female gender is weaker; hence the latter is likely to be victimized by the male-gender perpetration. The females are, thus, bullied in discussions, sports activities, and other rehearsals held at school. These females are already aware of the dangerous pose of power potential held on by their 'superior' males. So, they even psychologically get bullied before the actual victimization. However, this is not always the case even with children from such sociological homes. It has been observed that the female gender unexpectedly receives sexual mails or messages as well as nude pictures from the males to reduce them into condescending to male sexual libidos. Most times, the female pictures are used by these sometimes-anonymous males in this perpetuation. However, since psychologically speaking, the females less quickly respond to sexual activation than do the males, this perpetuation is thus left frustrated and truncated (Zsila, Urban, Griffiths, & Demetrovics, 2019). Logically, the male students are more often the perpetuations of cyber bullying and yet economically, at the same time, they become more often the victims of it. Yirci, et al (2021) also reveal that female students tend to rumour (gossip) more than male students on virtual platforms on issues of cyber bullying. It is also noted in the study that the reaction by female students to cyberbullying is crying. It is probably because of their emotional approach to resolving the inner twits of bullying effects that makes female students more likely prone to rumour cyberbullying behaviours than the male students whose reaction is mostly aggression behaviours.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to examine the determinants of bullying behaviour among secondary students in Rivers State. Specifically, the purpose of the study is

1. To evaluate how family structure leads to bullying behaviour among secondary school students in River State.
2. To ascertain age of students as a determinant to bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Rivers State.
3. To find out if gender is a determinant to bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Rivers State.

Research Questions

- 1) To what extent does family structure determines bullying behaviour among students in secondary schools in Rivers State?
- 2) To what extent does gender determines bullying behaviour among secondary school students?

Hypotheses

- 1) There is no significant difference between family structure and bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Rivers State
- 2) There is no significant difference between gender and bullying behaviour among secondary school student in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study are all the parents in three senatorial districts in Rivers State. The total population is 1550 from the three senatorial district in Rivers State. The sample size was calculated using Taro Yaman formula which is 300 parents. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select parents based on family structure and gender. The distributions are as follows: Family structure, we have monogamous family-150, polygamous family-96 and single parent -54 and gender: male -170 and female -130. The instrument used for the study is questionnaire titled “Bullying Behaviour Among Secondary School Students (BBASSSQ)”. The instrument has two sections, the first consist of demographic data of the respondents such as gender and family structures with 10 items for the body of the questionnaire. The instrument was validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation. A reliability coefficient of 0.80 of the instrument was established through Cronbach Alpha statistics. The instruments were administered to the students through the assistance of research assistants. The data obtained were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. Independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question 1: To what extent does family structure determines bullying behaviours among secondary school students in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Family Structure and Bullying Behaviours among Senior Secondary School Students

S/N	Items	Monogamous			Polygamous			Single parents		
		Mean	SD	Rmk	Mean	SD	Rmk	Mean	SD	Rmk
1.	Students trained by single parents, exhibit bullying behaviour.	3.54	0.77	HE	3.71	0.45	HE	3.57	0.50	HE
2.	Students from monogamous family do not have bullying behaviour.	2.27	0.90	LE	1.68	0.46	LE	1.70	0.46	LE
3.	Bullying behaviour in polygamous family is more prevalent.	3.27	0.81	HE	3.57	0.53	HE	3.81	0.39	HE
4.	Polygamous family upbringing leads to bullying behaviours in students.	3.04	0.83	HE	2.92	0.91	LE	3.25	0.58	HE
5.	Bullying behaviours in single parents family structure is more common.	3.27	0.81	HE	3.28	0.74	HE	3.46	0.57	HE
	Aggregate mean	3.07		HE	3.03		HE	3.15		HE

Table 1 indicates the result of determinants of bullying behaviours among senior secondary schools students based on family structures in public secondary schools in Rivers State with means and standard deviations. Item 1 indicates (M = 3.54, SD = 0.77), (M = 3.71, SD = 0.45) and (M = 3.57, SD = 0.49) which implies that all senior secondary school students in the different family structures to high extent accept the fact that students trained by single parents exhibit bullying behaviours. Item 2 indicates the (M = 2.26, SD = 0.90), (M = 1.68, SD = 0.46) and (M = 1.70, SD = 0.46) which implies that all students in senior secondary school in the different family structures to a low extent rejected the statement that students from monogamous family do not exhibit bullying behaviours. Responses from item 3 indicates that (M = 3.27, SD = 0.81), (M = 3.57, SD = 0.53) and (M = 3.81, SD = 0.39) which implies that all the students to high extent attest to the fact that bullying behaviours in polygamous family is more prevalent among senior secondary school students in River State. Item 4 indicates that (M = 3.04, SD = 0.83), (M = 2.91, SD = 0.91) and (M = 3.25, SD = 0.58) which implies that all the students in the different family structures to high extent agreed that polygamous upbringing leads to bullying behaviours in students. Item 5 indicates that (M = 3.27, SD = 0.81), (M = 3.28, SD = 0.74) and (M = 3.46, SD = 0.57) which implies that all the students in the different family structures to a high extent agreed to the fact that bullying behaviours in single parent's family structure is more common. The grand mean for the three family structures i.e. monogamous, polygamous and single parent are (M = **3.07**), (M = **3.03**) and (M = **3.15**) which implies that bullying

behaviours among senior secondary school students in Rivers State across the three family structures is high when compared to the criterion mean of 2.5.

Research Question 2: To what extent does gender determine bullying behaviours among secondary school students in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Bullying Behaviours among Senior Secondary School Students Based on Gender

S/N	Items	Males			Females		
		Mean	SD	Rmk	Mean	SD	Rmk
6.	Peer influence cause students to bully other students.	3.70	0.45	HE	3.47	0.54	HE
7.	Female students are more aggressive when it comes to bullying behaviours	1.93	0.48	VLE	1.78	0.49	LE
8.	Students bully junior students because of seniority in class	3.60	0.52	HE	3.70	0.46	HE
9.	Male students force their fellow students to join cultism because of bullying behaviour in them.	3.64	0.48	HE	3.66	0.51	HE
10.	Male students bully more than the female students	3.64	0.50	VHE	3.58	0.56	HE
	Aggregate Mean	3.30		HE	3.23		HE

Table 2 shows the result of bullying behaviours among senior secondary school students based on gender in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State with means and standard deviations. Item 6 shows (M = 3.70, SD = 0.45) and (M = 3.47, SD = 0.54) which implies that to a high extent influence by peers cause students to bully other students. Item 7 shows that (M = 1.93, SD = 0.48) and (M = 1.78, SD = 0.49) which implies that both male and female students to a very low extent disagreed to the fact that female students are more aggressive when it comes to bullying behaviours. Item 8 shows (M = 3.60, SD = 0.52) and (M = 3.70, SD = 0.46) which implies that both male and female students to high extent agreed to the fact that students bully junior students because of seniority in class. Item 9 shows (M = 3.64, SD = 0.48) and (M = 3.66, SD = 0.51) which implies that both gender to high extent agreed to the statement that male students force their fellow students to join cultism because of bullying behaviour in them. Item 10 shows (M 3.58, SD = 0.56) and (M = 3.54, SD = 0.50) which implies that male and female students to a high extent agreed to the fact that male students bully more than their female counterparts. The grand mean for male and female are (M = 3.30) and (M = 3.23) which implies that bullying behaviours among senior secondary school students based on gender is very high when compared to the criterion mean of 2.5.

Test of Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant difference between family structure and bullying behaviour among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 3: One-way ANOVA results between family structure and bullying behaviours among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	14.059	2	7.029	3.313	.038
Within Groups	630.138	297	2.122		
Total	644.197	299			

Decision rule: reject null hypothesis if $p < 0.05$ otherwise accept

Table 3 indicates the result of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test carried out on bullying behaviours among senior secondary school students based on the family structure. The result indicates that, there is no significant difference between family structure and bullying behaviours among senior secondary school students in public secondary schools in Rivers State $F(2, 299) = 3.313 = 0.038$. The null hypothesis which was stated earlier that; there is no significant difference between family structure and bullying behaviour among senior secondary school students in Rivers State was therefore accepted.

H0₂: There is no significant difference between gender and bullying behaviours among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 4: Result of t-test on significant difference between gender and bullying behaviours among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	A	t-value	p-value	Decision
Males	170	16.52	1.29	298	0.05	2.197	0.29	Significant
Females	130	16.21	1.13					

Decision rule: reject null hypothesis if $p < 0.05$ otherwise accept

Table 4 indicates the result of an independent sample t-test conducted to compare the mean scores of male and female senior secondary school students on determinants of bullying behaviours in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The result above indicates that there is a difference in the mean scores between males ($M = 16.52$, $SD = 1.29$) and females ($M = 16.21$, $SD = 1.13$) which is 0.29. The result of the independent sample t-test indicates that there was difference statistically between the average bullying of male and female senior secondary school students in Rivers State ($p = 0.006$). Following the decision rule, the null hypothesis was rejected since p – value of 0.006 is less than the 0.05. Therefore, it can be inferred that male and female senior secondary school students in Rivers State differ statistically in their bullying behaviour in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of findings is on the determinants of bullying behaviours among senior secondary school students. The result in Table 1 showed that the grand mean for the three family structures i.e monogamous, polygamous and single parent are ($M = 3.07$), ($M = 3.03$) and ($M = 3.15$) which implies that to a high extent bullying behaviours among senior secondary school students in Rivers State is high when compared to the criterion mean of 2.5. This finding corresponds with HBSC survey (2001) who indicated that bullying involvement prevalence did not significantly differ among adolescents living with single parents, or in polygamous and monogamous family. This finding is not

the same with that of Nwachukwu (2011) who reported that bullying behaviour affect children from single parent homes and these students tend to be more hostile, hyperactive and aggressive in nature. Similarly, it also differed from findings of Pepler and Craig (2010) who said that the type of family a child comes from determined to a large extent the way he or she sees bullying as a social act or behaviour. The research question 2 was analyzed in Table 2 which showed the mean and standard deviation of bullying behaviours among secondary school students based on gender. The result showed the grand mean and standard deviations for male and female are ($M = 3.30$) and ($M = 3.23$) which implies that bullying behaviours among secondary school students based on gender is very high when compared to the criterion mean of 2.5. This is in line with the findings of Olweus (2016) where it was reported that between 5 to 9 percent of students are exposed to bullying regularly globally. This finding is in line with Bosworth (2009) that found out that boys engage in higher amount of bullying behaviours than girls. He also found out that males were more likely to stay involved in bullying over a 4 year period of time than females. Farrington (2013) noted that the prevalence of female bullies reduces steadily with age but male bullies remain constant from 8 to 16 years. Again Chapell, Hasselman, Kitchin, Lomon, Maclver & Sarullo (2006), discovered that males bullied significantly more in both elementary and high school than female did. Table 3 revealed one-way ANOVA results between family structure and bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Rivers State. The result indicates that, there is no significant difference between family structure and bullying behaviours among secondary school students in public secondary school students in Rivers State. $F(2, 299) = 3.313 = 0.038$. The null hypothesis which was stated earlier that, there is no significant difference between family structure and bullying behaviour among secondary students in Rivers State was therefore accepted. The finding is similar to previous studies such as (Espelage, Bosworth & Simon, 2000) that identified familial risk factors to be common among children who bully. These factors include overly permissive parenting, (with a lack of clear limits for the child's behaviour) lack of parental supervision and harsh corporal discipline as well as experience of child. This goes along with Olweus (2017) and Crothers and Kolbert, (2008) who asserted that those who bully may come from families where there is lack of attention and warmth towards the child, poor supervision and the use of physical and verbal aggression. Children who bully others at school frequently have parents who teach them how to retaliate and to hit back when attacked. Therefore, children living in homes with violence between their parent are at a greater risk of themselves displaying violent, aggressive and bullying behaviour outside the home. The second hypothesis showed that there is no significant difference between gender and bullying behaviours among secondary school student in Rivers State. The result is shown in Table 4, which indicates result of t-test on significant difference between gender and bullying behaviours among secondary school students in Rivers state. The result above indicates that there is a difference in the mean scores between males ($M = 16.52, SD = 1.29$) and females ($M = 16.21, SD = 1.13$) which is 0.29. The result of the independent sample t-test indicates that there was difference statistically between the average bullying of male and female in secondary school students in Rivers State ($p = 0.006$). Following the decision rule, the null hypothesis was rejected since $p < 0.05$. Therefore, it can be inferred that male and female secondary school students in Rivers State differ statistically in their bullying behaviour in secondary schools in Rivers State.

This is in line with Silva M.A. L et al (2013) which reveals that male gender has greater chance of bullying than female. Again males are reportedly involved in bullying compared to teenage females. Males are significantly more likely to be bullies in schools than females. Males are more often involved in all types of intimidation while females are involved in verbal and emotional bullying that is gossiping.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that family structure such as polygamous, monogamous and single parent influence secondary school students in bullying behaviour. The following recommendations have been based on the findings and implications of this study.

- Parents should give proper training to their children this will reduce bully behaviours in them
- All the parents from the family structures (monogamous, polygamous and single parents) should show love and care to their children not minding the situation they find themselves.
- Parents should not be harsh to the children and also check their children friends.

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