

Forms of Bullying Prevalent in Public Secondary Schools: A Case of Selected Schools in Machakos County, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

Bullying in schools is a global problem that has short- and long-term negative health consequences on both the bullies and victims. A report by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2019) shows that one out of every five (20.2%) students report being bullied. This has long term physical, psychological and academic negative impact among students. The researcher sought to assess the prevalence of forms of bullying in public secondary schools in Machakos sub county, Machakos County. The researcher employed descriptive research design. Purposive sampling and simple random sampling were used to select 280 respondents. The study used both open and closed ended questionnaires to collect data. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 23.0. The study used both descriptive and inferential statistics to describe quantitative data which were then analyzed, interpreted, and presented in form of tables and figures. The study established that about 71.5% of students participated in bullying and among the different forms of bullying verbal (38.9%) was leading followed by psychological (21.7%), sexual physical (15.3%) and cyber bullying (11.2%). The study revealed that boys suffered more physical and cyber bullying while girls suffered more of sexual and verbal bullying activities. The study concluded that four forms of bullying are prevalent in Machakos County and that there is need to seek solutions in order to curb it down.

Key words: Bullying, Prevalence, Bully Victim, Bully, Bully bystander, cyber bullying, forms.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

School bullying occurs in all countries and includes physical, verbal, emotional, sexual violence and psychological and this has existed in communities for many years in most parts of the world (Alison, 2016). Globally there are over 246 million children and adolescents who experience bullying in some form yearly (United Nations Educational Scientific & Cultural Organizations [UNESCO] Institute for Statistics, 2023). School bullying can be defined as an intentional activity with repeated aggressive acts on the student or students mostly on other weaker students (Smith, 2018). The power imbalance means that the dominant group, or individual tends to cause disturbance or harm to the less dominant one for a long time (Smith, 2019). As noted by Kibriya, Xu and Zhang (2015) bullying constitutes a complex problem that affects more the academic performance of learners especially in schools. There is a higher percentage of male than of female students who are physically bullied and more females than males being bullied verbally or through rumours. A report by UNESCO (2023) indicated that both victims and perpetrators of bullying do suffer negatively in personal social development, health, and education in childhood as well as in adulthood. Bullying is more common in boys and young children than in girls. Bullying has been noted to be more on the West and Central Africa as well as in South Africa. In addition, there are low rates of bullying in Europe and the commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) (UNESCO, 2016).

Kenya is one of the countries most affected by frequent fatal bullying in many public schools and the rate of

bullying in Kenyan schools is higher than the world rate according to Okwemba, (2018). Some of the counties that have witnessed bullying are such as Bungoma County, Baringo, Mombasa, and Nairobi, among others.

Shafqat (as cited in Al-Raqquad, Al-Bourini, Al Talahin, & Aranki, 2017) noted that bullying in schools do occur anywhere in the school compound and this is also supported by Kahneman, D., `Sibony, O., & Sunstein, C. (2021). This could be in classes as students do their group work or school activities, around the school buildings, within or under their school buses. School bullying is widespread issue that affects school students in many parts of the world and is a distress to their lives either professionally, academically, or psychologically (Shafqat as cited in Al-Raqquad et al., 2017). A study conducted by Sekol and Farrington (2016) established that many bullies than non-bullies had been bullied before. As noted by Burton and Leoschut (2013), other studies in German and Belgium showed a ratio of 1.1% and 6.2% respectively of girls had experienced sexual harassment in 2005. Another study done by Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, and Ólafsson (2011) on traditional bullying and cyberbullying from 25 European countries revealed that 19% of 9-16-year-olds had something nasty happening to them in the past 12 months. However, only 5% indicated that bullying happened more than once a week and another 4% once or twice a month and 10% indicated that it was less.

According to a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2014) report, the most common perpetrators of physical violence among adolescent boys were their peers and teachers. Among the adolescent girls, parents and other caregivers were the most common perpetrators of physical violence. The report also noted that teachers were being mentioned by a good proportion of girls in some countries such as Zambia (10%), Democratic Republic of Congo (11%), Timor-Leste, Moldova, and Zimbabwe (12%), Cameroon (16%), Tanzania (28%), Nigeria (32%), Kenya (42%), and Uganda (48%).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive study design specifically on selected public day and boarding schools in Machakos sub-county, Machakos County. This study adopted quantitative research method through the use of a questionnaire for collecting the numerical data. The numerical data was then analyzed using SPSS Version 22.

The questionnaire was used in this study to allow data collection through different respondents. The respondents selected for this study represented the entire population from which the findings were drawn. According to Glazer and Rubinstein (2014), questionnaires aid the researcher in having a forthright comparison with other previous work. The study was conducted in four selected public mixed day and boarding schools in Machakos Sub-County which is within Machakos Town Sub County. The Sub-County has three educational zones namely, Muvuti zone, Mutituni zone and Mumbuni zone. With a total of thirty-nine (39) schools. In Muvuti zone the researcher selected one mixed day and boarding school called Katoloni. In Mumbuni zone, Centre for Excellence was selected which is boys boarding school while in Mutituni, Kwanthanze mixed day and boarding school and Mumbuni girls boarding school were selected.

The target population consisted of form one and form two students from the selected secondary schools from all the three zones in Machakos sub-county and the total was 935 students. The selection of the schools was purposively done to ensure good representation from different zones and depended on the specific schools which are few with mixed day and boarding. The study selected them purposively to avoid choosing schools with other unwanted characteristics and in addition the study focused on the schools within the Machakos municipality which had the needed.

The study purposively used 30% of the sampled target population as a representative of the population. This is in line with Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) who stated that a sample size of between 10% and 30% is

representative of target population and hence the 30% is adequate for this study. The study used random method to get the number of boys, girls’ boarding schools as well as public mixed day and boarding per zone. Stratification started from the zones whereby Machakos sub county which has three zones with thirty-nine (39) schools and each zone formed a strata and the schools within the zones were stratified into public mixed and boarding schools as well as girls and boys boarding schools. The schools were proportionally selected using convenient sampling method whereby there was one boarding school for boys and for girls, two public mixed day and boarding schools. The target population included all the form one and two students from the four sampled schools. In this case, every item or element in the entire population had equal chances of being selected in the study sample (Ranjit, 2011). Among the four selected schools, a total of 280 (students) formed the sample size and, according to sampling procedures by Kothari (2012), this was a convenient sample. Table 3.1 shows the population analysis of each school. The total sample size was 280 students.

Table 1.1: Population Analysis of Each School

Type of school	School	Form 1		Form 2		Total	Sampled 30%
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls		
Public mixed day and boarding	Katoloni	76	51	44	57	228	67
	Kwanthanze	48	50	40	37	175	53
Boys public boarding school	Centre for Excellence	120		112		232	70
Girls public boarding school	Mumbuni Girls		167		133	300	90
	Total	244	268	196	227	935	280

Source: Author (2021)

This study employed purposive sampling method to select the Machakos sub county, educational zones and stratification to select the required public mixed day and boarding schools, boarding girls and boys. Convenient purposive sampling was employed to get the required four schools out of the 39 schools because there are few public mixed day and boarding schools within the Machakos sub-county. The study used 30% of the total target population to get a sample size of the required number of students per each form. Simple random sampling employed to get the number of sampled students. The researcher got consent from parents of the sampled students without any problem since majority are below eighteen years. Every student was accorded a number for the purposes of sampling. The respective head teachers were approached before through the office of Machakos sub-county.

Data collection involved the use of questionnaire which contained closed-ended questions to gather data from the students. The researcher obtained an ethical clearance letter from Daystar University Ethics Review Board (DU-ERB) and then a research permit from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) to collect data from the respondents in the premises. The principals of the schools were approached a week before and informed of the intentions of collecting data from the students and assisted in contacting the respective parents through the school administration. Upon approval, the researcher was able to gather the information from the participants who also gave their consent.

RESULTS

The participants were provided with various statements to determine the frequency of bullying forms in schools and the results are as shown in Table 4.7.

Table 1.2: Respondents’ Views on the Types of Bullying in Schools

Form/Type of bullying	Never		Rare		Often		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Physical	148	53.01	89	32.93	39	14.06	280	100.00
Verbal	84	30.54	84	30.92	106	38.54	280	100.00
Psychological	140	50.20	78	28.11	58	21.69	280	100.00
Sexual	184	66.27	50	18.47	42	15.26	280	100.00
Cyber	182	65.86	61	22.89	30	11.24	280	100.00

The study revealed that 53% of the respondents indicated that physical bullying never occurred, 32.9% said it was rare and 14.06% said it was often. On verbal bullying, 30.5% indicated never, 30.9% rare and 38.5% often. On Psychological bullying, 50.2% indicated never, 28.1% rare and 21.7% often. Analysis on sexual bullying 66.27% said never, 18.47% rare and 15.26% often. On cyber bullying 65.86% indicated never, 22.89% rare and 11.24% often. From the above forms of bullying, verbal bullying was leading, followed by psychological 21.69%, sexual 15.26%, physical bullying 14.06% and cyber bullying 11.24%. This analysis again depended on the type of gender as revealed in another analysis that some types are more common on girls like verbal and sexual bullying while physical bullying and cyber bullying is more common on boys. The above results concur with a study done in Australia (Spiel & Strohmeier, 2011) and another one done in Nairobi County (Ndetei et al., 2007). However, a study by Salmivalli, Kärnä, and Poskiparta (2011) in Finland disagreed with these sentiments. The study found that physical bullying was the highest form of bullying in schools.

DISCUSSIONS

The study revealed that there were various forms of bullying including physical, psychological, verbal, and sexual and cyber bullying. Among the different forms of bullying, verbal bullying was leading followed by psychological, sexual, physical, and the least common was cyber bullying. The above analysis is supported by findings in a study by Jan, A., & Husain, S. (2015) showed that bullying caused both psychological and physical effects on the victims. Physical bullying includes beating, slapping, or forcing somebody to do something; sexual bullying involves touching and use of sexual dirty language and signs; verbal bullying involves insulting, spread false rumors, incitements, and threats. Thomas and McGee (2012) also noted that sexual forms of bullying included also texting or sending sex messages which have psychological effects on an individual. Some of these messages could lead to suicidal thoughts (Sherry, 2013). The above argument is also supported by other studies conducted in Australia by Spiel and Strohmeier (2011), which showed that verbal bullying is common. This is also echoed by Ndetei et al. (2007) on studies done in public secondary schools in Nairobi County showing that verbal bullying was common among students. Alongside traditional forms, cyber bullying is also common type of bullying and involves use of upsetting messages or name calling leading to emotional disturbance (Bureau of Market Research, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The study findings revealed that different forms of bullying existed in Machakos County and the most form of bullying was verbal which was more practiced by girls than boys. There is therefore needed to develop proper strategies to curb verbal bullying occurrences in the County.

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