

USEFULNESS OF SELF-MONITORING METHOD ON BULLYING CONDUCTS AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN ABIA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined how well self-monitoring method affected bullying conducts among teenagers in Abia State who were enrolled in school. At the 0.05 threshold of significance, two distinct and null hypotheses were developed and put to the test. Pre-test, post-test, and control group design were used in a quasi-experimental study. The study consisted of 124 in-school adolescents comprising of 60 male and 64 female SS II students randomly selected from Umuahia Educational Zone. One school was randomly selected from each of the six Local Government Areas that made up Umuahia Education Zone. A researcher-made instrument titled: "Manifestation of Bullying Among In-School Adolescents' Questionnaire (MBAIA)" was made. Experts in measurement and evaluation, guidance and counseling, and education from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture in Umudike evaluated the questionnaire's items. The overall reliability of the instrument was 69. The data was analyzed using covariance analysis, mean, and standard deviation. The findings of the study indicated that the students exposed to self-monitoring method had significant reduction in their bullying conduct compared to those of the control group. Furthermore, gender did not significantly influenced student bullying conduct implying that there was no statistically significant difference between bullying conduct and gender. These findings were situated within the already existing body of knowledge, and their implications for counselling for value re-orientation in education were discussed. Among the recommendations made were training on the principle of self-monitoring conduct modification method being integrated into the existing secondary education curriculum.

Keywords: Bullying, Conduct, Modification, Self-Monitoring Method, In-School Adolescents.

Introduction

The issue of bullying indeed presents significant challenges in various spheres of society. It not only affects individuals directly involved but also has broader impacts on the well-being of communities and institutions. Addressing bullying requires a multifaceted approach that involves education, awareness, prevention strategies, and support systems for victims. Indeed, human beings are inherently social creatures, and this inclination toward interaction and socialization plays a significant role in shaping our lives and societies. However, along with the benefits of social interaction come various challenges that require attention and solutions. Understanding and addressing these challenges can contribute to healthier and more harmonious relationships and communities (Uchendu, 2023).

Every individual engages in one form of conduct or the other. Conduct could either be positive or negative. Positive conduct is that conduct which conforms to the demands of the society or environment such as good manners, esteemed value, truth respect, obedience and humility while negative form is that conduct that does not conform to the acceptable standard of society, the environment and is aberrant to man (Nwachukwu, in Ifelunni & Chinweuba, 2015). Conduct is considered deviant, abnormal or anti-social if it is different from the norm or does not conform to societal standards. Nigeria was famous overtime with a distinct model of value. This was illustrated by deep noted fraternity, solid human relation and respect for elders (Uchendu, 2023), hence conduct pattern of contemporary Nigeria youth is becoming a source of worry to members of the older generation.

Violence is of great concern and disturbance across the globe. It occurs in the home school, workplace, rural and urban areas, among others (Smith, 2016). Violence is evident in educational, social, family, religious and political sceneries. Bullying is a serious issue in education settings and society at large. It not only causes immediate harm to the victims but also has long-term impacts on their mental and emotional well-being. Moreover, when bullying behavior is tolerated or not adequately addressed, it can send a message to students that violence or aggression is acceptable, which is a harmful societal norm. Moreso, violence disrupts schools from functioning well, students from learning and teachers from abounding the legitimate right of taking care of their children to face business.

Some students no longer consider their education as paramount except for exhibiting some aggressive conduct such as fighting, rioting, bullying, quest for fast money or get rich quick which is the order of the day. Sawaua (2015) also found these in primary schools as they serve as precursors for violent conduct and there seems to be a link between these conducts and animal activity in adult life.

It has been observed that secondary school students that are mostly involved in bullying are between the ages range of 12-18 years, who are either being bullied by others or bullying others (Saawaa, 2013). They call themselves different names engages in physical beating and-, backbiting, gossip, harassment and intimidation. All these conducts exhibited by students if reported could only lead to punishment or be totally ignored by authority which has not in any way

helped in handling these acts among the in-school adolescents in secondary schools. Girls tend to employ relational aggression, which includes actions like exclusion, manipulation of friendships, and spreading rumors, as strategies to harm or control others' social relationships and status. These forms of aggression can be more subtle but can have significant emotional and psychological impacts on the targeted individuals (Olweus, 2013).

Bullying occurs in many schools across the globe as observed by Mbah (2020). Omoteso (2012) defined bullying as a situation, where a person willingly fully or repeatedly exercises power over another with hostile or malicious intent. According to McDougall and Vailiaancourt (2015), school bullying often involves not just individual acts but can include group dynamics where a group targets an individual or another group. It can also be related to establishing dominance, asserting social status or even seeking validation within a peer group, leading to a complex interplay of social dynamics and power relationships.

Thus, it is sufficed to say that bullying is a very serious problem that has incapacitated some students. The problem of bullying has raised great concern in Abia State Education System, the society and the nation in general. In Abia State, there appeared to be a high rate of bullying conduct among in-school adolescents. Bully, which is the major concern of this study falls under conduct disorder conduct problems (Ifelunni & Chinweuba, 2015). Succinct and accurate description of bullying according to Uchendu (2023), emphasizes the intentional and repetitive nature of bullying, highlighting that it is not accidental but rather a deliberate act aimed at causing harm to others.

Every country world-wide, whether big or small, has recognized and embraced schooling as a veritable platform for education of her citizens. This could be basically because of the fact that school has been identified as a hub for transformational learning and life skills (Igbokwe, 2019). This emphasizes that schools are considered as important key agencies of socialization (Oguzie, Ezeonu, Uba & Osagie, 2018).

In the school environment, students may exhibit various maladaptive behaviors that can disrupt the peaceful coexistence and effective interpersonal relationships that are essential features of a healthy social milieu within schools. However, some maladaptive conducts exhibited by students are easily observed while others are not.

Bullying, despite its significant impact, can sometimes go unnoticed or receive less attention compared to more overt disruptive behaviors. This could be due to factors such as the covert nature of relational aggression, social dynamics within peer groups, or a lack of awareness among educators and parents about the signs and effects of bullying. It underscores the importance of raising awareness, implementing effective anti-bullying policies, and creating a supportive environment where all forms of maladaptive behaviors are addressed promptly and comprehensively (Esere & Mustapha, 2018).

Bullying is indeed a pervasive problem in schools that can have far-reaching effects on students' well-being, mental health, and academic performance. It is not just a child's play but a terrifying experience many school adolescents face every day. According to Igbineweka and

Jesuorobo (2022), bullying is a type of aggressive aggression that people are subjected to. According to Igbineweka and Jesuorobo (2022), bullying is a type of social interaction in which a more dominant person (the bully) engages in aggressive behavior with the intention of upsetting the more dominant person (the victim). Bullying can have serious negative health effects on both the bullies and the victims. Uchendu (2023) sees bullying as a gateway to crime and delinquent conducts.

On the above premises, bullying often involves one person or a group exerting power over another individual through various means like verbal insults, physical aggression, or social exclusion, with the aim of causing harm or distress. Wang, Jiang, Wang, Hu, Fang, Yuan and Su (2019), also defined bullying as intentional, unprovoked and involves an abuse of power by one or more individuals to cause harm or disorder repeatedly. Smith and Scherman (2016) also admitted that bullying is an act of utilizing one's strength, authority and position to terrify or hurt another individual for no good reason.

Bullying being a form of deviant conduct that is usually ignored by many due to its salient pose diverse effects to human nature. Bullying is unfortunately a widespread issue that can occur at various educational levels, including primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The power dynamics in bullying often create a situation where the bully gains more control and influence while the victims feels increasingly powerless. This imbalance makes it challenging for the victim to effectively respond or handle the difficulties they face, leading to a cycle of harm and distress (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). This is a very worrisome practice in the schools and deserves special attention. A situation can be identified as bullying if a student is harmed, intimidated, threatened, victimized and humiliated by another. Hence, the need to use effective self-monitoring method to curb these aggressive conducts called bullying. By learning self-monitoring method, students can become more self-directed and less dependent on continuous supervision.

Self-monitoring methods have indeed proven to be effective in improving students conduct (Kendra, 2022). In the framework of this study, self-monitoring method is seen as a conduct intervention strategy used to help individuals to achieve adequate self-awareness and self-control. Since self-monitoring method has been found to be effective in handling other maladaptive conducts of adolescents in schools, it is therefore necessary to use this method in tackling the problem of bullying among adolescents in schools. In light of the above, the present study dimmed the usefulness of self-monitoring method on bullying conduct among in-school adolescents, in Umuahia Education Zone.

Chinweuba in Ifelunni and Chinweuba (2015), observed that there is high rate of bullying in secondary schools in Onitsha urban. She rightly observed that these students (bullies) have graduated, and that they inflict so much injuries on their targets without any kind of remorse. Some students also bully their fellow students at all corners of the school environment such as the

classroom, hostel, and even at the playing ground. How school authority and administration could reduce bullying in secondary schools which has been a major concern to educators, school administrator, parents and entire society. Bullying is dangerous and can result in emotional or physical distress, poor academic performance, difficult concentration and emotional worries.

Hana, Eman, Fatima and Raghda (2017), deliberated on the high rate of negative effects of bullying in schools which has been very disturbing, irrespective of male, female or co-educational schools, and have resorted to ways of curbing the ills of this ugly conduct which has yielded little or no effect in Abia State.

Bully conduct leads to injuries, truancy absenteeism, and students' unrest, dropping out of school, destruction of property, early dating experience, rape, delinquency and even loss of life. Hence the effective way of curbing this deviant conduct will help in the effective performance of the young individual, in their academic and emotional stability (Uchendu, 2023). Bullying needs to be given prompt, urgent and adequate attention in Nigerian schools. Bullying in school has attracted much attention in every corners of the state. Leraya et al. (2015), deliberated on this high incidence and negative effect that bullying is toiling on the academic pursuit of students and a way to curb the deadly menace, coupled with the above ugly distressful situation. Parents, Teachers, Counsellors, Principals School PTAs and the general school administration have applied various measures to curb or reduce bullying such as: de-boarding, suspension, expulsion of the bullies, yet all these measures could not control bullying. Failure of the above measures have prompted the researcher to seek adequate conduct modification method that is appropriate to this bullying problem, which has been found that most bullies have little or no empathy for their victim and show little remorse about their bullying conducts.

It must be recognized that self-monitoring method proactive school-wide programmes have been proposed to prevent bullying (Adebayo, 2019). Self-monitoring is a regular and careful observation of someone's conduct. It involves the recording and analysis of a given conduct. The use of conduct modification method is necessary because the victims they target are often more vulnerable than them, and because bullying is acquired as a learned conduct, it therefore can still be unlearned. Therefore, conduct means the way someone conducts and carries himself which is relatively constant. The modification of thought pattern is the goal of this treatment method and as such it is believed that this method if applied will serve as veritable tool in managing issues related to bullying among students. Hence conduct modification by Vijayalakshmi (2019), is the systematic and scientific approach to changing behaviors. Self-monitoring methods can indeed be applied effectively in modifying interpersonal behaviors like bullying, as they empower individuals to become more aware of their actions and make positive changes towards more desirable behaviors. The choice of self-monitoring method is based on its efficacy and the management of conduct problems as suggested by (Laura, Marshall, Fernando & Robert, 2014). Besides, the individuals are capable of controlling their conducts when they are taught how to manage the conducts. Hence, the result will be more lasting than when the control measures are

applied by someone else. Ifelunni and Chinweuba (2015) observed that one of the fundamental bases of these methods is the mobilization of the will power of the subjects involved.

Self-monitoring enables the individual to gain immediate awareness of his actions and also to receive cumulative feedback on those actions. Beside the beneficial effect on learning, sub-goal and self-monitoring enhance intrinsic interest in the target cause as evidenced from subject rating. As a pervasive problem, bullying poses a great danger to the social and academic well-being of students. The work of the counsellor is to explain to the client the need to make accurate recording. The counsellor should also explain to client clearly before using the self-monitoring methods, so that the client could have knowledge of the new desired conduct using the method. This method can also be used in modifying these bullying, drug abuse, drunkenness among others. Hence the researcher deemed it necessary to help manage issues related to bullying conduct by embarking on the present study that examined the usefulness of self-monitoring method on bullying conduct among in-school adolescents in Umuahia Educational Zone.

This study therefore examined the usefulness of self-monitoring method on bullying conduct among in-school adolescents in Umuahia Education Zone of Abia State. Hence to investigate the influence of the treatment on male and female bullies. Two research questions guided the study as follows:

1. Which bullies who were exposed to the bullying behavior inventory's self-monitoring method scored higher on average than those who were not?
2. How do genders affect the bullying behavior inventory's mean ratings for bullies who are subjected to self-monitoring method?

The following null hypothesis were formulated and tested at 0.05 significant level.

1. Bullies who are exposed to self-monitoring methods do not significantly differ in mean score from those in the control group.
2. Gender does not significantly affect the mean ratings of bullies when evaluated based on bullying conducts

Methodology

The pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental research approach was used in this study. The design is called quasi experimental because it does not employ randomization in the placement of participants into experimental and control groups. A quasi-experimental study is a kind of experiment in which it is not feasible to randomly allocate people to the experimental and control groups. The two groups were post-tested to see how the treatment affected them after the treatment, and the experimental group was pre-tested. The study included bullying behavior among teenagers enrolled in school as a dependent variable, and two (2) independent variables: gender (male/female) and treatment (self-monitoring). The Umuahia Education Zone in Abia State served as the study's location. The study comprised 324 adolescent students enrolled in school. The study

consisted of 124 in-school adolescents comprising of 60 male and 64 female SS II students randomly selected from Umuahia Educational Zone. One school was randomly selected from each of the six Local Government Areas that made up Umuahia Education Zone. The “Manifestation of Bullying Among In-School Adolescents’ Questionnaire (MBAIA)”, a researcher-made questionnaire, was the tool utilized for data collection in the study. There were two sections: "A" and "B." The “Manifestation of Bullying Among In-School Adolescents’ Questionnaire (MBAIA)” was contained in Section "B," while Section "A" measured the subjects' demographic information. These items were all structured and scored on a likert type five (5) which were (1) never (2) rarely (3) sometimes (4) often (5) very often. The questionnaire items were used both for pre-test and post-test for treatment and control groups and data from them were compared to determine effect of treatment on student bullies. Decision rule is that the higher the mean scores, the higher the manifestation of bullying conduct and the lower mean score, the lower the manifestation of the bullying conduct.

Experts from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike's advice and counseling as well as measurement and evaluation departments evaluated the questionnaire's items. The instrument was trial tested on sixteen 16 bullies from coeducational school in Ohafia education zone. The internal consistency, reliability and stability of the instrument was done using Cronbach alpha to calculate the internal consistency co-efficient of the instrument, while the test re-test reliability was calculated to test for stability using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-Efficient (PPMCC). The study involved two research assistants who were the resident guidance counselors of the two secondary schools that were chosen. The subjects in the experimental and control groups took the “Manifestation of Bullying Among In-School Adolescents’ Questionnaire (MBAIA)” as a pretest. The experimental treatment was administered by the research assistant at the experimental school, whereas copies of the instrument were given to the control group by the research assistant in the control school. Each group received this treatment for six weeks, meeting for an hour each day. While the control group received traditional counseling, the experimental group received training in self-monitoring methods. The “Manifestation of Bullying Among In-School Adolescents’ Questionnaire (MBAIA)” instrument was rearranged and given to the experimental and control groups, respectively, following the therapy. This was done by the sixth (6th) week. The subject’s responses were then scored and overall data generated were subjected to statistical analysis. The analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), which is helpful in analyzing discrepancy amid variance, was used to test the null hypothesis at the $p < .05$ level of significance. The mean and standard deviation were employed in answering the research questions in order to present an accurate picture of the sample.

Result

Research question 1: Which bullies who were exposed to the bullying behavior inventory's self-monitoring method scored higher on average than those who were not?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Pre-test and Post-test of Bullies

Group	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Treatment group (Self-monitoring)	Mean	3.755	Mean
N		74	N	74
S.D		0.965	S.D	0.36
Control	Mean	3.71	Mean	3.765
	N	50	N	50
	S.D	0.99	S.D	0.965

Data presented in Table 1 show the mean ratings and standard deviations of bullies exposed to self-monitoring method and those not exposed to the strategy measured by bullying conduct inventory (control group). The findings indicate that students who were taught the self-monitoring approach had mean scores of 3.76 with a standard deviation of 0.97 for the pre-test and 1.22 with a standard deviation of 0.36 for the post-test. The control group's mean pre-test score was 3.71 with a 0.99 standard deviation, while their mean post-test score was 3.76 with a 0.97 standard deviation.

Research question 2: How do genders affect the bullying behavior inventory's mean ratings for bullies who are subjected to self-monitoring method?

Table 2: Gender Influence on the Mean Scores of Bullies

Group	Group	(Self-	Pre-test		Post-Test			
			No	Mean	Std	Mean	Std	
Experimental monitoring)	Group		Males	32	3.78	0.94	1.26	0.37
			Female	42	3.64	1.04	1.18	0.35
Control			Male	28	3.72	0.89	3.74	0.89
			Female	22	3.78	1.04	3.79	1.04

Data presented in Table 2 show the influence of genders on the mean scores of bullies exposed to self-monitoring measured by bullying conduct inventory. Result shows that male students exposed to self-monitoring method had pre-test mean score of 3.78 with standard deviation of 0.94 and post-test mean score of 1.26 with standard deviation of 0.37 while the female students had pre-test mean score of 3.64, with a standard deviation of 1.04, at post-test, the female students had a mean score of 1.18 with a standard deviation of 0.35. In the control group, the mean score for male students was 3.72 with a standard deviation of 0.89 before the test, and the mean score for female students was 3.78 with a standard deviation of 1.04. For male students, the mean score after the test was 3.74 with a standard deviation of 0.89, and for female students, it was 3.79 with a standard deviation of 1.04.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: Bullies who are exposed to self-monitoring methods do not significantly differ in mean score from those in the control group

Table 3: ANCOVA on the posttest Mean Scores of Subjects exposed to Self-monitoring and those in the control

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.	Partial Eta squared
Corrected Model	154.800 ^a	1	154.800	338.900	.001	.735
Intercept	676.932	1	676.932	147.899	.000	.924
Treatment models	154.800	1	154.800	338.900	.000	.735
Error	55.726	122	.457			
Total	909.231	124				
Corrected Total	210.526	123				

a. R Squared = .735 (Adjusted R Squared = .733)

Table 3 shows that at 0.05 level of significance, calculated F of 338.900 at p value of 0.00 which is significant. Hence there is significant difference between the post-test mean score of participants exposed to self-monitoring and control group in their willingness to curb bullying implying self-monitoring method is an indispensable tool for curbing bullying. We therefore rejected the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Gender does not significantly affect the mean ratings of bullies when evaluated based on bullying conducts

Table 4: Gender does not significantly affect the mean ratings of bullies when evaluated based on bullying conducts

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.	Partial Eta squared
Corrected Model	1.762 ^a	42	.042	.892	.636	.620
Intercept	80.287	1	80.287	1706.625	.000	.987
Sex	1.762	42	.042	.892	.636	.620
Error	1.082	23	.047			
Total	101.547	66				
Corrected Total	2.844	65				

Table 4 demonstrates that the computed F was 0.892 at the 0.05 level of significance. With a p-value of 0.636, the result was higher than 0.05. Gender is not a significant factor influencing a student's bullying behavior, as indicated by the lack of significant difference in the post-test mean score of gender exposed to self-monitoring in their willingness to stop bullying. Consequently, we agree with the null hypothesis.

Discussion

The findings of this study as presented in Tables 1 and 3 respectively show the trend of the treatment and control groups during the pre-test and post-test. This therefore revealed that self-monitoring made a positive impact on participants with respect to their willingness to desist from bullying conduct. This finding tallies with the findings of Ifelunni and Chinweuba (2015) who observed that there existed significant difference between bullies exposed to self-monitoring strategy which is evident in the reduction of bullying conduct compared to the control group in their study. However in the view of the researchers, the significant difference recorded on these participants or subjects could be due to the fact that self-monitoring made the individuals to gain immediate awareness of their actions as well as been able to cumulative feedback on those actions.

Furthermore, this finding shows an important correlation with the findings with Adebayo, Ninggal and Esere (2019) which specifically focused on the impact of self-monitoring in Ilorin, Nigeria, among teenagers enrolled in school to avoid bullying conducts. It further strengthens the evidence supporting the effectiveness of self-monitoring methods in addressing and preventing bullying behaviors. Their findings also showed that participants valued self-monitoring exercises as a true tactic for lowering the frequency of bullying conducts.

Additionally, the results indicate a noteworthy variation in the nature of bullying behaviors among students in secondary schools according to their gender. This outcome is in line with the conclusions of Magaji-Yusuf, Esere and Oniye (2020), who found that bullying conduct and counselling interventions differed significantly dependent on gender. Their results supported the notion that women are more likely to recognize the many forms of bullying behavior that students engage in.

Furthermore, an important distinction noted by Asiyai (2015), highlighting different manifestations of bullying behaviors based on gender. Boys may experience more physical forms of bullying, while girls may engage in relational or verbal bullying, such as making fun of appearance or speech. Understanding these differences can inform targeted interventions and support strategies for addressing bullying in educational settings. However, girls are more frequently the focus of sexual remarks and rumors. Additionally, according to Kwaku, Gadanya, Tsiga-Ahmed, Jalo, Ibrahim, Gajida, Iliyasu and Abubakar (2022), boys and girls encounter various kinds of bullying and have different types of reactions to it.

Conclusion

The study's results led the researchers to the conclusion that self-monitoring is a vital and successful strategy for preventing bullying behavior among teenagers enrolled in the local school system. Also, that bullies exposed to self-monitoring strategies differed significantly from one another

Recommendations

Based on the study's conclusions, the researchers made the following recommendations:

- i) Counsellors should undergo self-monitoring training through workshop, reorientation, training, seminar and enlightenment on strategies of conduct modifications based on the core components of self-monitoring method from time to time by various educational stakeholders in the study area,
- ii) Self-monitoring training methods with the view of re-modifying conduct should be integrated into the existing secondary curriculum.
- iii) All gender should be exposed to training on self-monitoring strategy to help curtail bullying activities among in-school adolescents.
- iv) Governments and non-governmental organizations should sponsor self-monitoring programmes with the view of modifying conducts.

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