

THE INFLUENCE OF SOME DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES, PARENTAL AND PEER FACTORS ON BULLYING BEHAVIOUR AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IBADAN, OYO STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of gender, age, religion, family size, family income, parental and peer influence on bullying behaviour among senior secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo state. A sample of two hundred and fifty adolescent students was selected using stratified random sampling from five senior secondary schools in Ibadan city. Fifty respondents were selected from each school. Bullying Rating Scale, Parental and Peer Influence Rating Scales were used in eliciting information. Three research hypotheses were tested. The data were analysed using multiple regression analysis and Pearson product moment correlation analysis. Result showed that bullying is positively correlated with gender, family type, religion, family size, parental influence, peer influence, age. Parental influence made the most significant contribution to the prediction of bullying behaviour. Based on the findings of this study, helping students learn how to understand and manage their feelings may provide them with tools to avoid escalating negative feelings so as to avoid serious confrontations with other students, teachers, and administrators.

Keywords: Gender, age, religion, family size, family income, parental influence, peer influence, bullying behaviour

Background to the problem

The intolerable levels of indiscipline and moral decadence originating from schools have remained a source of concern to parents, government and other stakeholders in the education industry (Jaiyeoba and Akintepede, 2002). Some visible signs of indiscipline in the school noted by Ogunsanya (1995) are strike, demonstration, arson, looting, riot and acts of vandalism on the part of students. The less noticeable symptoms of indiscipline and disharmony include frustration, alienation, absenteeism, lateness and generalized aggression among students. One major form of indiscipline that is gradually creeping to the centre stage of problem faced by teachers, students, educational psychologists and school administrators is bullying (Gboyega, 2000).

Bullying is a serious problem which instills fear in its victim and raises the anxiety level of students and parents. A school of thought opines that bullying behaviour is the stepping stone for violence and cultism in our secondary and tertiary institutions. This might account for the problem of cultism in our higher institutions. Bullying seems to be one of the most underrated problems which distract minds and inhibit the learning process among secondary schools students. It is a problem which our society cannot afford to leave unsolved, as the case now can gradually destroy lives and place society at great risk. Paramount to an understanding of the nature of bullying is an understanding of the social forces which appear to reinforce, condone and encourage bullying while ignoring the victims (Byrne, 1994).

Since social isolation facilitates the abuse of young people (Garbarino, 1996), establishing and maintaining supportive social climate is essential. On the whole, result from cross-sectional surveys suggests that being victimized by peers is significantly related to comparatively low levels of psychological well-being and social adjustment and to high level of psychological distress and adverse physical health symptoms. Retrospective studies have provided results suggesting that the connections are causal.

Research works have shown that bullying does not only cause considerable suffering to individual pupil but also has a damaging effect on personality development and on school atmosphere. It is known that some children are frequently and systematically victimized, harassed and attacked to the extent that in 1982, for example in Norway, three 10-14 years old boys committed suicide as the

consequence of severe bullying by their peers. A situation in which students play truancy so as to escape being bullied and victimized reflects a lot about the climate of the school.

Research evidences have shown that bullying behaviour can negatively affect school achievement (Boulton and Smith, 1994; Smith, 1997). Olweus (1993) is of the opinion that persons who persistently bully and victimize others at school are likely to do so later in life. Farrington (1993) also supports this by indicating that there is intergenerational continuity in bullying tendencies. Marano (1995) complements the fact by asserting that bullying is among the most unstable of all human behaviour if left unchecked. The problem of bullying is so vagarious that 15% of absenteeism has been found to be due to incident of bullying (Gboyega, 2000). All these point to the fact that bullying is a problem that must be nipped in the bud or else its consequence may become unaffordable by any well-to-do nation.

Parents, teachers and clinicians are very concerned about bullying because children who display aggressiveness toward peers usually persist in this pattern. Not only does disruptive behaviour result in rejection by peers, but also include academic difficulties, negative labeling by teachers and damaged self-concept (Parcel and Menaghan, 1993; Patterson, Debaryshe and Ramsey, 1989). Many of these problems continue into adulthood (Caspi, Elder and Bem, 1987, 1988). Children who persistently engage in bullying are more likely as adult to experience poor physical health, depression, difficulties in sexual relationships, involvement in criminal behaviour and low social-economic attainment (Baldry and Farrington, 2000; Kumpulainen and Rasanen, 1999).

From the foregoing, it has been portrayed that bullying has a multi-dimensional effect on diverse aspects of human endeavours. This background displays the necessity for investigating it so that the general populace of the country can be better informed about its enormity and be prepared for its outcome.

There is a consistent finding across several studies that boys stand to be more involved in bullying both as victims and as perpetrators, although sex barely influences the selection of the victims of bullying behaviour. For example, there are consistent gender effects on who is attacking who and in what form. Also, boys predominantly experience physical attacks or threats, whereas girls are confronted

mainly with verbal or indirect attack, teasing, spreading rumours, not being talked to (Whitney and Smith, 1993).

Age has been reported to influence the form of bullying: physical attack decrease with increasing age (Perry, Kusel and Perry 1988), Whitney and Smith (1993) and Kassim (2004). However, whether a group carries out an attack on a victim through individual action or collectively as a group is independent of age, Whitney and Smith (1993).

Kassim (2004) found that subjective happiness and contentment with one's religion can help prevent aggressive behaviour and consequently prevent peer victimization and bullying. But a person's religion void of subjective happiness and contentment easily perpetrates aggressive behaviour and consequently lead to or influence peer victimization and bullying. If a person's religion is not relatively free from anxiety, this can consequently lead to peer victimization and bullying. Sufficient tolerance and flexibility (psychic durability) in one's religion can help bring about psychosocial adjustment which can help to curb peer victimization and bullying. Research suggests that family size exposed individuals to various forms of illegal behaviours during childhood and this increases the risk of bullying behaviour. Still, most youths who are victims of physical abuse do not go on to become serious violent offenders, while exposure to real illegal behaviour and physical abuse on the part of family members have stronger modeling effects (Hoover, Oliver and Hazler, 1993; Slee, 1993; Yates and Smith, 1989).

Sampson and Laub (1990) found that when families live in impoverished neighbourhoods, parents are less effective in providing support and in monitoring the behaviour of their children and wards. Similarly, Onyejiakwu (1991) found out that most families in Nigeria do not have the quantity of money which they need to provide for their basic needs for survival so this economic factor often predisposes youths to engage in illegal means of survival, manifesting in stealing of money, food and material things to eat if it is food, or use in buying or selling if it is material things. Empirical evidence shows that children from single parents develop otherwise. Ortese (1998) found out that one parent family stands the risk of delinquent children. To him, children from such families constitute majority to the society's problem of armed robbery, prostitution, drug abuse, etc.

A prodigious number of studies, replicated worldwide, have shown that violence in the home (both physical and verbal) produces violent children. In a research carried out in Australia, a link was found between family dysfunction and violence by children (Rigby, 1994). Few notions are so well supported by the research literature as parental influence on bullying behaviour, yet it is surprising that too little attention is given to the families of bullies and victimizers. Bullying and victimization is best understood as an adaptive behaviour that makes sense within certain family environments. A study by Baldry and Farmington, (1998) examined 11-14 years old school children who reported being bullied and or victimized. Both types of children were found to come from homes where "authoritarian" styles of parenting were employed.

Costanzo and Shaw (1966) found that more curious are the results of a recent study of peer influence on cigarette smoking, in which both genders were significantly affected by peer, but in opposite directions. As members of their friends who smoked increased, teenage boys became more likely to downplay the liabilities of smoking (cost, health hazard etc) but as the number of friends who smoked increased, females grew more likely to emphasize the liabilities. Brandford Brown (1982) and Eicher (1986) have studied peer involvement (the degree of socializing with friends) and misconduct (drug/alcohol use, sexual intercourse and minor delinquent behaviour). In Berudt and Ladd (1989), children spend an increasing amount of time in peer interaction during late childhood and adolescence. Barker and Wright (1951) say that children were found to interact with peers 10% of their day at age 2, 20% at age 4, and more than 40% between the ages of 7 and 11 years. In a typical school day, there were 299 episodes with peers per day.

It is worthy of note that bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Nigeria is a serious issue. Act of indiscipline and disharmony which include frustration, alienation, absenteeism, lateness, generalized aggression among students have been observed by researchers (Jaiyeoba and Akintepede, 2002; Ogunsanya, 1995; Gboyega, 2000). A lot of these studies and others have not seriously looked into factors like demographic variables, parental and peer factors as they influence bullying behaviour among secondary school

students in Nigeria. So, this study will fill this gap on bullying behaviour..

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between gender, family type, religion, family size, parental influence, parental income, peer influence, age and bullying behaviour.
2. There is no significant joint effect of gender, family type, religion, family size, parental influence, parental income, peer influence and age on bullying behaviour among secondary school adolescents.
3. There is no significant independent effect of gender, family type, religion, family size, parental influence, parental income, peer influence and age on bullying behaviour among secondary school adolescents.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design using ex post facto method. This method has to do with observing existing variables in their natural occurrence. In ex post facto, variables of the study already exist and only require observation of the phenomenon. It is a systematic empirical inquiry in which the researcher does not have direct control of the independent variables. The independent variables of the study were demographic factors, parental and peer influence while the dependent variable is bullying behaviour.

The sample consisted of two hundred and fifty (250) students selected through stratified random sampling from S.S. 1 and S.S. 2 from Jericho Senior High School, Ibadan; Ibadan Boys Senior High School, Ibadan; Ibadan Senior Grammar School Ibadan; United Senior Secondary Grammar School, Ibadan; and Lagelu Senior Grammar School, Ibadan.

The instruments used for this study was a questionnaire tagged "Bullying Perception Rating Scales". This includes bullying behaviour, parental influence and peer influence.

Section A contained the demographic data such as age last birthday, sex, religion, class, marital status of parents, number of children in the student's family and the student's family income.

Section B contained information on bullying behaviour among adolescent students in secondary schools, which has five responses option that included very much like me that scores (5), like me (4), not sure (3), unlike me (2), and very much unlike me (1). This section reported a coefficient alpha of 0.89. The internal consistency ranged between 0.54 and 0.76.

Section C contained information on parental influence as it affects bullying behaviour among adolescent students in secondary schools. Parental influence rating scale instruction was used which ranges from strongly agree to score (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). This section reported a coefficient alpha of 0.91. The internal consistency ranged between 0.58 and 0.79

Section D contained information on peer influence as it affects bullying behaviour among adolescent students in secondary schools. Peer influence rating scale was used which has five response options that include strongly agree to score (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). This section reported a coefficient alpha of 0.87 with internal consistency ranging between 0.51 and 0.68.

The instruments were administered on the students in five secondary schools in Ibadan city. The questionnaire was given during the normal school hours after securing the cooperation of the principal, the school teachers and the school counselling psychologist. The students were properly seated to allow fair responses.

The questionnaires were distributed with the help of the staff members in the five secondary schools. Before the participants responded to the instrument, they were informed that the instrument is not an achievement test and hence there is no right or wrong answer to any of the items. The instrument was meant to elicit information on the influence of gender, age, religion, family size, family income and peer influence bullying among senior secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo State. There was no timing and the subjects were advised to respond to as many questions as were relevant to them. Two hundred and fifty copies of a questionnaire were administered on the students and all the two hundred and fifty questionnaires were duly filled and returned. The class atmosphere was good (conducive) for the

students as questionnaires were administered with the assistance of their teachers.

The statistical tool used to analyze the data is multiple regression analysis. The statistical procedure was adopted because it afforded the study to estimate the extent of the prediction of dependent variable by the independent variables. The procedure also allowed the detection of the degree of variance existing among both the dependent variable and the independent variables. The multiple regression analysis also found the relative contributions of each of the variable to the prediction of bullying behaviour among the senior secondary students.

Results

Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between gender, family type, religion, family size, parental influence, parental income, peer influence, age and bullying behaviour.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the variables

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Bullying | 1.000 | | | | | | | | |
| Gender | .239 | 1.000 | | | | | | | |
| Family type | .164 | -.044 | 1.000 | | | | | | |
| Religion | .239 | 1.000 | -.044 | 1.000 | | | | | |
| Family size | -.133 | .242 | -.121 | .242 | 1.000 | | | | |
| Parental income | -.060 | -.157 | .059 | -.157 | -.064 | 1.000 | | | |
| Parental influence | .485 | .153 | .198 | .153 | -.096 | .125 | 1.000 | | |
| Peer influence | -.108 | -.036 | -.118 | -.036 | .094 | .024 | -.146 | 1.000 | |
| Age | .241 | .045 | -.049 | .045 | -.063 | -.068 | .036 | .045 | 1.000 |
| Mean | 48.26 | 1.46 | 1.16 | 1.46 | 3.68 | 2.30 | 48.21 | 38.80 | 15.92 |
| Standard deviation | 10.96 | .50 | .36 | .50 | 1.88 | .81 | 10.14 | 8.75 | .77 |

Table 1 contains descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the study variables. As shown in Table 1, bullying is positively correlated with:

(1) Gender ($r = .239$; $p < .05$), (2) Family type ($r = .164$, $p < .05$), (3) Religion ($r = .239$, $p < .05$), (4) Family size ($r = .133$; $p < .05$); Parental influence ($r = .485$, $P < .05$); Peer influence ($r = .108$, $p < .05$); Age ($r = .241$, $p < .05$). This means that each of the independent variables except parental income ($r = -.060$), has significant correlations with bullying behaviour among the secondary school adolescents. However, parental income does not have positive relationships with bullying behaviour.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant joint effect of gender, family type, religion, family size, parental influence, parental income, peer influence and age on bullying behaviour among secondary school adolescents.

Table 2: Multiple regression analysis on the bullying data

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|------|-------------|--------|---------|
| R | = | .582 | | | |
| R Square | = | .339 | | | |
| Adjusted R Square | = | .309 | | | |
| SE | = | .339 | | | |
| ANOVA | | | | | |
| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Regression | 6065.883 | 7 | 866.555 | 10.383 | .000(a) |
| Residual | 11850.977 | 142 | 83.458 | | |
| Total | 17916.860 | 149 | | | |

The table above shows that the independent variables (Age, Parental Influence, Family Size, Parental Income, Peer Influence, Family Type and Religion) when pulled together have significant effect on the bullying $F(7,142) = 10.38$, $P < .05$. The joint prediction ($R = 0.582$) accounted for 33.9% of the total variance on bullying behaviour of the adolescents.

Hypothesis three

There is no significant independent effect of gender, family type, religion, family size, parental influence, parental income, peer influence and age on bullying behaviour among secondary school adolescents.

3: Relative contributions of the independent variables to the prediction bullying behaviour

| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | -23.876 | 16.775 | | -1.423 | .157 |
| Religion | 2.566 | 2.101 | .086 | 1.221 | .224 |
| Family type | 3.985 | 1.595 | .182 | 2.499 | S |
| Family size | -.669 | .418 | -.115 | -1.601 | .112 |
| Parental income | -1.124 | .949 | -.083 | -1.184 | .238 |
| Parental influence | .463 | .078 | .428 | 5.911 | S |
| Age | -.032 | .087 | -.025 | -.362 | .718 |
| Peer influence | 2.971 | .978 | .209 | 3.039 | S |

The table 2 above shows the extent to which each of the independent variables made significant contribution to the prediction of bullying behaviour among the students. The table further revealed that parental influence made the most significant contribution (Beta = .428; $t = 5.911$; $P < 0.05$) to the prediction. Other variables made significant contributions in the following order: peer influence (Beta = .209; $t = 3.039$; $P < 0.05$); family type (Beta = .182; $t = 2.499$; $P < 0.05$); family size (Beta = .115; $t = 1.601$; $P > 0.05$); religion (Beta = .086; $t = 1.221$; $P > 0.05$); parental income (Beta = .083; $t = 1.184$; $P > 0.05$); and age (Beta = .025; $t = .362$; $P > 0.05$). The result indicated that age has the least contribution to the bullying behaviour among the secondary school adolescents.

Discussion

It was observed that bullying is positively correlated with the independent variables of this study. This means that each of the independent variables except parental income has significant correlations with bullying behaviour among the secondary school adolescents. However, parental income does not have positive relationships with bullying behaviour. The result in table 2 also revealed that the

independent variables (Age, Parental Influence, Family Size, Parental Income, Peer Influence, Family Type and Religion) when pulled together have significant effect on the bullying.

Moreover, the findings examined the relative effect of gender, family type, religion, family size, parental influence, parental income, peer influence and age on bullying behaviour among secondary school adolescents. The results from the analysis showed that parental influence made the most significant contribution to the prediction. Other variables made significant contributions in the following order: peer influence, family type, family size, religion, parental income and age. The result indicated that age has the least contribution to the bullying behaviour among the secondary school adolescents.

In line with this study, a research reported that children living in large families with four or more children were more than twice more likely to be neglected than those living in smaller families with two or three children (Snyder and Sickmund, September 1999). Again, this increased risk may be due to socioeconomic issues. In addition to family type and size, teen parenting is a predictor of crime, not only for the child, but also for the parents, particularly the father. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), teenage fathers are more likely than other youths to commit delinquent acts, be involved in drug dealing, use alcohol, and drop out of school (Office of Justice Programs 2000).

Several studies (Loeber and Stouthamar-Leober (1998), Icheke (1998), Nwachukwu (1993); Ortese (1998); Olanrewaju (1999); Agulana (1999), Conkline (1996); Aremu (2002) corroborate the findings that family, peer, media factors significantly influence the antisocial behaviour of the youth. Loeber and Stouthamer – Loeber (1986) found four factors in line with the family associated with antisocial behaviour in their study to be parental neglect, conflict in the home or marital discord, family member exhibiting such behaviour and single parenting. Olanrewaju (1999) focused on parenting style, Ortese (1998) on single parenting, Agulana (1999) on the mother's significant role of socialization process, Conkline (1996) on broken homes/family while Aremu (2002) found that fathers who undermine their family produce children who later become adult offenders. This result also supports the findings of Icheke (1998) and Ayodele (2002) that emotional deprivation, broken homes, method of upbringing; child abuse and

neglect were some of the family factors that increase the propensity at which one exhibits anti social behaviours.

The findings of this study also corroborate the findings of Elliot, Huizinga and Ageton (1985) who found that peer affiliation was a significant factor in explaining offending behaviour as adolescents spend more time away from home, parents and family and more time with peers, opportunities to become involved with groups who exhibit high risk behaviours for violent activities such as gangs' increases. Likewise, Thornberry (1998) indicated that the effect of more serious (i.e. violent) peer delinquency was stronger than the effect of less serious (i.e. non-violent) peer delinquency. An adolescent who belongs to high peer group that deems aggression and anti social behaviour as desirable would engage in such behaviour to be able to stay in that group (Michele, 2008). Similarly, the finding of this study is corroborated by Capiara, Regalia and Bandura (2002) who found that low perceived emotional self efficacy could be a predictor for negative social behaviours. Muris (2002) found a significant relationship between low levels of emotional self-efficacy, depression and anxiety in adolescents.

Similarly, parents who engage in criminal behaviours are more likely to have children who are delinquent (in Loeber and Farrington, 1998). Approximately 60% of the female and 46% of the male intakes into the Travis County Community Justice Center had children (Wilkinson, et. al., 1998). National statistics also show that children who learn about the risks of drug use from their parents are 36% less likely to smoke marijuana, 50% less likely to use inhalants, 56% less likely to use cocaine, and 65% less likely to use LSD than children whose parents do not teach them about the dangers of drugs (Office of National Drug Control Policy). Community-level analyses have also linked neighbourhood poverty to violent crime (Loeber and Farrington, 1998). Farrington found that low socioeconomic status as a child was predictive of teen violence. While 8.8% of the boys in his study that did not suffer from poverty were convicted of violent offences, 23% of the boys living in poverty were convicted of violent offences.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have provided sufficient evidence to suggest that bullying represents problems that affect secondary school students

in Nigeria. The study has also provided a substantial report on the influence of some demographic variables, parental and peer factors on bullying behaviour among senior secondary school students in Ibadan. The demographic factors identified were gender, age, religion, family size and family income. Evidence of this report has indicated that the above factors jointly influenced bullying behaviour among senior secondary school students in Ibadan. Parental influence made the most significant contribution to bullying behaviour while age of the students was the least contributor to bullying behaviour. This study has clearly shown that there is a wide gap to be covered by the Nigeria government and all stakeholders on bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Nigeria.

Recommendations

It is hoped that helping students learn how to understand and manage their feelings may provide them with tools to avoid escalating negative feelings so as to avoid serious confrontations with students, teachers, and administrators. Research devoted to the study of bullying management among school adolescents is not readily available in Oyo State. To this end, it is anticipated that the results of this study would contribute to a large body of literature on bullying management among school-based adolescents.

Also, the study would help to set a solid foundation for the study of bullying management among school-based adolescents, especially in this part of the globe where such research is scarce. Adolescence development is a crucial period and adolescents play a significant role in the development of the society. The result of the study would assist adolescents in knowing how to control their reactions.

Finally, the study would affect the Nigerian society and the people of Oyo State in particular positively because the intervention programme of bullying management among school-based adolescents would affect the lives of the adolescents. The country stands to benefit highly from this research because stemming such negative tendencies as bullying in the adolescents during the critical secondary school stage makes room for presence of positively-focused learners in higher institutions, a reduction in the incident of bullying and cult-related activities in universities and polytechnics, and availability of a

psychosocially healthy crops of young adults who will be ready to step in roles of balanced leaders in the immediate future.

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