



Impact of Bullying Behavior on School Adjustment and Academic Performance among Students in Boarding Schools in Niger State: Implications for Counselors and Educational Psychologists

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the impact of bullying behavior on school adjustment and academic performance among junior secondary school students in boarding schools in Niger state: Implications for Counselors and Educational Psychologists. The objective of the Study was to investigate the relationship between bullying behavior, school adjustment and academic performance among boarding school students in Niger State and the implications of the findings to counselors and educational psychologists. The study employed a correlational survey design. The Population of the study comprises of 12,546 junior secondary school boarding students in Niger State. The sample size consisted of 370 junior secondary students. Three instruments were used for data collection namely Bullying Questionnaire (BQ), School Adjustment Scale (SAS) and Academic Performance Data (APD). Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed to examine the relationship between bullying, and academic performance, as well as school adjustment. The Result showed that bullying behavior significantly has impact on school adjustment and academic performance among boarding secondary school students in Niger State ($P= 0.000$ $r= 0.874$), ($p= 0.001$ $r= 0.854$) based on the result, the researchers recommended that establishment of Anti-bullying Programs and Student Support Systems in Boarding schools, Teacher Training on bullying prevention, Regular Monitoring and Parental Involvement to prevent or totally eradicate bullying behavior in boarding secondary schools in Niger State.

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying behavior has been part of school, and even workplaces, for years. Children and young people often fall out and disagree with each other as they form and build relationships. This is a normal part of growing up and most children and young people often bounce back from this type of behavior. However, if one's behavior is planned, on purpose, persistent and intended to hurt other people. Then we can conclude that is a bullying behavior. Bullying is common in our primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. Bullying can affect people in different ways and have significant impact in academic pursue.

Bullying behavior is a significant issue affecting adolescents worldwide. It is typically

defined as aggressive behavior, characterized by an imbalance of power, repeated over time, and intended to cause harm. This form of peer victimization occurs in various settings, but it is particularly prevalent in school environments. As bullying behavior has evolved with the advent of digital technology, cyberbullying has emerged as a new form of harassment, further complicating the issue (Rivers & Noret, 2010).

Many students, especially those in boarding schools, are victims of bullying by the senior students or classmates. According to Ngozi (2023) bullying, which is not attributed to a particular personality trait is reported to be because of environmental influence, family background, peer pressure and bad

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parenting. Bullying is any deliberate and persistent act of aggressive behavior against an individual carried out by a single person or a group of people where the victim has difficulty defending themselves due to an imbalance of power. Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort. Bullying can take the form of physical contact, words, or subtler actions. American Psychological Association (2023) According to Susan (2016), Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power or strength. It is a repeated behavior and can be physical, verbal, or relational. While boys may bully others using more physical means, girls often bully others by social exclusion.

School adjustment refers to how well students adapt to the demands of school life, including forming positive relationships, following school rules, and maintaining a sense of belonging. Bullying can severely hinder this adjustment. Victimized students often experience anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, which can lead to difficulties in forming peer relationships and engaging in school activities (Smith et al., 2008). Research has shown that victims of bullying are more likely to feel disconnected from school, engage in absenteeism, and exhibit disruptive behaviors that further impede their school adjustment (Farrington & Tfofi, 2011).

Academic performance, typically measured by grades or standardized test scores, is also negatively affected by bullying. Victims of bullying often face psychological distress, leading to reduced concentration and lower academic engagement (Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2011). Studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between bullying and decreased academic achievement. This is attributed to various factors, such as truancy, school avoidance, and the emotional toll that bullying takes on the student's ability to focus and perform in an academic setting (Rivers & Noret, 2010).

Various literatures suggest that bullying has lasting impacts on school adjustment and academic performance, for example Aminu, Lawal and Shehu (2020) investigated the Psychological and Academic Impacts of Bullying on Secondary School Students in Kaduna. The aimed of the study was

to explore the psychological impact of bullying and its effects on school adjustment and academic performance among secondary school students in Kaduna State. The study found that students who experienced bullying had higher levels of emotional distress, lower social engagement, and poor academic performance. Victims also reported difficulties in adjusting to the school's social and academic demands.

Aliyu, and Abdullahi (2021) examined the relationship between different forms of bullying (physical, verbal, and cyber) and school adjustment among students in Northern Nigerian boarding schools, including those in Kaduna State. They found a significant negative correlation between bullying and school adjustment. Victims of bullying reported lower levels of self-esteem, higher absenteeism, and poor relationships with peers and teachers, which led to difficulties in adapting to the school environment. They concluded that bullying negatively affects students' ability to adjust to boarding school life, impacting both their social relationships and academic success.

Adamu and Mohammed (2022) carried out a study which focused on understanding how bullying impacts social and emotional adjustment in Nigerian boarding schools, with a specific focus on schools in Kaduna State. They found out that students who experienced bullying showed higher levels of emotional distress, including anxiety, loneliness, and depression. Socially, these students had difficulty forming positive relationships with peers and were more likely to isolate themselves.

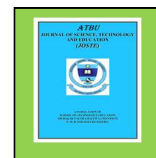
Reviewing the literatures on bullying and academic performance, studies showed that students who experience persistent bullying are more likely to drop out of school prematurely, leading to long-term consequences in terms of career opportunities and socioeconomic status (Veenstra et al., 2005). Oluwole and Olanrewaju (2022) also researched on bullying in Nigerian secondary schools, highlighting the influence of peer victimization on students' academic engagement and emotional well-being. Similarly, Aliyu and Abdullahi (2021) studied the correlation between bullying and school attendance in Northern Nigerian boarding schools, with findings showing that students

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who experienced bullying had lower attendance rates and poor academic performance. Furthermore, Aminu et al. (2020) explored the psychological and academic impact of bullying in boarding schools in Kaduna, concluding that victims of bullying are more likely to face emotional distress, which adversely affects their school adjustment.

The increasing recognition of the adverse effects of bullying on both school adjustment and academic performance highlights the importance of investigating this issue, particularly among secondary school students who are at a critical stage in their educational and emotional development. Various studies have investigated the effect of bullying behavior on adjustment and academic performance among secondary schools. However, gap still remain as to it impact among boarding secondary schools in Niger State. Understanding the relationship between bullying behavior, school adjustment, and academic performance in Niger states became necessary to help educators and policymakers develop effective interventions to support victims and create a safer, more conducive learning environment.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the impact of bullying behavior on the school adjustment of boarding secondary school students in Niger State.
2. To investigate the relationship between bullying behavior and academic performance among boarding school students in Niger State.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of bullying behavior on the school adjustment of boarding secondary school students in Niger State?

RESULT

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on relationship between bullying and school adjustment among boarding secondary school students in Niger State

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Correlation index r	Df	P
Bullying	370	19.01	5.264	0.874	368	0.000
School Adjustment	370	47.722	14.672			

Correlation is at 0.05 level of significance

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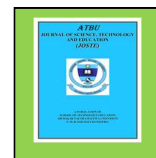
2. How does bullying behavior affect the school adjustment of boarding secondary school students in Niger State?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between bullying behavior and school adjustment among boarding secondary school students in Niger State.
2. There is no significant relationship between bullying behavior and academic performance among boarding secondary school students in Niger State.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a correlational survey design. The Population of the study comprises of 12,546 boarding secondary school students in Niger State. The sample size consisted of 370 respondents based on the recommendation of research Advisor (2006). Stratified random sampling was used to select the 370 junior secondary school students from four boarding schools in Niger Sate which are all made up of male and female. Three instruments were used for data collection namely Bullying Questionnaire (BQ) which consisted of different forms of bullying (verbal, physical, and cyberbullying). School Adjustment Sc ale (SAS) which measure students' emotional, social, and academic adjustment in the school environment and Academic Performance Data (APD) to collect Students' term grades to objectively measure academic performance. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed to examine the relationship between bullying, and academic performance, as well as school adjustment.



Pearson Product Moment Correlation on relationship between bullying and school adjustment among boarding secondary school students in Niger State revealed that the calculated p value of 0.000 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance at a correlation index r level of 0.874.

Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that bullying behavior significantly has impact on school adjustment among boarding secondary school students in Niger State.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on relationship between bullying behavior and academic performance among boarding secondary school students in Niger State

<i>Variables</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Correlation index r</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>P</i>
Teacher's Attitude	370	18.815	5.424	0.854	368	0.001
Learning Engagement	370	48.743	14.80			

Correlation is at 0.05 level of significance

Pearson Product Moment Correlation on relationship between bullying behavior and academic performance among boarding secondary school students in Niger State revealed that the calculated p value of 0.001 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance at a correlation index r level of 0.854. Therefore, the null hypothesis was also rejected. This means that bullying behavior has a significant impact on academic performance among boarding secondary school students in Niger State

DISCUSSION

The study was to investigate the impact of bullying behavior on school adjustment and academic performance among junior secondary school students in boarding schools in Niger state. The first result revealed that bullying behavior significantly has impact on School adjustment among boarding secondary school students in Niger State. The p value 0.000 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance. This corresponds with the study conducted by Aminu, Lawal and Shehu (2020) who found that students who experienced bullying had higher levels of emotional distress, lower social engagement, and difficulties in adjusting to the school's social and academic demands among secondary school students in Kaduna State. Similarly, Aliyu, and Abdullahi (2021) concluded that bullying negatively affects students' ability to adjust to boarding

school life, impacting both their social relationships and academic success. After examining the relationship between different forms of bullying (physical, verbal, and cyber) and school adjustment among students in Northern Nigerian boarding schools. Bullying showed higher levels of emotional distress, including anxiety, loneliness, and depression. Socially, students who are victims of bullying had difficulty forming positive relationships with peers and were more likely to isolate themselves.

The result also revealed that bullying behavior had a significant impact on academic performance among boarding secondary school students in Niger State. p value of 0.001 is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance. The finding was supported by empirical studies. For example, A study by Aliyu and Abdullahi (2021) showed that students who experienced bullying had lower attendance rates and poor academic performance. Similarly, Rivers and Noret (2010) asserted after their investigation that students who experience persistent bullying are more likely to drop out of school prematurely, leading to long-term consequences in terms of career opportunities and socioeconomic status.

Bullying behavior as various research investigated has a negative impact on both school adjustment and academic pursue. Bullying behavior is a threat that should not be disregarded. Attention needs to be giving to the

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bullying in our schools today due to its effect in the life of those being bullied.

Implications for Counselors and Educational Psychologists

Bullying behavior has significant impacts on school adjustment and academic performance, particularly for junior secondary school students in boarding schools as the result indicated. These impacts have critical implications for counsellors and educational psychologists working in such settings. Some of the implications of the impact of bullying behavior on school adjustment and academic performance for counsellors and educational Psychologists are as follows.

- 1. Early Identification and Intervention:** Counsellors must be trained to recognize the early signs of bullying and provide immediate support to both victims and perpetrators. Establishing peer support programs and anti-bullying workshops can be an effective approach.
- 2. Emotional and Social Support:** Counsellors should offer individual and group counselling sessions aimed at improving emotional resilience and social skills among students. This helps victims of bullying regain confidence and reintegrate into school life.
- 3. Parental Involvement:** Counsellors should collaborate with parents to ensure that they are aware of their children's experiences and are equipped to provide support at home. Regular parent-teacher meetings can help address these issues collectively.
- 4. Assessment of Mental Health:** Educational psychologists play a critical role in assessing the mental health status of students affected by bullying. Psychological assessments can help determine the severity of the emotional and cognitive impacts on victims and provide a basis for appropriate interventions.
- 5. Designing Intervention Programs:** Psychologists should design evidence-based intervention programs that target both the emotional and academic well-being of students. This could include resilience-building programs, cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), and social skills training.

6. Whole-School Anti-Bullying Policies:

Educational psychologists can work with school administrators to create and implement school-wide anti-bullying policies. This includes training teachers to handle bullying incidents and creating a positive school climate where bullying is not tolerated.

7. Monitoring Academic Progress:

Psychologists should track the academic progress of students who have been affected by bullying to ensure that they are receiving the necessary academic support. This may include tutoring, special education services, or accommodations in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that bullying has a detrimental impact on both school adjustment and academic performance among secondary school students in Niger State. Therefore, Counsellors and educational psychologists must work together to provide a supportive environment for victims, promote positive peer relationships, and ensure that affected students receive the emotional and academic interventions they need to succeed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of similar studies, the following recommendations could be proposed:

1. Schools should implement comprehensive anti-bullying programs that involve students, teachers, and parents. These programs should include awareness campaigns, conflict resolution training, and counselling services.
2. Boarding schools should establish peer support groups and counselling centres to help victims of bullying cope with emotional distress and adjust to school life.
3. Teachers and school staff should receive training on identifying and addressing bullying. They should also be involved in creating a positive school climate that discourages aggressive behavior.

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4. Schools should conduct regular surveys and monitoring to identify cases of bullying and intervene early.
5. Parents should be involved in efforts to reduce bullying by staying informed about their children's experiences and working with schools to address issues of victimization.

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