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EXAMINATION OF FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH BULLYING PRACTICES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OYE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EKITI STATE

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the factors associated with bullying practices among secondary school students in Oye Local Government Area of Ekiti State. This study utilized a descriptive research design of correlational type to examine the influence of the variables. Five (5) research questions and Four (4) research hypotheses were raised and analyzed. Two hundred (200) secondary school students were randomly selected from government owned secondary school in the local government. Standardized instruments were administered to the participants. Descriptive statistics and Pearson product moment correlation and ANOVA was used to analyze the data. The study revealed a significant relationship between individual, familial *and peer –related factors and bullying practices among adolescents; it also revealed that cultural norms, values and beliefs do significantly influence adolescent's attitude towards bullying practices among others. It is therefore recommended that schools and homes should instill sound moral values in children during their formative years, parents should be a good role model to their children and teachers should have skills and knowledge in classroom management and control.*

Keywords: Bullying, Individual Personality, Family Dynamics, Peer Pressure, Norms and Values, Socio-economic Status.

Introduction

Students are still impacted by bullying, which is a common issue, particularly in secondary school settings. A persistent pattern of violent behaviour by the perpetrator against the victim is known as bullying. It can take many different forms, such as physical assault, verbal abuse, social isolation and cyberbullying (Smith, 2021). Bullying occurs in many contexts and can have detrimental effects on the victim's social, psychological and emotional wellbeing. A successful solution and safer learning for all students depend on an understanding of the contributing causes to this threat.

Bullying among secondary school students is a global concern that affects adolescents social, emotional and physical wellbeing. One out of three adolescents worldwide reported having experienced bullying once in school (UNESCO, 2022). This phenomenon thrives in secondary school as a result of social integration and craves for dominance.

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Peer group social structures in secondary school invariably make bullying practices worse. Adolescents engage in aggressive behaviour to assert control and social standards just to gain acceptability and privilege in their social conclave (Parker and Salmvalli, 2022). Furthermore, new way of bullying practices has become the order of the day. This is technology based such as cyberbullying which is done outside the school setting and into an online environment perpetuated by students. (Kowalski and Limber, 2022).

The prevalence of bullying among students is well documented. Studies that between 20 and 30% of secondary school students are involved in bullying as perpetrators, victims or both at some point during their stay in school (Gaffney et al. 2021). Bullying practices has debilitating effects on the victims, they develop mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation (Barlet & Chamberlin, 2021). Also, victims also experience decreased academic performance and social isolation, which also compounds their emotional stress. On the other hand, the perpetrator suffers long-term negative consequences like antisocial behaviour, substance abuse and criminal activities as adults (Olweus, 2021). Consequently, bullying can create a toxic school environment where fear, mistrust and hostility is the order of the day. High rate of bullying often results in poor academic performance, higher dropout rates and increased behavioural problems (Vailancourt et al. 2021). In other to truly and fully address bullying in schools, it is crucial for all parties concerned to take a larger view of the issue because it not only directly affects the individuals involved but also the overall school climate.

According to recent studies, bullying behaviours are significantly predicated among adolescents who exhibit particular personality qualities such as high impulsivity, hostility and inadequate empathy (Gomez-Baya & Mendoza, 2022)). In the same vein, study by Jones and Hall (2022) shows that victims frequently experience mental health conditions like anxiety and depression as well as low self-esteem, which can lead to a vicious cycle of victimization and bullying. Furthermore, teenagers who struggle with emotional imbalance are more likely to engage in bullying behaviour (Parker and Salmivalli. 2022). Bullying may be determined by family socioeconomic level (SES), since lower SES may result in more stress in the family and less supportive parental technique.

During adolescence, peer interactions are crucial and bullying practices are frequently strengthened by peer approval or pressure to fit in (Lee & Han, 2022), Olawole and Olugbemi (2023). Bullying can be used by teenagers who are under pressure to follow their influential friends or who are seeking social dominance in order to achieve status or group identity. Studies conducted by Smith and Little (2022) emphasize the significance of peer impact. They discovered that individuals with supportive peers are less likely to be involve in or be bullied.

Adolescent conduct is significantly shaped by family environment, bullying practices are more common among adolescents from homes with high levels of conflict limited

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parental control (Thompson & Kowalski, 2022). Adolescent bullying rates are still high despite the awareness and anti-bullying measures put in place, these realities emphasize the need for more research into the underlying causes and contributing aspect of this problem (Nguyen & Parker, 2022). Similarly, despite various efforts to reduce bullying practices, it persists among secondary school students. Numerous studies have shown the complex nature of bullying with diverse causes ranging from individual characteristics to environmental and institutional based factors. (Smith et al., 2022).

With a close emphasis on the associated factors of individual personality, family dynamics, peer influence and cultural norms and values, this study seeks to examine this factor deeply as it relates to bullying practices among secondary school students.

Research questions

a. What are the individual, familial and peer-related factors associated with bullying practices among adolescents?
b. What are the implications of socio-economic status (SES) for bullying practices among adolescents?
c. How do cultural norms and beliefs influences adolescents' attitude towards bullying practices?

Research hypotheses

a. There is no significant relationship between individual, familial and peer – related factors and bullying practices among adolescents.
b. Cultural norms, values and beliefs do not significantly influence adolescent's attitude towards bullying practices.
c. Socio-economics status (SES) does not significantly impact on bullying practices among adolescents.
d. There is no significant gender difference in bullying practices among adolescents.

Methodology

Research Design: This study adopted a descriptive research design in which questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. This method seeks to establish investigation among variables by observation which researcher has no control over the variables of interest and therefore cannot manipulate them. It is expected that the sample drawn would be generalized and inferences will be made on the whole population of the study

Population: The population for this study comprise all public owned secondary schools in Oye Local government area of Ekiti State.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Simple random sampling technique was used to select four (4) secondary school the Local government area. Fifty students were randomly selected from each school. Two hundred (200) secondary school students were used for the study.

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Table 1 : School Distribution of the Students

Schools	Frequency	Percentage
Government College	50	25.0
Oye Egbo High School	50	25.0
St Augustine Comprehensive High School	50	25.0
Obalatan Community High School	50	25.0
Total	**200**	**100**

Instrumentation

The instrument used for the collection of data for this study is a questionnaire which was designed by the researcher. The instrument was a close–ended structured questionnaire (a closed-ended questionnaire refers to any question for which a researcher provides research participants with options from which to choose a response). The questionnaire was developed in line with the modified four-point Likert-type rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) Agreed (A) Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses raised for the study. The questionnaire is titled '' factors associated with bullying practices among adolescent's questionnaire. To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, it was administered to 20 secondary students who will not take part in the study. two weeks test re-test reliability method was carried out on the sample and a reliability coefficient of .82 was determined.

Participants

The sample for this study consists of 200 randomly selected secondary school students from Oye Local government area of Ekiti State, Nigeria. Four secondary school in the local government area was used for the study. The summary of biodata information received from the participants, showed that 78 (39.0%) were male while 122 (81.0%) were female. 98 respondents (49%) were Christians and 80 respondents (40%) were Muslims while other where 22 (11.0%). A further breakdown showed that shows that 137 representing 68.5% respondents are from intact family while 67 people representing 31.5% respondents are from divorced family. It signifies that the highest respondents are from intact home. The socio-economic status of the respondents shows that 26 representing 13.0% respondents are from low socio-economic status, 108 respondents representing 54.0% are from average socio-economic status while 66 respondents representing 33.0% are from high socio-economic status. This shows that the highest number of respondents comes from average income home or family. The age range shows that the respondents between the age ranges of 13-16 years are 92 in number which represent 46.0%. Those between age ranges of 17-20 years are 73 which represent 36.6%, while the respondents between 21 years and above are 35 in number which represent 17.5% of the entire sample.

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Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistic and Pearson Product Moment of correlation Coefficients, ANOVA and t-test was used to analyze the data at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Research Questions One: Low-income family (socio-economic status) does not significantly impact on bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools?

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and correlation between low- income family and bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools?

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Low-income family	200	1.67	.785	.228*	.001
Bullying practices	200	2.16	.880		

Table 2 contains descriptive statistics and correlation between low-income family and bullying behaviour. Shows that there is no correlation between low-income family and bullying behaviour ($r = .228$; $p<.05$). This indicates that the relationship between low-income family and bullying behaviour is not significant. This further implies that the students who come from low-income family may not have the tendency to engage in bullying practices and vice versa. Hence, low-income family does not significantly impact on bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools.

Research Question Two: Is there significant difference in bullying practices among male and female adolescents in senior secondary schools?

Table 3: T-test showing the significant difference in the bullying practices among male and female adolescents in senior secondary schools

Variable	N	X	SD	T	Df	P	Remark
Male	77	2.25	.830	3.192	197	.076	NS
Female	122	2.11	.907				

The result from table 3 above shows that, the value of ($t = 3.192$ $df = 197$, $p>0.05$). Since $p>0.05$, therefore, there is no significant difference in the bullying practices among male and female adolescents in senior secondary schools. This result indicates that gender is not a factor affecting bullying practices as male mean score is not significantly different from female mean score despite the disparity in the number of male and female students used.

Research Question Three: Is there significant difference in the level of bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools based on age?

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Table 4: Analysis of Variance showing the significant difference in the level of bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools based on age

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig	Remark
Between Groups	16.392	3	5.464	7.772	.000	S
Within Groups	137.803	196	.703			
Total	154.195	199				

From the analysis of variance in table 4 there is a significant difference in the level of bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary based on age. The F-ratio (F (3, 199) = 7.772, P<.05) further affirms the significance of the finding. Hence there is significant difference in the level of bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary school based on age.

Research Question Five: What is the prevalent of bullying practices among adolescents in
senior secondary schools?

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics showing the prevalence of bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools

Level of bullying practices	Frequency	Percentage
Low	64	32.0
Average	41	20.5
High	95	47.5
Total	200	100.0

Table 5 revealed that 64 participants which represented 32.0% scored low in bullying practices, 41 respondents representing 20.5% scored average while 95 participants representing 47.5% scored high in bullying practices. This implies that majority of the adolescents in senior secondary schools are scored high in bullying. Hence, there is high prevalence of bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools.

Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between individual personality and
bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools

Table 6: Descriptive statistics and correlation between individual personality and bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig
Individual personality	200	1.90	.637	.522	.000
Bullying	200	2.16	.880		

Table 6 contains descriptive statistics and correlation between individual personality and bullying. As shown in table 4.7, individual personality is significantly correlated with bullying (r =.522; p<.05). This indicates that the relationship between individual personality and bullying is significant. This implies that those students that has a personal interest to bully will always engage in bullying behaviour and

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vice versa. Hypothesis one is therefore rejected. This further implies that individual personality is significant correlated with bully.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between family dynamics and bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics and correlation between family dynamics and bullying practices of undergraduate students

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Family dynamics	200	2.05	.768	.694*	.000
Bullying practices	200	2.16	.880		

Table 7 reveals the descriptive statistics and correlation between family dynamics and bullying practices. As shown in the table 4.8, family dynamics is significantly correlated with bullying practices (r =. -694; p<.05). This means that there is significant relationship between family dynamics and bullying practices among adolescents in secondary schools. However, the relationship is negative meaning that the those who have positive family values will not engage in bullying practices and vice versa. Hence hypothesis two is rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between peer influence and bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics and correlation between peer influence and bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Peer influence	200	1.75	.671	.389	.000
Bullying practices	200	2.16	.880		

Table 8 shows the descriptive statistics and correlation between peer influence and bullying practices. As shown in the table 4.9, peer influence is significantly correlated with bullying behaviour (r = .389; p<.05). This means that there are students who are influenced negatively by the peers get engaged in bullying practices and vice versa. Therefore, the null hypothesis three is rejected.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant relationship between cultural norms and values and bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools.

Table 9: Descriptive statistics and correlation between cultural norms and values among adolescents in senior secondary schools

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Cultural norms and values	200	2.40	.641	.203*	.004
Bullying practices	200	2.16	.880		

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Table 9 reveals the descriptive statistics and correlation between cultural norms/values and bullying practices. As shown in the table 4.10, cultural norms and values is significantly correlated with bullying behaviour ($r = .203$; $p<.05$). This implies that those who embrace African mentality as regards violence score high in bullying practices vice versa. The null hypothesis four is therefore rejected.

Discussion

This study examined the associated factors of bullying practices among secondary school students in Oye local government of Ekiti State. According to the study's findings there is significant relationship between individual personality and bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools. This was corroborated by in a study that indicate that personality characteristics shape how individuals perceive, react to, or participate in bullying dynamics, making it crucial to understand this relationship to design effective intervention (Arseneault, 2022). This is also in line with the submission of Gomez-Baya and Mendoza (2022) that bullies often exhibit heightened aggressiveness and impulsivity which drive their need to intimidate or dominate peers.

The study further revealed that that family dynamics is significantly correlated with bullying practices. This means that there is significant negative relationship between family dynamics and bullying practices among adolescents in secondary schools. The finding supports the opinion of Olawale et al., 2021 who said that bullies often externalize the aggression they see at home, targeting peers as a way of expressing their frustration or gaining undue control. This is also similar to the opinion of Agbo et al., 2021 who asserted that students from dysfunctional families are more likely to become victims of bullying. Lack of emotional support at home makes them vulnerable to peer exploitation.

The study also shows that peer influence is significantly correlated with bullying practices This means that students who are influenced negatively by the peers get engaged in bullying practices and vice versa. The study by Olaniyan and Ajayi (2021) indicate that bullies often act under the influence of peers who normalize or reward such behaviours. This is also true of Ahmed et al., 2021, Olugbemi and Olawole (2021) said that students tend to emulate the behaviours of their peers, especially those who are seen as leaders or perceived role model. If bullying is common within a peer group, individuals are likely to adopt or adapt these practices as a socially acceptable norm. it is also in line with the assertion of Olowu (2021) who said bullying is often reinforced by group cohesion, where the collective identity of a group is built around exclusionary or aggressive practices. Students may bully others to maintain their standing within a group or to assert dominance.

Also, the study indicates that cultural norms and values is significantly correlated with bullying behaviour. This implies that those who embrace African mentality as regards violence score high in bullying practices vice versa. According to Okafor and Oladipo (2021) in some communities, bullying practices are downplayed or dismissed as part of childish practices. This

tolerance creates an atmosphere where students feel strengthened to bully others without fear of consequences. Additional studies shows that cultural norms and values that emphasize and criminalize disobedience and disrespect for others can suppress bullying (Eze and Onyeka, 2021.

The study also shows that there is no correlation between low-income family and bullying behaviour. This indicates that the relationship between low-income family and bullying behaviour is not significant. This further implies that the students who come from low-income family may not have the tendency to engage in bullying practices and vice versa. This finding aligns with Ahmed et al., 2021 who indicated that bullying is witnessed along all income strata. Students from wealthy homes are not exempt and may bully their peers due to entitlement of social dominance. Conversely, students from low-income background may lack the power or social standing required to bully others.

The finding also shows no significant difference in the bullying practices among male and female adolescents in senior secondary schools. This result indicates that gender is not a factor affecting bullying practices. This is in consonance with the statement make by Olawale et al., 2021 who asserted that modern study indicates that both genders are capable of engaging in all forms of bullying including physical, verbal and cyberbullying making bullying practices more similar between boys and girls.

There is also is a significant difference in the level of bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary based on age. This finding corresponds with the results of recent studies in this field showed that younger students are more vulnerable to bullying behaviours (whether bullying students or the victimized) than the older ones, including thee study of Fleming and Jacobson (2009) and Frisen and Persson (2007).

Finally, the study showed that there is high prevalence of bullying practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools. This also aligns with the findings of Owuamanam and Makinwa (2015) and Alex- Hart et al., (2015) who agrees unanimously that the prevalence of bullying victimization is high among in- school adolescents.

Conclusion

This study shows among other things that there is a significant correlation between individual personality, family dynamics, peer influence, norms and values and bullying practices among secondary school students. It is also important to note that this study shows the prevalence of bullying practices in secondary schools in respect of gender and age of the students.

Recommendations

Bullying has risen to become one of the most persistence and deleterious maladaptive behavior among adolescents, therefore, it deserves the attention of everyone, students, teachers, parents, school administrators and policy makers. Thus, for bullying to be reduced drastically, the following recommendation were made:

1. Schools and homes should instill sound moral values in children during their formative years.
2. Parents should be a good role model to their children.
3. The teachers should have skills and knowledge in classroom management and control.
4. Bullies and victims needs the support and intervention of counsellors, psychologist and other stakeholders.
5. Parents and teachers must recognize the dangers in violent films and contents that harbours and encourage violence in children.

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