EMPATHY TRAINING AS A MEANS OF PREVENTING BULLYING IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS: ALIMOSHO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, LAGOS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Bullying is a maladaptive behaviour that children and adolescents face daily in schools all around the world. It is prevalent in today's schools and is commonly found in secondary schools. It is a complicated social problem that can have serious negative implications for both bullies and victims, especially when the victim is physically or psychologically harmed. The study, therefore, examines empathy training among students to prevent bullying behaviour in selected secondary schools in Alimosho local government area of Lagos state. A survey method was utilized using the structured questionnaire as an instrument of data collection. Utilizing a simple random sampling, three hundred and seventy-six copies of the questionnaire were administered to students in the four secondary schools. However, three hundred and thirty were retrieved which were used for the analysis. Quantitative data were tested using Quantitative data was analysed utilizing the descriptive statistics with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23. A descriptive analysis was used with the use of frequency counts and percentages for the analysis of the data. Findings of the study shows that many victims of bullying get involved in substance abuse and lose interest in schooling. Therefore, empathy training and encouraging victims to make timely reports on incidences of bullying are crucial to mitigating bullying and its consequences in secondary schools in Lags State.

Keywords: Bullying, Empathy training, prevention of bullying, Secondary schools,

1. INTRODUCTION

Students associate with their colleagues while at school and work in groups for their growth. Students may find it hard to develop morally, socially, academically, or emotionally as it should be if the school climate is less fascinating, safe, and secure. According to a study by Olabiyi, (2021), only a few students can relate faultlessly with their colleagues without experiencing classroom violence. Bullying is one kind of violence that has seriously endangered students' lives in Nigerian schools. Bullying is prevalent in today's secondary schools. It is uncommon to find a secondary school nowadays that does not experience bullying Tambawal and Rukayya, (2017).According to Azeez, Misra, Lawal and Oluranti, (2021) bullying may involve threat on

social media which is a form of cyberbullying there by endangering the lives of student in secondary school. According to Ekumah, (2018), approximately 30% of more than 15,000 public school students in the United States said they were bullied regularly.

Bullying is turning out to be more boundless in schools around the world Kim, Spadafora, Craig, volk, and Zhang, (2021). In the United States, Guo, Liu, and wang; (2021) argue that in less than two months as much as 20.8 percent of students take part in physical bullying, 53.6 percent in verbal bullying, 51.4 percent in social bullying, and 13.6 percent in cyberbullying in a school of 7,182 youths (level 6 to 10). In the United Kingdom, the British school health education unit discovered that a quarter of 10–11-year-olds was consistently bullied by their classmates. Corfe, shepherd, and Pardoe, (2021). Similarly, another report indicated that 15 percent of Australian kids reported that they were bullied every week. Erickson, Bridgman, furlong, & stark, (2022). In Nigeria, a cross-sectional review was conducted on students in grades 10 and 11. According to the review, more (56.8 percent) of students in the sample have been bullied in the previous month. Adeosun, Adegbohun, Oyekunle, Ogunlowo, and Pedro, (2015)

Bullying has now been related to an increase in mental health issues. Van Ryzin, & Roseth, (2018). Ttofi and Farrington (2019) found that school bullying is related to higher rates of violence later on in life. These negative consequences make it clear that such behaviour must be curtailed. Over the year, there has been significant growth in creating anti-bullying initiatives, urging teachers and other school administrators to take a proactive role in preventing bullying incidents in their classrooms. Waasdorp, fu, Perepezko, & Bradshaw, (2021). Bullying behaviours are reduced as a result of anti-bullying initiatives. More significant decreases are achieved when more thorough programs include discussions involving parents, appropriate disciplinary techniques, and more outdoor supervision Ttofi and Farrington (2019); Evans, Smokowski, Rose, Mercado. & Marshall, (2019).

Bullying has been linked to reduced empathy, particularly affective empathy, in children and adolescents Caravita, Diblasioo, & Salmivalli, (2019).; Jolliffe and Farrington 2021; van Noorden, Cillessen, Haselager, Lansu, & Bukowski, (2017). According to longitudinal studies Stavrinides, Georgiouu, & Theofanous (2010)), low empathy may increase bullying over time. According to warden and Mackinnon, cited in Soliman, Frydenberg, Liang, & Deans, (2021), good social behaviour students exhibit better empathy levels. Before acting, a person with a high level of genuine empathy will be able to predict the negative consequences of their actions against others. Students with bad social conduct, on the other hand, do not anticipate the adverse effects of their actions. Empathy may be used to lessen aggressive behaviour in two ways. The first is cognitive, which is the ability to take the perspective of others and to accept, comprehend, and tolerate their point of view. (Davis, 2018). Individuals can evaluate the rationale and intentions of others in an attempt to comprehend as well as embrace other people's actions. the second part of empathy causes emotional tension by making an aggressive offender experience the victim's pain. (Davis, 2018 Afolabi, Oyeyipo, Ojelabi, R., & Patience, 2019)

There are differing perspectives on how bullies experience empathy. According to Lee, Cheung, Chee, & chai, (2021) bullies have a hard time comprehending others' feelings and are prone to social detachment, in which they have minimal understanding of how others thought about them. Other researchers claim that hat bullies have "cold cognition," which means they are less able to understand and empathize with others' feelings. Dautenhahn, Woods, & Kaouri, (2007). Participation in an empathetic program has enabled greater compassion and decreased bullying. Kokkinos & Kipritsi, (2018). Efforts to increase classroom bullies' compassion by addressing the distress of their targets may thus be successful in curbing their behaviour. When students are being taught how to respond to other people's feelings with positive emotions, they will be able to sense the feelings of those who have been bullied if they increase their empathy level. According to Veliki (2018), students between the ages of 10 to 16 years showed a significant difference in empathy levels. Garandeau, Laninga-Wijnen, and Salmivalli, (2021) also observed that a lower level of empathy related to students. According to Rivers and Noret, (2013) to reduce bullying, a concentrated program fit for increasing understanding with others, particularly, ought to be done. Increasing the empathy level of students will make them feel emotions toward people who were victims of bullying. This study seeks to examine empathy training for students as a means of preventing bullying among selected secondary schools in the Alimosho local government area, Lagos, Nigeria.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey technique was utilized in gathering data from the field with the use of a questionnaire to help the researcher test the impact of empathy training as a means of preventing bullying among selected secondary schools in command secondary school, Elias secondary school, Good shepherd secondary school, and

Ikotun high school. This method involves the collection of data, through the use of a structured questionnaire. The objective populace for the examination were the students at the selected secondary schools which in the long run helped to estimate the sample size. Quantitative data was analysed utilizing the descriptive statistics with the aid of the statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 23. The total number from the selected secondary school was 6,490.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the distribution based on the distribution of the respondents for the study which includes gender, age, class, religion, parents' marital status, parent's income level, and weight.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents		
Variable	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Male	162	49.1
Female	167	50.6
No response	1	.3
Number of siblings		
1-2	92	27.9
3-4	131	39.7
5-6	52	15.8
7-8	18	5.5
8 and above	13	3.9
No response	24	7.3
Age of respondent		
10-13 years	128	38.8
14-16years	157	47.6
17-19years	36	10.9
20 and above	3	.9
No response	6	1.8
Class in school		
Jss1	76	23.0
Jss2	83	25.2
Jss3	53	16.1
Ss1	41	12.4
Ss2	53	16.1
Ss3	24	7.3
Religion		
Christianity	224	67.9
Muslim	101	30.6
Others	2	.6
No response	3	.9
Parent marital status		
Single	61	18.5
Married	234	70.9
Separated	16	4.8
Divorced	2	.6
Widowed	10	3.0
No response	7	2.1

Source: Field Survey

The table above shows the frequency distribution for the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. About half (50.6%) of the population of this survey were female while the remaining were male and only 1(0.3%) respondent didn't answer the question. apart from 24(7.3%), all other respondents answered about the number of siblings they had. with about 40% having between 3 and 4 siblings and

27.9% having 1 to 2 siblings only less than 4% of respondents had more than 8 siblings. a tenth of the respondents was between the ages of 17-19 years while most (39.7%) were between the ages of 14—16 years old. those respondents in sss3 had the least representation (7.3%) while the respondents in jss2 were about one quarter (25.2%) of the survey population. Most (70.9%) of the respondent's parents were married, while 18.5% were from a single parenting family. about 2/3rd of all respondents were Christians while the remaining 30.6% reported being Muslim. Just about 22.4% of all respondents' parents earned between N91,000 and above, 10% didn't respond to the question and 20% had parents who earned N11,000 monthly income.

Strategies to stop bullying in schools		
Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)
Flogging bullies during school assembly		
Strongly disagree	115	34.8
Disagree	67	20.3
Neutral	15	4.5
Agree	44	13.3
Strongly agree	47	14.2
No response	42	12.7
Teaching empathy		
Strongly disagree	37	25.2
Disagree	16	25.2
Neutral	16	4.8
Agree	59	17.9
Strongly agree	83	30.5
No response	52	15.8
Encouraging reporting of incidence of bullying		
Strongly disagree	136	41.2
Disagree	76	23.0
Neutral	20	6.1
Agree	24	7.3
Strongly agree	29	8.8
No response	45	13.6
Suspension of bullies from school		
Strongly disagree	128	38.8
Disagree	74	22.4
Neutral	23	7.0
Agree	32	9.7
Strongly agree	18	5.5
No response	55	16.7
Educating students about the dangers of bullying		
Strongly disagree	129	39.1
Disagree	95	28.8
Neutral	16	4.8
Agree	30	9.1
Strongly agree	20	6.1
No response	40	12.1
Paste fliers on the dangers of bullying		
Strongly disagree	123	37.3
Disagree	80	24.2
Neutral	25	7.6
Agree	35	10.6
Strongly agree	22	6.7
No response	45	13.6
Educating teachers on the measures to be taken		
Strongly agree	134	40.6
Disagree	101	30.6
Neutral	20	6.1

Agree	18	5.5
Strongly agree	13	3.9
No response	44	13.3
Expulsion of bullies from school		
Strongly disagree	123	37.3
Disagree	66	20.0
Neutral	38	11.5
Agree	29	8.8
Strongly agree	20	6.1
No response	54	16.4
Educating parents on the dangers of bullying		
Strongly disagree	117	35.5
Disagree	91	27.6
Neutral	23	7.0
Agree	30	9.1
Strongly agree	16	4.8
No response	53	16.1
Inviting bullies' parents to come and flog them personally		
Strongly disagree	104	31.5
Disagree	62	18.8
Neutral	25	7.6
Agree	42	12.7
Strongly agree	50	15.2
No response	47	14.2

Most of the respondents (55.1%) disagreed to different degrees that flogging bullies during school assembly do not deter bullying. the same can be said for suggestions for teaching empathy when asked, respondents reported that they strongly agreed with the strategy.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	20	25.2
Disagree	16	25.2
Neutral	16	4.8
Agree	59	17.9
Strongly agree	83	11.2
No response	52	15.8

Source: Field Survey,2022

The result shows respondents' responses on if teaching empathy among students in the classroom can reduce bullying behaviour in secondary schools.20(25.2%) strongly disagree,16(25.2%) of the respondents disagree, 16(4.8%) of the respondents stayed neutral,16(17,9%) of the respondents agree,83(11.2%) of the respondents strongly agree, while 52(15.8) of the respondents didn't response.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, the strategies that could be used to prevent bullying behaviour in school are by encouraging students to report incidences of bullying. teaching students about empathy is another

strategy that could be used in addressing bullying in secondary schools. educating teachers on the measures to take when they notice certain behaviour from their students. Efforts should be put in place by teachers, school administrators, and the government to ensure that all forms of bullying must not be condoned as the school environment must be safe, secured, and conducive to ensure that students grow both morally and socially, academically, emotionally, and physically.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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