



Role of parental involvement, conflict resolution, and perceived social acceptance on bullying tendency among adolescents in Ibadan

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Abstract

Adolescence is a developmental stage that comprises some basic interactional processes with parents, which can be described as gaining autonomy while maintaining relatedness. Studying the factors that predict bullying tendency among adolescents is especially important while seeking to understand the challenges of this developmental stage that is characterized by different disruptive behaviours. This study investigated the role of parental involvement, conflict resolution, and perceived social acceptance on bullying tendency among adolescents in secondary school in Egbeda local government, Oyo state, Nigeria. The study makes use of Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory, and Evolutionary Theory, among other theories to explain the construct. Standardized questionnaires: The Modified Aggression Scale, Parental Involvement Scale, Conflict Resolution Style Inventory and Perceived Acceptance Scale were used to collect data from 649 adolescents. A total of 606 questionnaires were completed and analysed using intercorrelation, t-tests and multiple regression (57.4% female and 42.6% male, average age of 16). Results revealed a substantial 65.5% prevalence of bullying among the sampled students. Interestingly, while parental involvement didn't directly predict bullying, a negative correlation was observed between parental involvement and bullying tendencies. Conversely, conflict resolution styles significantly predicted bullying behavior, whereas perceived social acceptance did not. Furthermore, significant gender disparities in bullying were identified. The findings of this study established that among adolescents, psychosocial factors are significant predictors of bullying behaviours. It is therefore advocated that comprehensive intervention programs involving collaboration among parents, teachers, and professionals like psychologists, counselors, and social workers to effectively mitigate bullying tendencies among adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescents, bullying, parental involvement, conflict resolution, perceived social acceptance

Introduction

Adolescence is a developmental stage where adolescents start expressing their characters. It is especially important to understand the challenges of this developmental stage which is characterized by different disruptive behaviours. Similarly to other stages of life, adolescents can see physical differences or characters as an avenue to survive others in their environment. This makes the supposedly favourable adolescents either in biological traits, social characters or other factors to exhibit bullying behaviour over others that are seen as disadvantaged (this is later well explained through the biological evolutionary theory on bullying). According to Veenstra et al. (2013), bullies appear to deliberately target individuals who are not capable of effective retaliation or receive peer support.

Aggression, violence and bullying have been observed to be escalating in recent years in school environments across Nigeria. Aggression is inherent both in humans and animals, but what makes humans different is that they can bring aggressive behaviour under control (Celik et al., 2016). This buttresses the fact that bullying as a form of aggression is a deliberate and intentional harm-doing (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). Bullying manifests in many forms, such as harassment, hounding, maltreatment, oppression, intimidation and discrimination. It is usually inflicted by seniors on junior students. Although physical bullying can be easily noticed, and damaging type of bullying to a person; however, verbal bullying can be just as harmful as physical bullying.

When it comes to dealing with bullying and violence against their children, parents face difficulties. Rose & Espelage (2012) provide valuable ideas. Bullying has a dynamic nature that is shaped by interactions in a variety of contexts, including peer groups, families, and society norms. According to Salgado et al. (2021), parental involvement is critical in preventing unfavorable outcomes. Clear communication and active participation build trust and lessen behavioral problems. According to

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Katie (2021), conflict resolution techniques are essential for handling the inevitable disputes that arise among teenagers, with constructive methods encouraging good peer relationships. The dual concern paradigm, as defined by Qin Gao et al. (2017), was used in this study to evaluate several conflict resolution techniques, such as problem-solving, conflict engagement, compliance, and retreat. Furthermore, discussion of the importance of teenagers' perceived social acceptance is highlighted, with acceptance promoting both academic engagement and emotional well-being (Leary, 2001). Rejection, on the other hand, might result in unfavorable effects and antisocial conduct.

The aims and objectives of the study are as follows:

To investigate the relationship between parental involvement, conflict resolution, perceived social acceptance, and bullying tendency among adolescents in Ibadan.

To examine whether parental involvement, conflict resolution, and perceived social acceptance are associated with bullying tendency, addressing the gap in literature regarding these factors.

To report on the prevalence of bullying in Egbeda Local Government, Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria, filling the gap in empirical data collection on this issue in the specified area.

Statement of Problem

The issue of bullying among adolescents presents a complex array of challenges, with far-reaching consequences affecting physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Research, such as that conducted by Ryan et al. (2023), Copeland (2013) and Wolke & Lereya (2014), highlights the enduring impacts of bullying, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and academic decline. These detrimental effects not only disrupt normal developmental processes but also hinder adolescents' integration into society (Sullivan et al., 2005). Instances of school violence, exemplified by

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incidents in Egbeda Local Government and schools like Zumuratu Secondary School and Muslim Grammar School in Ibadan, emphasize the widespread nature and severity of the problem. Such occurrences not only disrupt the peace within schools but also reflect broader societal challenges. The situational survey conducted by the Federal Ministry of Education (2007) reveals alarming rates of physical and psychological violence in schools, with notable disparities across regions and settings. Establishing a comprehensive understanding of the prevalence and dynamics of bullying in Nigerian schools is essential for creating safer and more supportive learning environments for adolescents, aligning with the goals outlined in the National Policy on Education.

Checking through the literature (Tan et al., 2020, Poon, 2020), parental involvement has been linked to academic achievements but not to disruptive behaviour (bullying). Most studies on bullying are on actual bullying behaviour but not bullying tendency. There is also no empirical data collection on the prevalence of bullying in Egbeda Local government. However, this study will fill these gaps by studying the role of parental involvement, conflict resolution, and perceived social acceptance on bullying tendency among adolescents in Ibadan, and reporting the prevalence of bullying in Egbeda local government Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria.

Evolutionary Theory on Bullying

Animal inherent trait of dominance as an instrument of survival could make them strive to dominate either by acceptance or by force on the other animals. This inherent trait is also fostered by biological factors that make the advantaged or the animal with favourable or surviving characters perceive themselves as superior and others as inferior, which may lead to a bullying tendency. This act can also be seen among nonhuman animals, where the older, larger and/or stronger animal continually takes advantage of or bullies the other by harming and preventing them

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from eating, which in turn results in a wider gap between the bully and the victim animal. Because as the bigger or stronger eat more, the bigger it becomes at the expense of the other ones.

By providing objectives that were adaptive in the past and are still adaptable today, a functional evolutionary approach clarifies the key roles of bullying. Evolutionary theory and evidence also support that bullying is a goal-directed behaviour, and is associated with adaptive outcomes relating to reputation (i.e., social dominance), resources, and reproduction (Volk et al., 2012b).

Method

A cross-sectional research design was adopted in this study. The participants for this study were adolescent students of diverse demographic characteristics in the six randomly selected sample schools from a total of 23 government senior secondary schools in the Egbeda Local Government Area (Oyo State School Census Report, 2019). Out of the 649 participants, only 606 questionnaires were completely completed. Therefore, data were gathered and analysed from 606 secondary school students, 57.4% female and 42.6% male, with an average age of 16. A letter of introduction was obtained from the Psychology Department of the University of Ibadan to the Ministry of Health for ethical approval which was approved by the Oyo State Ethics Review Committee (AD 13/479/44653A).

Instruments

Modified Aggression Scale: It's a standardized scale developed in 1993 and was later modified by Bosworth and Espelage in 1995. It is primarily for measuring aggressive behaviour. It is a 22-item scale with four subscales; anger, fighting, bullying, and caring/cooperative behaviour. However, only the bullying subscale of 4 items was used in the present study with an internal consistency of 0.83 (Orpinas, 1993;

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Bosworth & Espelage, 1995). E.g "I threatened to hit or hurt another student" (Compendium, 2nd edition).

Parental involvement scale: This is a standardized scale developed in 1996 (Gorman-Smith et al., 1996). It measures the degree to which the parent is involved in the child's life. It has 24 items, but only the 12 items for the youth were used in this study with internal-consistency: Youth 0.79 (Compendium, 2nd edition).

Conflict Resolution Style Inventory: It is a 16-item standardized measure developed by Kurdek (1994). It has four conflict resolution strategies: conflict withdrawal, compliance, positive problem-solving, and conflict engagement. The scale is primarily for couples but adapted to parent and adolescent populations, and studies have reported good validity (Branje et al., 2009; Van et al., 2007; Van et al., 2008). It has a Cronbach alpha of 0.79-0.90 (Henson, 2001).

Perceived Acceptance Scale: It's a 44-item self-report standardized measure with five Likert response categories. It is designed to assess perceptions of acceptance within four specific categories of relationships: friends (12 items), family (12 items), mother (10 items) and father (10 items). The internal consistency alpha scores of the mother, father, family, friends, and the total PAS were 0.94, 0.93, 0.92, 0.80, and 0.96 respectively (Brock et al., 1998).

Results

4.1 Demographic Information

Table 4.1: Demographic distribution and bullying

Variable	Frequency (%)	Mean (SD)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	258(42.6)	51.51(11.30)

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Female	348(57.4)	51.31(9.98)
<i>Living with</i>		
Father	42(6.9)	50.40(8.36)
Mother	136(22.4)	48.85(10.24)
Both parents	424(70)	52.23(10.68)
Caregiver	4(0.7)	59.50(13.96)
<i>Experience bully in the past 3 months?</i>		
Yes	397(65.5)	51.49(10.35)
No	209(34.5)	51.20(10.95)
<i>If yes, which form of bullying?</i>		
None	203(33.5)	50.97(11.03)
Verbal	129(21.3)	49.67(10.04)
Physical	138(22.8)	52.65(10.16)
Both	136(22.4)	52.38(10.55)
<i>How did you experience it?</i>		
None	199(32.8)	50.76(11.04)
As a bully	85(14)	50.59(8.87)
As a victim	118(19.5)	52.15(10.45)
As a bully and victim	69(11.4)	53.80(11.35)
Witness	81(13.4)	49.99(10.78)
Witness and victim	54(8.9)	52.33(9.71)
Total	606 (100)	51.39 (10.55)

Table 4.1 presents the results of the frequency distribution among secondary school students. It is shown that more of the respondents 348 (57.4%) were females, while the other 258(42.6%) were males. Age distribution showed that more of the respondents 454 (74.9%) were between 15 and 17 years old, 109 (18%) were less than 15 years, and the other 43 (7.1%) were 18 years old and above. When asked who they were living with, 424 (70%) indicated that they lived with both parents, 136 (22.4%) lived with their mother, 42 (6.9%) lived with their father, and the other 4 (0.4%) lives with caregivers. Furthermore, more of the students 397 (65.5%) indicated having experienced bullying for at least the past 3 months, while the other 209 (34.5%) indicated that they had not experienced bullying in the past 3 months. Among those who had experienced bullying, 138 (22.8%) reported it to be physical, 136 (22.4%) experienced both verbal and physical, 129 (21.3%) experienced only physical bullying, and the remaining 203 (33.5%) never experienced bullying. Finally, 118 (19.5%) indicated experiencing bullying as a victim, 85 (14%) experienced it as a bully themselves, 81 (13.4%) experienced it as a witness, 69 (11.4%) experienced it as a bully and victim, 54 (8.9%) experienced it as both a witness and victim, while the remaining 199 (32.8%) indicated none.

Table 4.2: Zero-order correlation summary table showing results on the relationship among variables of the study

SN	Variable	X	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Bully	7.73	2.3	-								
2	PI	34.3	7.5	-	-							
		9	2	13*								
				*								

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3	CE	7.38	3.0	.31*	-	-						
			1	*	.17*							
					*							
4	PPS	11.8	3.9	.10*	.31*	.08	-					
			5	6	*							
5	Withd.	9.94	34	.12*	.01	.28	.33*	-				
			2	*		**	*					
6	Compl i	9.04	3.3	.14*	-.07	.36	.13*	.40*	-			
			8	*		**	*	*				
7	PAFR	10.0	3.0	.02	.14*	.03	.10*	.09*	.08	-		
			7	0	*							
8	PAFA	13.5	4.8	.10*	-.07	.18	-.01	.17*	.19*	.32	-	
			8	2		**	*	*	**			
9	PAFA M	8.19	3.0	.02	.28*	-.06	.19*	.05	-.03	.46	.08	-
			1		*		*		**	*		

**** Significant at 0.01, * Significant at 0.05**

NB: PI - parental involvement, CE - conflict engagement, PPS - positive problem solving, PAFR - perceived acceptance by friends, PAFR - perceived acceptance by father, PAFA - perceived acceptance by family

Table 4.2 presents results on the intercorrelation among the variables of the study. Bullying was found to have a significant and positive relationship with conflict engagement ($r = .31$; $P < .01$), positive problem solving skills ($r = .10$; $P < .05$), compliance ($r = .14$; $P < .01$) and perceived acceptance by fathers ($r = .10$; $P < .05$). This means that the higher the conflict engagement, positive problem solving skills, compliance, and perceived acceptance by fathers, the higher the bullying tendencies.

Additionally, bullying was found to have a significant and negative relationship with parental involvement ($r = -.13$; $P < .01$). This means that the higher the parental involvement, the lower the bullying.

Hypothesis One

Students with a high level of parental involvement will report lower bullying tendencies (fighting, bullying, and anger), but higher on cooperative behaviour, than those with low level of parental involvement. This was tested using t-test for independent samples and the result is presented in Table 4.3;

Table 4.3: t-test for independent samples summary table showing results on the influence of parental involvement on bullying tendencies

Dependent	Parental involvement	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P
Bullying	High	321	7.68	2.25	.62	604	>.05
	Low	285	7.80	2.41			

Table 4.3 presents results on the influence of parental involvement on bullying tendencies among secondary school students. Parental involvement had no significant influence on bullying [$t(604) = .62$; $P > .05$]. The hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Two

Conflict resolution dimensions will significantly predict bullying tendency among adolescents. This was tested using multiple regression analysis and the result is presented in Table 4.4;

Table 4.4: Summary of multiple regression table showing conflict resolution dimensions as predictors of bullying tendencies

Criterion	Predictors	β	t	P	R	R ²	F	P
	Conflict engagement	.29	6.93	<.01				
Bullying	Positive problem solving	.07	.166	>.05	.32	.10	16.81	<.01
	Withdrawal	.01	.18	>.05				
	Compliance	.03	.59	>.05				

Table 4.4 presents results on the joint and independent influence of conflict management dimensions on bullying tendencies among secondary school students. It is shown that when combined, conflict management styles (conflict engagement, positive problem solving, withdrawal, and compliance) were significant predictors of bullying [$R = .32$; $R^2 = .10$; $F(4, 601) = 16.81$; $P < .01$]. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis Three

Perceived social acceptance will significantly predict bullying tendency among adolescents. This was tested using multiple regression analysis and the result is presented in Table 4.5;

Table 4.5: Summary of multiple regression table showing perceived social acceptance as predictors of bullying tendencies

Criterion	Predictors	β	t	P	R	R ²	F	P
	Friends	.03	-.65	>.05				
Bullying	Father	.10	2.26	<.05	.09	.01	1.78	>.05
	Family	.03	.55	>.05				

Table 4.5 presents results on the joint and independent influence of perceived social acceptance on bullying tendencies among secondary school students. The perceived social acceptance dimensions (friends, father and family) had no joint influence on bullying [$R = .09$; $R^2 = .01$; $F(3, 600) = 1.78$; $P > .05$], perceived social acceptance by fathers had a significant independent influence on bullying ($\beta = .10$; $t = 2.26$; $P < .05$). Hence the hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Four

Males will significantly report higher bullying tendencies than their female counterparts. This was tested using t-test for independent samples and the result is presented in Table 4.6;

Table 4.6: t-test for independent samples summary table showing results on gender differences in bullying tendencies

Dependent	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P
Bullying	Male	258	8.03	2.50	2.71	604	<.05
	Female	348	7.51	2.17			

Table 4.6 presents results on the gender differences in bullying tendencies (bullying subscale) among secondary school students. There was a significant gender difference in bullying among secondary school students [$t(604) = 2.71$; $P < .05$]. Furthermore, males were found to report higher on bullying (Mean = 8.03; SD = 2.50) compared to their female counterparts (Mean = 7.51; SD = 2.17).

Discussion

The prevalence of bullying behaviour in verbal and physical bullying ranged from 43.7% for verbal bullying and 45.2% for physical bullying. The total prevalence in

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the last three months reported by adolescents is 65.5%. This makes it the primitively known investigated prevalence study of bullying behaviour among adolescents in government secondary schools in Egbeda Local Government Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. This showed and supported the evidence of prevalence studies in other places in Nigeria and the world, as reported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2017) that school violence and bullying occur throughout the world and affect a significant proportion of children and adolescents.

The result of the first hypothesis showed no predictor role of parental involvement on bullying tendency. However, correlational analysis indicated that there is a negative relationship between parental involvement and bullying tendency among adolescents. The correlational findings support the bioecological theory of development formulated by Urie Bronfenbrenner, which posits that human development is a transactional process in which an individual's development is influenced by his or her interactions with various aspects of their environment. Out of the five systems identified by Bronfenbrenner according to Guy-Evans (2020), the microsystem which consists of the immediate environment such as parents and family, is the first and the most influential level of ecological system theory. It is believed that a strong nurturing relationship with parents will have a positive effect on the child. The findings also support the postulation according to Kristin (2014) that parental involvement plays an enormous role in student behaviour in school. Additionally, there is an inverse relationship observed between aggression scores and family variables, aggression scores and parental monitoring, and students who lived with both parents were less likely to report aggression than students in other living arrangements (Orpinas et al., 1999).

The result of hypothesis two showed that conflict management styles (conflict engagement, positive problem solving, withdrawal, and compliance) were significant predictors of bullying. This finding supports previous studies that showed that workplaces or teams where a dominating conflict management style was used had

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higher levels of bullying victimization and where problem-solving styles (i.e., integrating, compromising) were used had lower rates of bullying victimization (Ayoko, 2003; Baillien & Witte, 2010).

The third hypothesis that suggests that perceived social acceptance significantly predicts bullying tendency among adolescents was not supported by the results. This outcome finds little support from the literature according to Schwartz et al. (2006) that stated that social acceptance is not a predictor variable for aggressive behaviour, but there is a correlational relationship between the variables, and popularity as a social standing is a predictor variable.

The result of the fourth hypothesis showed that there exists a significant gender difference in bullying among secondary school students. Males were found to report more bullying than their female counterparts. This result supports the previous studies (Egbochuku, 2007; Fields, 2007) that found that bullies were most likely to be boys, and that boys engage in a more direct method of physical assault than girls, who engage in subtle indirect bullying methods such as calling names and spreading rumours.

Recommendations

The findings of this study established that among adolescents psychosocial factors (parental involvement, conflict resolution and perceived social acceptance) are significant predictors of bullying behaviours. It is therefore suggested that intervention programs that can curb bullying tendencies among adolescents should be established. The government is encouraged to fund social awareness campaigns and infuse educational and counselling programs that can change the attitude of adolescents concerning bullying behaviour in our schools. This study recommends that schools should employ professionals, social workers, psychologists, and counsellors to engage in prevention and intervention efforts both for the bully and the victim. This interdisciplinary team, including teachers, could work together in

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developing plans for educating students and parents about the importance of parental involvement or family relationships in the development of these adolescents. Schools that have solid conflict resolution should teach students/adolescents how to peacefully solve conflict. As suggested by social norms theory, behaviours may be seen as acceptable if they are socially accepted in the community. Therefore, to reduce the tendency of bullying, it should be labelled unacceptable behaviour.

Limitations

The means of collecting data were through a structured questionnaire that did not give a chance for further probing or open means of data collection. The parents and teachers who would have been a very good source of information on bullying tendencies among adolescents were not included in the study.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Future studies on bullying tendency among adolescents should make use of a structured questionnaire with an unstructured questionnaire that will allow for further probing, and should also include parents and teachers in data collection.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, O.J., upon reasonable request.

Ethical and Consent Declaration

This study is carried out according to the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Oyo State Ethics Review Committee, under the Ministry of Health Department of Planning, Research and Statistics Division.

Reference Number: AD13/479/44653A



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Date: November 9, 2022

Approval was given by the ministry and informed consent was obtained from the participants, and school principals as the legal guardians for those who could not consent. While assent was obtained from the other students before participation.

Consent to Publish Statement: Not Applicable

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