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# INFLUENCE OF PARENTING STYLE ON BULLYING BEHAVIOUR OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ABUJA METROPOLIS

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## ABSTRACT

*This examined the influence of parenting style on the bullying behaviour of secondary school students in the Abuja metropolis. Three hypotheses were postulated and tested in the course of this study. The research design that was adopted in this was ex-post facto design. The population of the study consisted of 2100 junior and senior students of the two private and government owned secondary schools with their age ranging from 11 to 17 years and they were in grades seven to grade eleven in AMAC local government area, Abuja, FCT Nigeria and were purposefully selected with participating schools being diverse in terms of reported bullying perpetration and urban/rural status, and came from three different prefectures. The Bullying Prevalence Questionnaire (BPQ) by Rigby and Slee (1994) was used to gather data. Multiple regression and t-test statistical tools were to analyse the data gathered. This study discovered that bullying is a significant issue impacting the psychological and emotional well-being of adolescents, there is no significant difference in bullying behaviour between school type and bullying behaviour and there is no significant gender difference in bullying behaviour. This study concluded that watching violent movies has the highest influence on students' bullying behaviour; bullying behaviour is higher among students of secondary school age who watch violent movies than those that do not watch violent movies as indicated by their mean scores; bullying behaviour is higher among students from polygamous families than those from monogamous families. This study recommended that secondary school teachers should ensure that students' bullying behavior is detected very early for immediate treatment.*

**Keywords:** Bullying Behavior, Parenting Style, Secondary School Students

## Introduction

School bullying is widely recognized as a significant risk factor for poor psychological well-being among adolescents and poses a substantial challenge for school administrators. It is generally defined as the "systematic abuse of power" (Rigby, 2012), and its prevalence has been documented in numerous countries (De Serf, 2002). In Australia, estimates suggest that one in four children experiences bullying every few weeks (Omotose, (2010). Research has shown that children who are bullied tend to have significantly worse mental health and

are more likely to suffer from mental illness in adulthood (Rigby, 2013).

Bullying can manifest in various forms among students. Grusec and Dany (2014) identify several types, including direct physical or verbal attacks, indirect aggression through a third party, relational aggression that harms peer relationships, and social aggression that undermines self-esteem or social status. Specific examples include physical acts like hitting or kicking, verbal abuse such as name-calling, and indirect bullying like exclusion or gossip (Kim et al, 2014). Additionally, technology can facilitate bullying through means such as text messages, online chats, emails, and phone calls (Preidt, 2015). Moreover, bullies often view their aggressive behaviours positively, driven by a desire to control and dominate others. This supports Sharma, Nam, Kim and Kim (2016) perspective that bullying is a repeated, unprovoked aggressive behaviour directed at victims who cannot defend themselves, typically carried out by individuals or groups with greater power. Previous studies have also indicated that socio-demographic factors such as gender, race, age, and family socioeconomic status can influence the likelihood of being involved in bullying on campus.

Family systems significantly influence adolescents' social behaviors, including bullying in schools. Research has shown that various family characteristics, such as family environment, parent-child relationships, family norms, and especially parenting styles, are closely linked to school bullying. Negative parenting traits like strictness, neglect, and lack of support can lead to behavioral issues in children, including emotional problems and misconduct at school. Parenting is a multifaceted process aimed at supporting a child's physical, emotional, and intellectual development from infancy to adulthood (Omotose, 2010). Effective parenting encompasses ensuring children's safety, preparing them for adulthood, and transmitting cultural values. A strong parent-child relationship is crucial for healthy development, influencing social competence, academic performance, and behavioral issues (Efobi & Nwokolo, 2014).

Different parenting styles yield varied outcomes: authoritarian parenting can lead to irritable and socially unskilled children, while authoritative parenting fosters positive traits like adaptability and low aggression. Permissive parents often raise impulsive children, and uninvolved parents may see their children develop both externalizing (aggressive) and internalizing (depressive) problems (Eyiah, 2012). In Nigeria, there is a noted increase in anti-social behavior, including bullying, among adolescents, hindering their academic success and overall well-being. Bullying creates an environment of unhappiness, preventing children from reaching their potential and impacting their self-esteem and mental health. As children

navigate their relationships and self-identity in school, bullying poses serious concerns for educators, parents, and society (Tippett & Wolke, 2014). Schools have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for positive development. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influence of parenting style on bullying behaviour among adolescents in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

**Statement of the Problem**

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage where parents and youth must renegotiate their relationships. Research indicates that different parenting styles affect the quality of parent-adolescent relationships, with authoritative parenting linked to greater cohesion and reduced conflict. While many studies have explored the direct effects of parenting styles, there is less focus on the mechanisms behind these relationships. Additionally, household demographics, such as family structure and socio-economic status, also play a role in behaviors like bullying. For instance, adolescents from unmarried or cohabiting families are more prone to aggressive behaviors. Similarly, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds exhibit higher impulsivity and anti-social behaviors.

Conversely, close relationships with caregivers lead adolescents to value their opinions and seek guidance, reducing opportunities for anti-social behavior (Crawford & Novak, 2018). This connectedness is linked to lower risks of issues like substance use, depression, and bullying. Authoritative parenting serves as a protective factor against school bullying, while parent-child conflict increases the risk of peer aggression. However, empirical support for these connections is limited. Children involved in bullying, whether as perpetrators or victims, face significant psychological challenges later in life . Bullying is associated with future externalizing issues for bullies and internalizing problems for victims (Sourander et al., 2020). Consequently, educators and psychologists are seeking effective strategies to combat this issue, recognizing that bullying often originates at home. This study aims to identify parenting aspects related to bullying to inform prevention and intervention programs. Effective initiatives should extend beyond schools to include family environments. Thus, the study will explore the influence of parenting styles on bullying behavior among in-school adolescents.

**Objectives of the Study**

The broad purpose of this study is to examine the influence of parenting style on bullying behaviour of secondary school students in Abuja metropolis. However, the specific purposes of the study seek to

1. To investigate the influence of parenting style on bullying behavior among adolescents in selected secondary schools

2. To establish gender difference on the influence of parenting style on the bullying behavior of secondary students' behavior.
3. To establish factors involved in the prevalence of bullying in Public and Private schools (comparative analysis).

**Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were addressed in this study; The following null hypotheses have been postulated for testing in this study:

1. There is no significant relationship in the parenting styles and bullying behavior of in-school adolescents in Abuja metropolis.
2. There is no significant gender difference in bullying behavior of in-school adolescents in Abuja metropolis.
3. There are no significant factors involved in the prevalence of bullying in Public and Private schools (comparative analysis).

**Research Method**

**Research Design:** The research design that was adopted to examine the influence of parenting style on cyberbullying behavior in selected schools in AMAC local Government Area, Abuja will be an ex-post facto design. Akuezuilo and Agu (2003) stated that an ex-post-facto design is the research where a researcher carries out empirical inquiry but does not have direct control of the independent variables because their manifestation had already occurred. The researcher employed quantitative approach. This study adopts a descriptive ex-post factor survey design to investigate parental influence as correlates affecting bullying behaviour among selected in-school-adolescents in AMAC local government area, North-central, Abuja Nigeria. The population for this study consists of selected in-school adolescents in secondary schools in AMAC LGA, North-central Nigeria. The samples for this study are one hundred and eighty (180) in-school adolescents (male and female) in public and private secondary schools in AMAC LGA, North-Central, Abuja Nigeria.

**Population and Sampling:** The population of the study consisted of 2100 junior and senior students of the two private and government owned secondary schools with their age ranging from 11 to 17years and they were attending grades seven to grade eleven in AMAC local government area, Abuja, FCT Nigeria and were purposefully selected with participating schools being diverse in terms of reported bullying perpetration and urban/rural status, and came from three different prefectures. The sample of the study comprised 180 students. Simple random sampling technique was employed in selecting 2 schools. Then a disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was further employed

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in selecting 90 junior and senior students from each of the already chosen two schools. This yielded a total of 180 students which served as the sample.

**Research Instrument:** The Bullying Prevalence Questionnaire (BPQ) by Rigby and Slee (1994) was used to measure incidence of bullying among in-school adolescents. It is a twenty item instrument that has been used across culture and proven to be reliable. It has items such as: I like to get in fights with someone I can easily beat: I like to make others scared of me etc. The instrument has a reliability coefficient of 0.84.. Responses are made on a 5-point scale. Responses to all 13 items are summed up to yield the final composite score, with a range from 10 to 48. It has a Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.69 to 0.91 for all measures. The research instrument was ordered into three sections (A B and C). Section A comprised questions that sought the demographic characteristics of the students whereas Section B focused primarily on a review and contextualization of the Parental influence Questionnaire (PIQ) by Buri (1991). This was to measure the three main parenting styles exhibited by parents; authoritative, authoritarian and permissive styles of parenting as perceived by students. Originally, it is a 30-item questionnaire with ten (10) items each for each parenting style on a 5-point Likert scale. While Section C focused on the prevalence of bullying among in-school adolescents and it is a 13-item questionnaire In this study, the questionnaires were based on the version adapted by Dawson (1996) for adolescents. Data collected for this study were analyzed using multiple regression and t-test at 0.05 levels of significant via SPSS.

## Results and Discussions

### Test of Hypotheses

Data generated were analyzed using multiple regression and t-test statistical tools via the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

**Decision rule**: If P-value is less than 5% (0.05) significant level, the null hypothesis is rejected. However, P-value is greater than 5% (0.05) significant level, the null hypothesis is accepted.

**Hypothesis 1:** Hypothesis 1 states that there will be a significant influence between Parenting Style on bullying behavior among adolescents in selected Secondary schools in Abuja metropolis. This hypothesis was tested using Multiple Linear Regression as shown in table 4.1

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**Table 4.1:** Summary Results of Multiple Regression influence of Parenting Style on Bullying Behaviour

| Variables | B | T | P | r | $r^2$ | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | 2.32 | 4.12 | .000 | .403 | .262 | 3.750 | .051 |
| Authoritarian | -.608 | .702 | .011 | | | | |
| Authoritative | -.057 | .095 | .059 | | | | |
| Permissive | 2.188 | .875 | .312 | | | | |

The summary results of multiple regression presented in Table 4.2 indicates that Authoritarian Parenting style (β = -.608, p > .05) and Authoritative Parenting style (β = .057, p > .05) each showed no significant influence on Bullying behaviour. However, Permissive parenting style (β = -.188, p > .05) shows significant independent influence on Bullying behaviour. Furthermore, the result further reflect that Authoritarian parenting did contributed less while Authoritative and Permissive parenting contributes the most with [F (1, 107) = 2.62; p < 0.05]. The result indicates that parenting style jointly contributes 26.2% variability on Bullying behaviour.

**Hypothesis 2:** this hypothesis states that: there will be a significant difference in bullying behaviour among adolescents between selected Public and private schools in Abuja municipal Area

**Table 4.2:** Summary Results of t-test on Gender difference and bullying behaviour

| School Type | N | Mean | SD | t | df | P | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Private | 99 | 27.2525 | 9.38447 | 0.637 | 178 | .525 | Not Significant |
| Public | 81 | 26.4074 | 8.39014 | | | | |

t (178) = .637, p > .05

To analyze the hypothesis 2, the reseacher employed the independent sample test (t-test) analysis at 95% confidence intervals. The analysis showed a good model fit: df = 178 with mean differnce of 0.845.Hypothesis 2: The analysis shows that School Type (Public and Private schools) had no significant effect on bullying behavior among students. (F=0.89,t = 0.63, *P* = .347 >.001) df = 178. Hence the hypothesis 2 rejected.

**Hypothesis 3:** The Second research hypothesis states that there will be significant gender difference on bullying behavior among adolescents in selected secondary schools in Abuja Municipal Area council. This hypothesis was tested using independent sample t-test and the summary results

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**Table 4.3:** Summary Results of t-test on Gender difference and bullying behaviour

| Gender | N | Mean | SD | t | df | P | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 83 | 27.2169 | 9.60189 | 0.48 | 178 | .637 | Not Significant |
| Female | 97 | 26.5773 | 8.36390 | | | | |

t (178) = .48, p > .05

To analyze the hypothesis 3, the researcher employed the independent sample test (t-test) analysis at 95% confidence intervals. The analysis showed a good model fit: df = 178 with mean difference of 1.64. The analysis shows that there is no gender difference on bullying behavior among students. (F=3.14,t = 0.48, *P* = .078 <.001) df = 178. Hence the hypothesis 3 is accepted.

**Discussion of Findings**

Bullying is a significant issue impacting the psychological and emotional well-being of adolescents. Researchers have extensively studied the role of parenting styles in influencing bullying behavior. This analysis focuses on the effects of authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles on adolescent bullying, supported by relevant research. Research on authoritarian parenting and bullying has produced mixed results. While earlier studies suggested a positive link between authoritarian parenting and bullying (Olweus, 1994) more recent studies found no significant association (Chaux, Molano & Podlesky, 2009) Thus, evidence does not strongly support authoritarian parenting as a factor in promoting bullying.

Authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth and guidance, has also shown no significant correlation with bullying behavior. Studies by Calvete et al. (2008) reported no meaningful relationship between authoritative parenting and bullying, indicating it may not predict bullying tendencies. In contrast, permissive parenting—marked by low control and high warmth—has been linked to a greater likelihood of bullying. Polderman et al. (2019) found a significant association between permissive parenting and increased bullying perpetration. Farrell and White (2016) identified permissive parenting as a strong predictor of bullying in high school students. Authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles do not significantly influence adolescent bullying, whereas permissive parenting is consistently associated with higher bullying behavior. However, the impact of parenting styles may vary based on individual and contextual factors, highlighting the need for further research to understand the complex relationship between parenting styles and bullying among adolescents.

Hypothesis two finds no significant difference in bullying behaviour between school type and bullying behavior which is

in alignment with the assertion of Gini and Espelage (2018) that there is no significant difference in the prevalence of bullying behaviors between the two groups. A meta-analysis by Vieno et al. (2017) examined 64 studies and concluded that school type does not significantly predict bullying behavior among adolescents. These findings suggest that both public and private schools need to prioritize anti-bullying initiatives, as bullying behaviour can occur in any educational environment. Implementing comprehensive prevention programs is crucial to fostering a safe and inclusive school climate for all students.

In a meta-analysis of 33 studies that compared bullying rates across school types, Farrington and Ttofi (2009) found "no significant difference" overall between public and private schools in terms of bullying prevalence. While some individual studies reported lower rates in certain private schools, the overall effect was small and inconclusive. Similarly, Smith et al. (2004) compared self-reported bullying in a sample of over 26,000 middle school students across the US and found "no significant differences" between public, Catholic, and other private school students in terms of victimization or perpetration rates after controlling for individual risk factors. However, other studies have found some differences. For example, Whitney and Smith (1993) observed bullying incidents directly and found rates were "significantly lower" in private religious schools compared to public schools. So the evidence is mixed. While some studies report differences, the bulk of research to date lends overall support to the hypothesis that "two finds no significant difference in bullying behaviour between school type and bullying behavior" (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; Smith et al., 2004). More research is still needed to fully understand this relationship.

The finding made from Hypothesis 3 shows that there is no significantly gender difference in bullying behavior. This finding is in consonance with the previous findings of Sharma, Nam, Kim and Kim (2016) that prevalence did not vary significantly between male and female youths. Egbochukwu (2007) longitudinal study likewise saw gender an insignificant predictor of bullying in middle schoolers. These findings suggest bullying behavior manifests equally regardless of sex, emphasizing the need for universal, inclusive interventions addressing all young people. As God views all kindred in Christ with impartial eyes.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that; watching violent movies has the highest influence on students' bullying behavior; bullying behaviour is higher among students of secondary school age that watch violent movies than those that do not watch violent movies as indicated by their mean scores; bullying behavior is higher among students from polygamous families than those from

monogamous families as indicated by their mean scores; bullying behavior is higher among students bullied by siblings than students not bullied by siblings as indicated by their mean scores; bullying behavior is higher among students of secondary school age from uneducated parental background than those from educated parental background as indicated by their mean scores; bullying behavior is higher among students from authoritarian homes, followed by those from permissive homes, and lastly by those from authoritative homes as indicated by their mean scores; bullying behavior is higher among students of secondary school age who experience inter-parental violence than those who do not as indicated by their mean scores.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

Secondary school teachers should ensure that students' bullying behavior is detected very early for immediate treatment. Parents should employ better rearing and socializing practices that will help their children/wards in their day-to-day activities. Parents should also ensure that the home environment is devoid of all form of cumbrances and threats that can impede the good upbringing of children born into it. Counseling units should be established in all public secondary schools in Nigeria to enable students seek counseling whenever the need arises. Students identified with bullying behaviour should be referred to guidance counsellors for professional assistance. Empathy should be taught to students very early in life and if possible incorporated into our school curricular to enable cushion the effect of influence of mass media and violent entertainments

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