

Prevalence of Bullying Behavior on Academic Performance among Students in Integrated Public Secondary Schools in Kitui County, Kenya

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Abstract: Cases of bullying have been on the rise in public secondary schools in Kenya. Many experience bullying and many other forms of violence on a day-to-day basis within school. Most students in public secondary schools in Kitui County have either been bullied or have known someone who has been bullied. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the prevalence of bullying behavior on academic performance among students in integrated public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya. The study was based on Social Identity Theory. This study employed a descriptive research design. This study was carried out in Kitui Central District. The target population was 1302 respondents comprising of 31 principals and 31 Guidance and counselling teachers and 1294 form three students. Stratified random sampling method was used and then simple random sampling method was used to select respondents from various strata. The sample size was 92 respondents comprising of 14 principals, 14 Guidance and counselling teachers and 64 form three students. The data collection tools were questionnaires for the teachers, students and interviews for the principals. Content validity was carried out to ensure that the instruments are valid and the test re-test technique was used to estimate the reliability of the instruments. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation and presented using frequency distribution tables, pie charts and bar graphs for effective communication to the users. Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis technique and presented in narrative form. The study established that a high rate of bullying behavior among students which emanated from monogamous family, being from a broken home vulnerability in the community and some students feeling stronger than others, verbal bullying and indirect bullying were the most types of bullying behavior and students that bullying still happen in their school and every student had been bullied. However, a number of the students indicated that some of these cases are not reported to the school administration. The study concluded that school bullying exists in all schools regardless of them being governmental or private ones. The study also concluded that school bullying affect student's academic achievement either victims or the bullies. The study recommends that school management and teachers have to take different measures for the purpose of reducing the bullying volume. Moreover, teachers should coordinate with bullied students.

Keywords: Bullying Behaviour, Academic Performance

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Omoteso (2010), bullying is a psychological, a sustained aggression that strips a person of control and

dignity. Poor academic performance among students has been noted to be on the increase in our environment despite efforts at improving the school curriculum and quality of teaching. Bullying is one of the most common problem behaviours experienced by students not only in Kenyan secondary schools, but also in schools across Africa and the world. Different studies conducted on the prevalence, causes and effects of bullying in secondary schools show that bullying is considered one of the most prominent problem behaviours by education practitioners the world over (Brown et al., 2008; Carney & Merrell, 2010).

Shafqat (2015) argued that bullying in schools occurs in any place either in school building or around school building and may occur in bathrooms, school buses and during waiting for school buses, and in classes which may require group work or after school activities. School bullying is a widespread issue that affects school students in many parts of their lives such as; psychologically, educationally and professionally. Sekol and Farrington (2016) found that bullies, compared to non-bullies have been bullied before. Bullying at school affects academic achievement since bullied children feel fear and weak and in the same time it affects students' personality traits and self-confidence. Therefore such situation makes bullied students unable to follow or to pay attention for their study well and even they might do not like to go to school.

In North America, Nansel et al. (2001) studied bullying behaviours among United States (US) youth and found that 29.9% of the sample reported moderate or frequent involvement in bullying, as a bully (13%), as one who was bullied (10.6%), or both (6.3%). They sampled (15,586) fifteen thousand five hundred and eighty-six students across the United States of America. The authors of the study concluded that prevalence of bullying among US youth was substantial and given the concurrent behavioural and emotional difficulties associated with bullying, as well as the potential long-term negative academic performance among the students.

In Africa, the prevalence of bullying behavior has been reported by Asamu (2006) that, 22.5% of the students she studied in Ibadan, Nigeria were below 15 years of age. She found that bullying behavior was peculiar to junior secondary schools 21% of male students had bullied other students. In

Tanzania, for example, bullying behavior among Secondary schools is widespread and has a negative impact on students' right to learn in a safe and secure environment without fear. Mgalla, Schapink and Boenna (2008) conducted a study in rural and urban Tanzania; and their investigation revealed that the incidences of bullying were real and some of the pupils had been adversely affected following the acts which are normally done to both male and female pupils.

In Kenya, studies show that bullying has a long history as evidenced by increased violent cases in schools. According to Poipoi (2011) up to the late 1970s, it was a sort of compulsory disciplinary drill in most schools. In 1999 a group of male students in Nyeri High School locked up 4 prefects in their rooms at night for bullying them and doused them in petrol killing them instantly. In 2001 at a school in Bombolulu, 68 students were also burnt to death and many injured after their dormitory was set ablaze using petrol by two boys. According to Ikambili (2003), beating as a form of bullying accounted for about 30% in public mixed day secondary schools in Nairobi Province. The Government of Kenya (GoK) through the Ministry of Education (MoE) hence banned bullying acts in all schools in 2003 due to its violent nature that does not only result in death and permanent injuries among students but also due to its effects on learning (Ajowi, 2005). However, despite its ban bullying of students persists. In May 2006, a 15-year-old Form One student of a high school in Nyeri district in Kiambu County, further succumbed to injuries caused by a bully (Okwemba, 2007). Later in 2008, Mathiu (2008) reported that over 254 secondary schools in Kenya experienced violence and Kitui County was among the top listed 10 with 54 cases. Despite the prevalence of bullying in schools in Kenya, little appears to have been done.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Cases of bullying have been on the rise in public secondary schools in Kenya. Many experience bullying and many other forms of violence on a day-to-day basis within school. Kiplagat (2008) argue that school administrators would want to dismiss the existence of bullying cases because of its seriousness and effects, but they still happen. In Nyanza Province, according to Affulo (2005), 67 percent of disciplinary problems experienced in secondary schools in Bondo sub-county were bullying behaviour. Nyasato (2009) on the other hand reported a case where six prefects were expelled from a secondary school in Manga Sub-county, Kisii County, for brutally bullying form one students where one of the victims was seriously injured and admitted to the local district hospital. These studies did not focus on the effects of bullying specifically in integrated public secondary schools, thus the gap this study seeks to fill.

Most students in public secondary schools in Kitui County have either been bullied or have known someone who has been bullied. For instance, Kitui High School and Matinyani Boys' which have been going on strikes every year for the last three years never appeared in the top 100 best performed

schools in the country in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E) 2013 and 2012 consecutively as it has been before. There was need therefore to investigate prevalence of bullying behavior on academic performance among students in integrated public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Rigby (2008) suggests that bullying is "the systematic abuse of power in interpersonal relationship". In other words, bullying is when a person is picked on over and over again by an individual or group with more power, either in terms of physical strength or social standing. Rigby argues that the abuse of power is not restricted only to certain managerial or "authority" positions, but that most individuals have "the opportunity to exercise power to control over someone". Thus, there are apparently imbalances in physical and psychological strength between bully and the victim (Olweus & Solberg, 2009).

Moon (2008) asserts that bullying in schools is also a worldwide problem that can have negative consequences for the general school climate and for the rights of students to learn in a safe environment without fear. It is widespread, and perhaps the most underreported safety problems in schools. Until recently, most bullying researchers have been merely concerned with school bullying although other contexts of bullying have also been widely researched. The reason for this is that during school age bullying becomes a common and daily basis activity among students. In relation to this, Sampson (2002) argues that the "most frequently bullying happens during elementary school and slightly less during middle school and less so, but still frequently, in the high school".

Olweus (2003), the first Scandinavian researcher concerned with the issue, conducted his systematic study in Norwegian and Swedish schools and found that many students experienced school bullying. The findings showed that approximately 7% of Scandinavian students in the sample engaged in school bullying, and between 5% and 15% of students in various grades reported being bullied.

In Philippines, Jones et al., (2008) reported that a national study by World Health Organization (WHO) (2004) showed that over one-third of students who were bullied 30 days preceding the survey, 28% reported being hit, kicked, pushed, shoved or locked indoors. Boys (35.8%) were more likely than girls (22.2%) to report such physical bullying. Malematsa (2005) in a South African case study concurred with WHO (2004) that physical bullying apart from involving intentional hitting and tripping up, also involved punching, damaging property, slapping, extortion, taking another learner's belongings and assault.

In Eastern Africa, Saito (2011) in assessing violence in primary schools between the years 2000-2007, established that Zanzibar Island had the highest occurrence of all forms of

bullying, for example, 73-98% of pupils used abusive language. In Tanzania, Ndibalema (2013) while exploring teachers' and students' perception about bullying behaviour among secondary schools in Dodoma Municipality, established that bullying persist in schools and that students are bullied by both their peers and teachers as well and cited an incident where a form four male secondary student aged 20 years was severely injured by his teacher. Still in Tanzania, Moris (2012) conducted a study in Dar-es-Salaam among secondary school students where it emerged that students were bullied by their teachers too and included humiliation, sexual harassment and corporal punishment. Students further reported high prevalent acts of gossiping at 74.3%, spreading rumours at 70% and group exclusion at 70.2% among peers.

In Nandi district, Baringo County, a study by Sang' (2007) revealed that high rate of school dropout both in primary and secondary schools occurred as a result of bullying activities. The most heinous bullying incidents recently reported in the County were attempted circumcision of a male student in a local secondary school (Kandagor, 2008) and, senior students forcing a form one student to drink ethanol at Kituro secondary school in Baringo County which resulted in the affected boy being admitted to Kabarnet District Hospital in critical condition (Kiplagat, 2013). In Kangundo, Machakos County, Daily Nation (2012) reported a bullying case in a public secondary school in which Form two students torched a dormitory in protest of their personal property being stolen by senior students

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design. This study was carried out in Kitui Central District. The target population was 1302 respondents comprising of 31 principals and 31 Guidance and counselling teachers and 1294 form three students. Stratified random sampling method was used and then simple random sampling method was used to select respondents from various strata. The sample size was 92 respondents comprising of 14 principals, 14 Guidance and counselling teachers and 64 form three students. The data collection tools were questionnaires for the teachers, students and interviews for the principals. Content validity was carried out to ensure that the instruments are valid and the test re-test technique was used to estimate the reliability of the instruments. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation and presented using frequency distribution tables, pie charts and bar graphs for effective communication to the users. Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis technique and presented in narrative form

V. FINDINGS

The findings of the prevalence of bullying behavior on academic performance among students in integrated public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Prevalence of Bullying Behaviour

Statement	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Being from a broken home vulnerability in the community	4.33	0.778
Feeling stronger than others	4.08	0.793
Feeling older than others	3.33	0.492
Teachers' poor classroom management	3.92	0.743
Being from a monogamous family	4.42	0.667
Copying parents'	3.75	0.452
Being from well-off families	3.83	0.389
Watching the violent film and pornographic pictures	3.58	0.151
Aggregate Score	3.91	0.558

The results in Table 4.4 show that respondents agreed that prevalence of bullying behavior among students in integrated public secondary schools in Kitui Central District, Kitui County, Kenya was high as indicated by aggregate mean of 3.91 which varied significantly as indicated by the standard deviation of 0.558. This finding is in agreement with that of Sampson (2002) who argues that the most frequently bullying happens during elementary academy and hardly beneath during average academy and beneath so, but still frequently, in the aerial school".

The respondents strongly agreed on the statements that prevalence of bullying behavior is being from a monogamous family, being from a broken home vulnerability in the community and feeling stronger than others as shown by mean of 4.42, 4.33 and 4.08 respectively with respective significance variance of 0.667, 0.778 and 0.793. These findings are in line with the findings of a study carried by Moon (2008) asserts that bullying in schools is also a worldwide problem that can have negative consequences for the general school climate and for the rights of students to learn in a safe environment without fear. On the other hand, Olweus (2003) indicate that the first Scandinavian researcher concerned with the issue, conducted his systematic study in Norwegian and Swedish schools and found that many students experienced school bullying. The findings showed that approximately 7% of Scandinavian students in the sample engaged in school bullying, and between 5% and 15% of students in various grades reported being bullied

The respondents agreed on the statement that prevalence of bullying behavior is by watching the violent film and pornographic pictures, being from well-off families, copying parents' and teachers' poor classroom management as shown by mean of 3.92, 3.83, 3.75 and 3.58 respectively with respective significance variance of 0.743, 0.389, 0.452 and 0.151. These findings concur with the findings of Sang' (2007) study which revealed that high rate of school dropout both in primary and secondary schools occurred as a result of bullying activities. These findings are also supported by the

findings of a study carried out by Moris (2012) who conducted a study in Dar-es-Salaam among secondary school students where it emerged that students were bullied by their teachers too and included humiliation, sexual harassment and corporal punishment.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On prevalence of bullying, the study concludes that Low self-esteem is a potential risk factor for bullying. Threatening others or treating others as victims was a way that the students made themselves feel powerful. Students who appear weak, are unpopular or are not able to defend themselves may become victims of bullying. Some students who bully are popular and socially connected at school and bully others so as to maintain popularity. Some students bully to retain their popularity while others act in violent or threatening ways to fit in. Being friends with a bully may increase the likelihood that a student will adopt similar ways of thinking and acting.

The study recommends that school management and teachers have to take different measures for the purpose of reducing the bullying volume. Moreover, teachers should coordinate with bully's students. Teachers and school management have to set some programs for bullies to mitigate the school bullying. Involvement in the extracurricular activity of the students can improve the academic achievement of the children by downsizing the negative issue of bullying. Schools should also provide ample facilities that are required for the students to engage in these activities

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