



Influence of School Bullying on Mental Health of Students in Delta Central Senatorial Districts in Delta State

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ABSTRACT

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The study examined influence of school bullying on mental health of students in Delta central senatorial districts in Delta State. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study and a sample size of 375 students were involved in the study. A questionnaire titled “School Bullying on Mental Health Rating Scale (SBMHRS)” which contains physical Bullying Rating Scale (BRS), Verbal Bullying Rating Scale (VBRS) and Relational Bullying Rating Scale (RBRS). Cronbach Alpha was used to obtain the internal consistency of the instrument. Reliability indices of 0.71 for physical bullying, 0.94 for verbal bullying, and 0.67 for relational bullying were obtained. The data obtained were analyzed with mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and one way sample t-test was used to analyse the hypotheses. Based on the findings, it was concluded that physical bullying, verbal bullying and relational bullying influences the mental health of secondary school students. On the basis of the findings and conclusion of the study, it was recommended that the Post Primary Education Board in collaboration with the Ministry of Education should organize seminar for the students on various forms of bullying and their implications; Teachers should look keenly into the students behavior to identify bullies and victims of bullying; The principal together with the teachers can educate the students on disciplinary measures to be taken if found wanting to discourage them from indulging in the act; Parents are advised not to use violence in the presence of their children when settling dispute.

KEYWORDS:

Bullying, Mental Health, Physical Bullying, Verbal Bullying, Relational Bullying

1. INTRODUCTION

The school serves as a socialisation tool as well as a centre for learning where knowledge, skills, values, aptitudes, and character qualities are imparted. Along with learning to get along with their classmates, teachers, and other school staff, students also develop their social skills. The goal of the school setting is to create a secure haven where students feel at ease and are handled with respect, thus it should be free of any actions that obstruct the fluidity of good connections. When students do not feel safe in the school environment, they become apprehensive and this can affect their mental health. Our psychological, emotional, and social well-being all fall under the category of mental health. It impacts our

thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Additionally, it influences our capacity to manage stress, interact with people, and make wise decisions. (National Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division for Population Health, 2021). Children with stable minds may likely do well academically in schools however, students with unstable minds may show lukewarm attitude toward academic work.

It appears that school bullying might affect the mental health of students. Bullying may result in sadness, nervousness, and trouble in the classroom. Students may find it more difficult to establish relationships and perform well in the classroom as a result. On academic and social growth, this may have disastrous consequences. Bullying happens between someone who has more power and is more aggressive than their targeted person. A bully uses that power whether it's physical strength, being more popular, or knowing embarrassing information to hurt or control the person they're bullying. The person who is being bullied may find it hard to defend themselves and may feel increasingly powerless against the person bullying them. Bullying is referred to as recurrent violent behaviour in conditions of

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power imbalance, which can take multiple forms. It is marked by aggressive behaviour such as coercion, abuse, harassment, marginalisation, and/or unfair treatment, which may appear either explicit or implicit. It is also expressed as deliberate and persistent antagonism (Oliveira, Menezes, Traffi, 2017).

Bullying can take many forms: some of which are more obvious than others. They include: physical bullying, verbal bullying, relational bullying, cyber bullying, sexual bullying and prejudicial bullying (Vinney, 2021). Physical, relational and verbal bullying appear to be widespread forms of bullying among Nigerian students.

Physical bullying involves any assault on a person's body, including hitting, kicking, tripping, or pushing. It can also extend to inappropriate hand gestures or stealing or breaking a victim's belongings (Vinney, 2021). Physical bullying is perpetrated by an individual or group of individuals who are bigger or stronger than the individual being targeted. Bullying frequently leaves behind visible scrapes and wounds (Jonny Shannon, 2021). Verbal bullying entails using spoken or written remarks to humiliate or frighten a victim. It involves insults, mocking, and even threats. Additionally, a bully can disguise it as friendly banter between pals. It may be challenging for the victim to establish this as a result. Therefore, this form of bullying can become a long-term source of stress and anxiety (Vinney, 2021).

Relational bullying, which is also referred to as relational aggression or social bullying, involves actions intended to harm a victim's reputation or relationships. It can include embarrassing the victim in public, spreading rumors, purposely leaving them out of social situations, or ostracizing them from a group. Unlike more overt types of bullying, it is especially sly and insidious because it involves social manipulation. Relational bullying can lead to isolation, loneliness, depression, and social anxiety (Jacobsen, Bauman 2007). Relational bullying is a distinct form of bullying which causes harm to the victim through the systematic manipulation and destruction of their peer relationships and social status.³ Such behaviors could include threatening to retract friendships, spreading rumors, purposefully ignoring and excluding the victim or using friendship as a bartering tool. (Coyne, Archer, & Eslea 2006)

Bullying causes emotional and cognitive dysregulation, which then fuels the development of mood disorders such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, panic disorder, agoraphobia, and eating disorders. Stress and fear can cause children to spiral downward into rumination, suicidal thoughts, and attempts. A child who has experienced bullying becomes more susceptible to depression as an adult since the neurological circuitry controlling sad mood was already hyper-aroused during the bullying occurrences. (Dan Brennan, 2021). To function effectively in daily school activities, students must be in good mental health. Teenagers who have been bullied usually experience lingering emotions that express as wrath, either towards others or towards

oneself. Long-term bullying can cause a victim to start placing the responsibility on themselves (Louise 2021). Bullying makes children anxious, unhappy, frequently lonely, and afraid. It also makes them feel insecure and forces them to believe they are flawed. Additionally, they do not have the confidence or enthusiasm to go to school, which might result in illness (Nazir & Piskin, 2015) and subpar academic performance.

Chester et al 2017 examined the association between relational bullying and health-related quality of life (HRQL) among young people using 5335 students aged 11-15 years, collected as part of the 2014 in England. The findings showed an association between relational bullying and poorer HRQL which is above and beyond that of physical and verbal bullying. AlBuhairan (2016) investigated The relationship of bullying and physical violence to mental health and academic performance: A cross-sectional study among adolescents in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between 2011 and 2012 using a total of 9073 students, the result showed that Bullying and physical violence are serious and major public health issues that have a negative impact, are negatively associated with adolescents' well-being, and require special attention at the family, school, and community level. Maunder et al. (2010) conducted a survey of students, teachers, and staff in four secondary schools in England, and a total of 1302 people participated in this survey, and the results found that physical bullying was the most harmful to students. Chen et al. (2012) selected a middle school in Taiwan, China, and conducted two samples (605 students and 869 students) and found that relational bullying such as rumor spreading and cyberbullying were more harmful than physical and verbal bullying

Man, Liu and Xue (2022) explored the relationship between forms of bullying and adolescent mental health and the role of parental support as a protective factor. Data were drawn from adolescents aged 12–17 years in 65 countries from the Global School-based Student Health Survey between 2003 and 2015. The results found that the prevalence of bullying in the sample of 167,286 adolescents was 32.03%, with the highest prevalence of bullying in the sample countries in Africa. Verbal bullying had the highest prevalence and the most significant negative effect on adolescent mental health.

Bullying is a social issue that is widespread at the time in Nigeria, specifically in Delta State, among students in different schools, whether private or public, and the frequency appears to be increasing yearly. Today, it is practically impossible to find a high school without bullying. There have been accounts of instances of student bullying that have even led to certain students' deaths. Sylvester Oromoni was said to have passed away on November 30, 2021, after suffering from multiple internal wounds after being beaten up by bullies at his boarding school in Downen College, Lagos. The little youngster allegedly refused to give in to pressure from some of his classmates to join a cult group. Following a

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similar terrible experience, Don Davis, an 11-year-old Junior Secondary School pupil at Deeper Life High School in Uyo, became the focus of a December 2020 story. Davis' mother, Deborah Okezie, released his images and videos on social media, telling the world how her small child had been physically and sexually molested by his bigger peers and starved by the school administration for bedwetting. According to sources, the school administration increased the punishment by relocating him from his room to a more senior dorm, where he was constantly assaulted by his seniors (Aveseh & Asough, 2021). Cases like this sparked the idea for this study, which looked at the influence of bullying on students' mental health in Delta State.

Four research questions and three established hypotheses served as the study's guiding principles.

- What forms of bully influence mental health of students?
- What is the extent does physical bullying influences mental health of students?
- What is the extent does verbal bullying influences mental health of students?
- What is the extent does relational bullying influences mental health of students?
- There is no significant influence of physical bullying on the mental health of students
- There is no significant influence of verbal bullying on the mental health of students.
- There is no significant influence of relational bullying on the mental health of students

II. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design was adopted for the study, it helped in gathering data for the study and a population of 49,312 students in the 8 local government areas of Delta Central Senatorial District in Delta State was used. The sample size of 375 students was obtained from Krecejie and Morgan's table as cited by Ekedama (2023). In krecejie and Morgan, the population of 45,312 will have a sample size of 375. A questionnaire titled School Bullying on Mental Health Rating Scale (SBMHRS) which contains physical Bullying Rating Scale (BRS), Verbal Bullying Rating scale (VBRS) and Relational Bullying Rating Scale (RBRS). The instrument has four-point scale type of strongly agreed, agreed, strongly disagree and disagree. Cronbach Alpha was used to obtain the internal consistency of the instrument. Reliability indices of 0.71 for physical bullying, 0.94 for verbal bullying, and 0.67 for relational bullying were obtained. The data obtained were analyzed with mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and one way sample t test was used to analyse the hypotheses.

III. RESULTS

Research questions raised for the study were answered using mean responses of data obtained from questionnaire as presented in tables as follows

Research Question One: What form of bully influences mental health of students?

In order to answer this research question 1, mental health of students scale questionnaire responses were rated on the influence covered in the study. The mean rating of responses is presented in table 1

Table 1: Mean Rating of Responses on the bullying that influence Mental Health of Students.

| | Mental Health of Students Questionnaire | N | X | Std. | Decision |
|---|--|-----|-------------|------------|-----------|
| A | Physical Bullying | | | | |
| 1 | When students punch me, I strike back. | 375 | 2.88 | 1.05 | Agreed |
| 2 | I like to slap my classmates since I am bigger and tougher than them | 375 | 3.27 | .82 | Agreed |
| 3 | I intentionally ran into another student. | 375 | 3.36 | .84 | Agreed |
| 4 | I stood up for a person who had stuff stolen from them on purpose. | 375 | 3.53 | .62 | Agreed |
| 5 | I hurled things at student | 375 | 3.19 | .70 | Agreed |
| | Grand Mean (X) for physical Bullying | | 3.26 | .80 | |
| B | Verbal Bullying | | | | |
| 1 | I receive insults from my classmates | 375 | 2.22 | .64 | Disagreed |
| 2 | I am ridiculed, called names, and laughed at. | 375 | 1.92 | .77 | Disagreed |
| 3 | My classmates gossip about me, speak negatively of me behind my back | 375 | 2.02 | .70 | Disagreed |
| 4 | I make jokes about other students in order | 375 | 3.26 | .81 | Agreed |

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| | | | | | |
|---|---|-----|-------------|-------------|--------|
| | to make them laugh at. | | | | |
| 5 | I take part in the rumors that are being spread about a different student. | 375 | 2.95 | .89 | Agreed |
| | Grand Mean (X) for Verbal Bullying | | 2.50 | 0.78 | |
| C | Relational Bullying | | | | |
| 1 | In an effort to prevent other students from playing with my classmates, I have spread stories about them. | 375 | 2.70 | 1.17 | Agreed |
| 2 | I am occasionally left out of my classmates' games. | 375 | 3.52 | .70 | Agreed |
| 3 | I have fabricated stories about a classmate. | 375 | 3.16 | .84 | Agreed |
| 4 | Others in the school premises have made untrue claims about me. | 375 | 3.06 | .89 | Agreed |
| 5 | I have incited other students to act against a classmate of mine. | 375 | 2.60 | 1.12 | Agreed |
| | Grand Mean (X) for Relational Bullying | | 3.00 | 0.92 | |

Bench Mark Mean: 2.50

Table1 clearly highlighted the grand mean of bullying that influence mental health of students in the study. Physical bullying ranked highest among the bullying (\bar{X} =3.26), followed by relational bullying (\bar{X} =3.00) and verbal bullying ranked lowest (\bar{X} =2.50). Each variable has grand mean greater than and equal to the bench mark mean of 2.50. This implies that physical bullying; verbal bullying and relational bullying are the bully forms that influence mental health of students.

Research Question Two: What is the extent of physical bullying on the mental health of students?

In order to answer this research question 2, mental health of students scale questionnaire responses were rated on the physical bullying covered in the study. The mean rating of responses is presented in table 2

Table 2: Mean Responses of the extent of physical bullying on Mental Health of Students.

| | Physical Bullying Statement | N | X | Std. | Decision |
|---|---|-----|-------------|------------|----------|
| 1 | Punching me makes me to strike back. | 375 | 2.88 | 1.05 | Agreed |
| 2 | I slap my classmates since I am bigger and tougher than them | 375 | 3.27 | .82 | Agreed |
| 3 | Intentionally running into students. | 375 | 3.36 | .84 | Agreed |
| 4 | Standing for persons who had stuff stolen from them on purpose. | 375 | 3.53 | .62 | Agreed |
| 5 | hurdlng things at students | 375 | 3.19 | .70 | Agreed |
| | Grand Mean (X) | | 3.26 | .80 | |

Bench mark mean: 2.50

Table 2 clearly highlights the mean of physical bullying on mental health of students covered by the study. According to the data gather in Table 2 punching students makes them strike back (\bar{X} =2.88), students uses their size to intimidate their classmate (\bar{X} =3.27), students also said they intentionally run into fellow students (\bar{X} =3.36), students said that they stand for persons with stolen stuff for purpose (\bar{X} =3.53) and further said that they hurled things at fellow students (\bar{X} =3.19).

Generally, the grand means of 3.26 is higher than the bench mark means of 2.50.This implies that physical bullying influences mental health of student to a large extent.

Research Question Three: What is the extent of verbal bullying on the mental health of students?

In order to answer this research question 3, mental health of students scale questionnaire responses were rated on the verbal bullying covered in the study. The mean rating of responses is presented in table 3

Table 3: Mean Responses of the extent of verbal bullying on Mental Health of Students.

| | Verbal Bullying Statement | N | (X) | Std. | Decision |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----|------|------|-----------|
| 1 | I receive insults from my classmates | 375 | 2.22 | .64 | Disagreed |

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| | | | | | |
|---|--|-----|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| 2 | I am ridiculed, called names, and laughed at. | 375 | 1.92 | .77 | Disagreed |
| 3 | My classmates gossip about me, speak negatively of me behind my back | 375 | 2.02 | .70 | Disagreed |
| 4 | I make jokes about other students in order to make them laugh at. | 375 | 3.26 | .81 | Agreed |
| 5 | I take part in the rumors that are being spread about a different student. | 375 | 2.95 | .89 | Agreed |
| | Grand Mean (X) for Verbal Bullying | | 2.50 | 0.78 | |

Bench mark mean: 2.50

Table 3 clearly highlights the mean of verbal bullying on mental health of students covered by the study. According to the data gather in Table 3 they do not receive insults from classmate ($\bar{X}=2.22$), students do not ridicule, call names and laugh at students ($\bar{X}=1.92$), classmates do not gossip, speak negative behind themselves ($\bar{X}=2.02$), students makes jokes about fellow students to make them laugh ($\bar{X}=3.26$) and further said that they take part in rumors that are being spread about different students ($\bar{X}=2.95$).

Generally, the grand means of 2.50 is equal to the bench mark means of 2.50. This implies that verbal bullying influences mental health of student to an extent.

Research Question four: What is the extent of relational bullying on the mental health of students?

In order to answer this research question 4, mental health of students scale questionnaire responses were rated on the relational bullying covered in the study. The mean rating of responses is presented in table 4

Table 4: Mean Responses of the extent of relational bullying on Mental Health of Students.

| | Relational Bullying Statement | N | X | Std. | Decision |
|---|---|----------|----------|-------------|-----------------|
| 1 | In an effort to prevent other students from playing with my classmates, I have spread stories about them. | 375 | 2.70 | 1.17 | Agreed |
| 2 | I am occasionally left out of my classmates' games. | 375 | 3.52 | .70 | Agreed |
| 3 | I have fabricated stories about a classmate. | 375 | 3.16 | .84 | Agreed |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|-----|-------------|-------------|--------|
| 4 | Others in the school premises have made untrue claims about me. | 375 | 3.06 | .89 | Agreed |
| 5 | I have incited other students to act against a classmate of mine. | 375 | 2.60 | 1.12 | Agreed |
| | Grand Mean (X) for Relational Bullying | | 3.00 | 0.92 | |

Bench Mark Mean: 2.50

Table 4 clearly highlights the mean of relational bullying on mental health of students covered by the study. According to the data gather in Table 4 students prevents other fellow students from playing with their classmates by spreading stories about them ($\bar{X}=2.70$), students are occasionally left out of classmates' games ($\bar{X}=3.52$), students also said they fabricated stories about their classmates ($\bar{X}=3.16$), students said others in the school premises have made untrue claims about them ($\bar{X}=3.06$) and further said that they have incited other students to act against a classmate ($\bar{X}=2.60$).

Generally, the grand means of 3.00 is higher than the bench mark means of 2.50. This implies that relational bullying influences mental health of student to a large extent.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant influence of physical bullying on the mental health of students

Table 5: One-Sample t-test analysis of physical bullying on mental health of students

| Variable | N | X | Sd | Df | t | Mean Diff | Sig (2-Tailed) |
|-----------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Physical bully | 375 | 12.45 | 5.41 | 374 | -899.2 | -50.01 | 0.000 |

0.05

Table 5 shows a one-sample t-test value of-899.23. Using an alpha level of 0.05 and a p-value of 0.000 at 374 degrees of freedom, the p-value of 0.000 is lesser than the alpha level of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This shows that there was significant influence of physical bullying on mental health of students.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant influence of verbal bullying on the mental health of students.

Table 6: One-Sample t-test analysis of verbal bullying on mental health of students

| Variable | N | X | Sd | Df | t | Mean Diff | Sig (2-Tailed) |
|-----------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Verbal bully | 375 | 12.37 | 3.81 | 374 | -1287.3 | -50.09 | 0.000 |

0.05

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Table 6 shows a one-sample t-test value of-1287.31. Using an alpha level of 0.05 and a p-value of 0.000 at 374 degree of freedom, the p-value of 0.000 is lesser than the alpha level of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This shows that there was significant influence of verbal bullying on mental health of students.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant influence of relational bullying on the mental health of students

Table 7: One-Sample t-test analysis of relational bullying on mental health of students

| Variable | N | X | Sd | Df | t | Mean Diff | Sig (2-Tailed) |
|------------------|-----|-------|------|-----|----------|-----------|----------------|
| Relational bully | 375 | 15.04 | 4.72 | 374 | -1033.08 | -47.45 | 0.000 |

0.05

Table 7 shows a one-sample t-test value of-1033.08. Using an alpha level of 0.05 and a p-value of 0.000 at 374 degree of freedom, the p-value of 0.000 is lesser than the alpha level of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This shows that there was significant influence of relational bullying on mental health of students.

IV. DISCUSSION

The first finding showed a significant influence of physical bullying on mental health of students. This finding means that physical bullying may likely affect mental health of students. This finding underscores that kicking, pushing, hitting, slapping which are traits of physical bullying can affect students' mental health. This finding agrees with the work of AlBuhairan (2016) who posited that bullying and physical violence are serious and major public health issues that have a negative impact, are negatively associated with adolescents' well-being, and require special attention at the family, school, and community level. Again, Maunder et al. (2010) in their study found that physical bullying was the most harmful to students which likely agrees to this study.

The second finding revealed that there was significant influence of verbal bullying on mental health of students. This finding indicated that naming calling, gossiping, which are traits of verbal bullying can affect students' mental health. This study is in agreement with the study of Man, Liu and Xue, (2022) affirmed that verbal bullying had the highest prevalence and the most significant negative effect on adolescent mental health.

The third finding revealed that there was a significant influence of relational bullying on mental health of students. This finding indicated that purposeful exclusion of classmates and rumor spreading which are traits of relational bullying can affect students' mental health. This study harmonizes with the study of Chen et al. (2012) who found that relational

bullying such as rumor spreading and cyberbullying were more harmful than physical and verbal bullying.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings generated from the study, it was concluded that physical bullying, verbal bullying and relational bullying influences the mental health of secondary school students in Delta Central Senatorial Districts in Delta State.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings and conclusion of the study, the following were recommended:

- The Post Primary Education Board in collaboration with the Ministry of Education should organize seminar for the students on various forms of bullying and their implications.
- Teachers should look keenly into the students behavior to identify bullies and victims of bullying.
- The principal together with the teachers can educate the students on disciplinary measures to be taken if found wanting to discourage them from indulging in the act
- Parents are advised not to use violence in the presence of their children when settling disputes.

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