



BULLYING AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract: *The study investigated the effect of bullying in adolescents, as it relates to cases of victimization, vandalism and gangsterism which are threats to national security. The purpose of this study was to ascertain the existence of adolescent bullying in secondary schools and its attendant effects on national security. Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The sample for the study was 120 students who were randomly selected from junior and secondary schools. Primary data were collected with the aid of a structured questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using Chi Square to test the relationships. The findings suggest that bullying among adolescent is related to national security while male adolescent bully differ significantly from female adolescent bullying. The study therefore recommends that concerted efforts at establishing and strengthening counselling services in schools should be initiated with a view to protecting school children from bullies and violent behavior of other students and resolving issues that bothers on bullying, especially physical violence against children. Similarly, counselling services should also be incorporated into the school curriculum in Nigeria*

Keywords: *Bullying, Adolescent, Threat, National Security, secondary schools.*

Introduction

Despite anti-bullying campaigns and renewed efforts to eliminate bullying in schools, bullying has continued to be a major concern for parents and general people in society today. Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated over time (Dictionary. Com, 2015). Both students who are bullied and who bully others may have serious lasting emotional and psychological problems.

Burger, Dagmar, Sprober, Bauman and Rigby (2015) defined bullying as a subcategory of aggressive behavior characterized by the following

three minimum criteria: (1) Hostile intent (2) Imbalance of power and (3) Repetition over a period. Bullying may thus be defined as repeated aggressive behavior. Olweus (2013) noted that bullying occurs when a person is exposed repeatedly and over a time to negative actions. He stated that negative actions occur when a person intentionally inflicts injury or discomfort upon another person through physical contacts or in other ways. Bullying usually takes the form of spreading rumors, isolation from peer groups, gossiping, ridiculing, extorting or stealing money and possession (Pepler & Craig, 2007; Ma, Stewin and Mah, 2001). Bullying is mean spirited and pointless but ironically, it is a regular part of childhood. Bullying is a multifaceted behavior that



shifts with the situation, the people involved, the time and place. It occurs to all people irrespective of their age, sex, race, class, sexual orientation, national origin or any other factor. Bullying takes place mostly where there is power imbalance, that is the bullied is of lesser power.

A bullying culture can develop in any context in which humans interact with one another. This includes school, family, the workplace, home neighborhood, and playground. Bullying may occur in isolated places – bathrooms, an empty hallway and more frequently in places with lots of other children around for example the lunchroom, the classroom, the bus or the school compound. The strongest predictor of bullying is approval of the most infected peer. Unless the “bully mentality” is effectively challenged in any given group in its early stages, it often becomes an accepted or a supported norm within the group (Athealth. Com:2013, Science news 2009). Within the school environment, bullying has been found to have a negative impact on the school climate (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). This is because it has been found that bullying creates anxiety which in turn may affect students’ academic performance and school attendance (Crick & Bigbee, 1998).

There are five known types of bullying; these are physical bullying, verbal bullying, intimidation, social exclusion and social alienation (Boulton, 1997). Research has shown that different types of bullying have different effects on the victims. The most stressful form of bullying among adolescent seems to be indirect bullying which includes intimidation, social alienation and social exclusion. The main effect of bullying is that it has a real emotional and psychological impact. Depending on the situation, it may hurt, humiliate, expose, harass or otherwise harm the one being bullied upon.

Also, students who are bullied may be afraid of going to school, moving about freely within the school compound, having trouble concentrating, or do poorly academically. The bullied students, may be emotionally withdrawn, they do lose confidence in themselves, may experience depression, low self esteem and suicidal thoughts or they may lash out in

violent ways. Students who bully are more likely to get into frequent fights, steal and vandalize property, drink alcohol and smoke, report poor grades, perceive a negative climate at school, and carry weapon. Most of these students are likely to have increased risk to commit crimes later in life. Many students do stay home from school because they are afraid of being bullied (Vail, 1999). Bullying & victimization reflect difficulty with psychological challenges. Bullies and victims are at elevated risk for substance use disorders (Rospenda, Richman, Wolff & Burke, 2013; Ttofi & Farrington, 2012).

Bullying may affect the general school environment if the school authority does not take positive action to prevent or intervene in bullying situations. Over the past two decades, educators and researchers have increasingly acknowledged that a safe and healthy school environment is important for promoting students’ academic achievement (Hymel, Schonert-Reichl, & Miller, 2006). The students may be afraid and some may become disrespectful thereby hampering the ability of the students to learn well under such situation. Many students avoid public areas of the school such as the cafeteria and restrooms to avoid been bullied.

The effects of bullying are devastating and may lead to civil suits brought against the schools and school systems over bullying incidents especially in developed countries. Bullies often grow up to be unhappy adults, who make fewer positive choices and act less often in defence of their own happiness, mostly due to the lack of perceived control installed in them during their childhood bullying (Akindayo, 2014). Bullies are often mean, confrontational, aggressive and spiteful. They intimidate to get their own way and do exhibit impulsive behavior. They use physical aggression to accomplish their goals. They may also be aggressive toward adults. Most of them do carry these characteristics into adult life. Studies have shown that child bullying may damage adult life. Gurney – Read (2014), in a survey, stated that about 65% of those that were bullied at school, had damaged self – confidence, 36% lost their ability to make friends and



27% were mentally affected. Only 18% of those being bullied had no negative impact of bullying on them as they grow into adulthood.

Bullying does have long-lasting psychological impact on victims (depression and anxiety) and this goes beyond the children's bullying years and extend into their adult lives where they become chronic, sometimes lifelong problems. These emotional circumstances make eating, sleeping working, exercising and engaging in interesting hobbies more difficult. Without these, the individual will not live a balanced life. Dombeck (2014) stated that bullies are more likely to have been sacked from jobs, to be in a violent relationship and to be involved in risky or illegal behavior, such as getting drunk, taking drugs, fighting, lying and having one – night stand with strangers. Dombeck further stated that they are more likely to have committed offences, such as breaking into property. Studies have also revealed that school bullies are more likely to grow up into adult criminals (Gurney-Read, 2014). Olweus, Limber & Mihalic (1999) opined that children who are bullies are more likely than those who do not bully to commit offences as adults. Bullying behavior during childhood is closely associated with future anti- social behavior in adolescence and adulthood.

Children who bully may turn into adolescents who sexually harass and become involved in delinquent or gang-related violence. As adults, these same individuals may display harassment in the workplace or may commit spousal, or child abuse (Pepler & Craig, 2007). However, bullying behavior in adolescence may culminate into unrest, militancy or insurgency. Crimes like militancy, kidnapping, bombing, armed robbery, destruction of government properties among others are now the order of the day. These deviant behaviors could be the resultant effect of unchecked bullying in adolescents.

The pattern of insecurity in Nigeria has been somehow rationalized with militia groups insurgency in the north (Boko Haram) especially in the North - East, ethnic communal clashes in the middle belt, kidnapping and extortion in the eastern and southern

parts of the country, ritual killings in the west, Niger Delta Militants in the South- South, Political and non-Political calculated assassinations across the nations especially in the South-South regions. Even Nigeria offshore waters are not safe and are experiencing piracy. The regionalized structure of insecurity has also given rise to regionalized unlegislated security formation in the country in a bid to curtail the alarming rate of insecurity (Albinus, 2012).

Udeh (2013) opined that the disturbing sense of insecurity poses a daunting challenge towards Nigeria's efforts at national economic development and consequently fulfilling the vision 2020 agenda of ranking among the twenty (20) developed countries of the world. From what is happening now in Nigeria security wise, achieving this will be a herculean task if at all it will be achieved. The security situation in Nigeria has been quite disturbing and in the past fifteen years, things have been worsening daily. Insecurity because of criminal activities does affect legitimate social and economic activities in the country (Akintokunbo, 2011). As Nigeria struggles with the teeming youth unemployment, companies in their numbers are closing operations in the north and other troubled areas of the country and relocating to other African countries for fear of loss of lives and property.

Albinus (2012) stated that heightened social insecurity in Nigeria has arguably fueled crime rate, having unpalatable consequences for the nation's economy and its growth. The socio political and economic situations in Nigeria have been blighted by crime and violence which are endemic. The failure of successive administrations in Nigeria to address the challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequitable distribution of wealth among ethnic nationality has ultimately resulted to anger, agitation and violent crimes against the Nigeria state by some individuals and groups. Insecurity, especially internal is not a problem that is unique to Nigeria. Other countries, both developing and developed, face the challenge. The differences between some of



them and our country Nigeria, is how they manage the threat. (Akindiyo 2014).

Prevention of bullying behavior in children and youth therefore is an important factor for minimizing the involvement of adolescents in future criminal activities, disruptions, disorders, rebellion, truancy, lack of empathy, disrespect for constituted authorities, rape, kidnapping, gangsterism and bomb threats. All these vices can be a threat to national security thereby truncating national peace, safety and development.

Statement of Problem

Bullying is one of the anti-social behaviors that are prominent among adolescents in schools. Research has shown that bullying affects students socially, academically and emotionally (Adeniyi, 2015). However, bullying extends much further than the school. Its effect takes its toll on the well-being of the larger society. It is noteworthy how some students fear bullies to the extent that some of them stay out of school without permission or even fake sickness as an excuse to be absent from school.

Therefore, this study looked at the effects of bullying in adolescent as it (bullying) relates to cases of victimization, vandalism and gangsterism which are threats to national security.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the existence of adolescent bullying in schools and its attendant effects on national security.

Research Questions

1. Is there any relationship between bullying among adolescents in secondary schools and National insecurity?
2. To what extent do male adolescent bullies differ from the female bullies in schools?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between bullying among adolescents in secondary schools and national insecurity
2. There is no significant difference between male and female adolescent bullies in secondary schools.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The sample for the study comprised 120 students randomly selected from Junior and Senior secondary schools in Education District V of Lagos State.

The Research instrument used for data collection was a researcher designed questionnaire titled: Bullying among Adolescents in schools and National Security (BAANS). It is divided into two sections: Section A deals with demographic data of the respondents while section B consists of items structured in a four point Likert scale the: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The data were analyzed using Chi Square test statistics to test the hypotheses formulated.

Data Presentation and Analysis

One hundred and twenty copies of the questionnaire were self-administered to Secondary schools in Education District V. A total of one hundred and fifteen (115) copies were returned. However, 7 were wrongly filled and eight were empty; hence one hundred (100) were used for the analysis. This corresponds to an 83.3 % response rate.

Analysis According to Research Questions

Research Question One: Is there any relationship between bullying among adolescents in secondary schools and national insecurity?

**Table 1 Percentage Responses on Adolescents Bullying and National Insecurity.**

Items	Constructs	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagree	Strongly Disagreed	Total
1	Bullying in secondary school leads to kidnapping and Robbery in the society	38	38	10	14	100
2	Most Bullies get involved in Criminal Activities	39	52	8	1	100
3	Bullies are insensitive in their actions towards their victims	40	56	2	2	100
4	Inappropriate handling of bullying cases has likelihood of causing unrest	61	37	1	1	100
5	Bullies use aggression to accomplish their goals	61	30	4	5	100
Average		47.8	42.6	5	4.6	100

Table 1 reveals that an average of 47.8% strongly agreed that bullying among adolescents can lead to national insecurity. An average of 42.6 percent agreed that bullying among adolescents is tantamount to the problem of national insecurity if not nipped in the bud. However, an average of 4.6 percent strongly disagreed that bullying among adolescents can lead to national insecurity while about 5 percent also disagreed that bullying among adolescents can lead to nation insecurity. These positions stem from the possibility of untamed

bullying metamorphosing into kidnapping and robbery that has become the order of the day in Nigeria. The findings also suggest that adolescent bullying has the likelihood of progressing into national insecurity if measures are not taken against it, especially in the secondary school system in Nigeria.

Research Question Two: To what extent do male adolescent bullies differ from the female bullies in secondary schools?



Table 2 Percentage Responses on the difference between Male and Female adolescents bullying in Schools

Items	Constructs	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Total
6	Bullying in school is the handiwork of male students	16	35	24	25	100
7	Female students are mostly the victims of bullying by male students	7	27	42	24	100
8	Female students have become more bullies than the male students	28	44	18	12	100
9	Female students victimize females than males	45	42	5	8	100
10	Males are mostly bullied by male colleagues	20	22	27	31	100
Average		23.2	34	22.8	20	100

Table 2 shows that an average of 23.2 percent strongly agreed that there is difference between male bullies and female bullies in schools, while about 34 percent agreed with the construct that male bullies differ from female adolescent bullies. However, 20 percent strongly disagreed that male bullies are different from female bullies and 22.8 disagreed that male bullies are different from female adolescent bullies in secondary schools in Nigeria. The findings suggest with about 60 percent affirmation that male bullies differ from female bullies in secondary schools in Nigeria.

Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses stated earlier are empirically tested using the responses from the research instrument-questionnaire.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between bullying among adolescents in secondary schools and National Insecurity.

Table 3: Summary of Chi-Square for Adolescent Bullying and National Insecurity

Variables	Degree of Freedom	χ^2 Cal.	χ^2 Tab.	Decision
Adolescent Bullying and National Insecurity	3	329.152	9.348	Reject Null Hypothesis

The degree of freedom for chi-square test of goodness is given as: $df = (r-1)(c-1)$. Where df = degree of freedom $df = (4-1)(2-1)df = 3$

At 3 degrees of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance (95 per cent confidence interval for reliability), the chi-square tabulated value $\chi^2 = 9.348$ (Gujarati, 2005).

From the computed values above, the chi-square calculated is 329.152 while the chi-square tabulated is 9.348. Thus, the chi-square calculated is



greater than chi-square tabulated. The null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is significant relationship between bullying among adolescents and National Insecurity. This suggests that adolescent bullying has a significant relationship with national insecurity in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between male and female adolescent bullies in secondary schools.

Table 4: Difference between Male and Female bullying in Schools

Variables	Degree of Freedom	χ^2 Cal.	χ^2 Tab.	Decision
Male and Female Bullying in Schools	3	22.816	9.348	

The degree of freedom for chi-square test of goodness is given as: $df = (r-1) (c-1)$ Where $df =$ degree of freedom $df = (4-1) (2-1) df = 3$

At 3 degrees of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance (95 per cent confidence interval for reliability), the chi-square tabulated value $\chi^2 = 9.348$ (Gujarati, 2005).

From the computed values above, the chi-square calculated is 22.816 while the chi-square tabulated is 9.348. Thus, the chi-square calculated is greater than chi-square tabulated. The researchers, therefore reject the Null hypothesis and accepts the alternative and conclude that there is a significant difference in bullying between male and female adolescents in secondary schools. This suggests that there is significance between male bullies and female bullies in secondary schools.

Discussion of Results

From empirical investigation in the study, bullying occurs when a person is exposed repeatedly and over a time to negative actions (Olweus, 2013). The study found that bullying among adolescents in school has a direct link to National insecurity.

This finding is consistent with the findings of the Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration

with UNICEF (2007) while assessing violence against children at the Basic education in Nigeria. These bodies found that violence in schools not only has the potential for discouraging girl child education, it also negates the principle of children friendly schooling. The implications of violence against children in school include school absenteeism, school dropout and poor achievement, as well as the long-term implication of threat to safety and security in the society.

From extant study of the problem of violence and bullying in school, it has been found that children who are victimized in school often suffer from decreased self-esteem, truancy, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and in extreme cases, suicide and violent retaliation (FME&UNICEF, 2007). When this occurs, the natural result is fear and disenchantment; withdrawal from school, sleeping problem and so on.

Effects of school violence on bodily function include the following; depression, aggressiveness, anxiety among others. The child involved in school bullying and violence will also experience irregular emotions such as difficulties with peer relationships; and attention deficit disorder will set in since the child begins to suffer from psycho-social problem which include lack of concentration and reduced school performance. Aside from interfering with the learning process, the long-term effect of school violence affects the whole community. According to Taub (2002), children who engage in bullying behavior are more likely to become adult criminals.

The study also found that there is significant difference in bullying between male and female adolescents in schools.

The finding corroborates the finding of Omoniyi (2013) from the study of Bullying in Schools: Psychological Implications and Counselling Interventions. Omoniyi found that difference emerges in the bullying among females and males. Commonly, boys bully other boys and girls; whereas girls are bullied mainly by other girls (Sampson, 2002). When girls are bullies, according to Van der Wal (2008), they tend to use more indirect



forms of bullying. Boys tend to use physical might and verbal threats.

As reported by Hazler and Oliver (2007), girls use rumor mongering as a social and verbal threat. They spread rumors about one another and exclude one from the peer group. Sampson (2002) also reported that girls also engage in bullying actions such as social isolation, ignoring, excluding, and backbiting.

Strategic Intervention of School Management in Bullying

In order to reduce the incidence and prevalence of bullying and prevent its occurrence in secondary schools, individual, groups and systematic interventions need to be applied. These varying interventions should be comprehensive enough in their scope and involve students, teachers, administrators, parents and the host community as well.

As Kenny (2005) observed, bullies tend to show little compassion for their victim, school counsellors therefore need to provide certain interventions to improve students' level of compassion and empathy. These may include activities that foster sensitivity for the feelings of others. Aluede (2006) suggested role reversal techniques, that is, students place themselves in the position of others. This allows them to experience the same situation and hence will be able to understand how each other feel in that same situation. It may help increase empathetic understanding.

Training the children how to be assertive could be a helpful measure to fend off bullies in schools. Beane (2008) suggested teaching children to say, "Leave me alone" or "Back off" with confidence and anger and then walk away with confidence.

The school management should engage in series of educative activities that can help reduce bullies in schools. This may include but not limited to the following:

- i. Counselling services capacity in schools should be initiated with a view to protecting school children from bullies and violent behavior of other students.

- ii. Guidance and Counselling issues that bother on bullying, especially physical violence against children should be incorporated into school curriculum.
- iii. School counsellors should sensitize the students regularly on the need to avoid violence which may lead to kidnapping, armed robbery and insurgency.

Conclusion

As observed both from the literature and field, bullying problem remains pervasive and sometimes evasive in virtually all over the world and Nigeria in particular. Strategic interventions as summarized in this paper can help to create a better school environment devoid of bullying and conducive for learning which on the long run can help create a secured Nigeria.

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