



REVISTA DE ESTUDIOS E INVESTIGACIÓN
EN PSICOLOGÍA Y EDUCACIÓN

eISSN: 2386-7418

2023, Vol. 10, No. 2, 318-338.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17979/reipe.2023.10.2.10066>



UDC / UMinho

Demographic variables influence on challenges and coping strategies of bullied in-school adolescents in Kwara State (Nigeria)

Influencia de variables demográficas en los retos y estrategias de afrontamiento de adolescentes víctimas de acoso escolar en el estado de Kwara (Nigeria)

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Abstract

Bullied in-adolescents do experience certain psychosocial challenges and they employed varying coping strategies. However, the impact of demographic variables on the adjustment approaches used by adolescents enrolled in school is not sufficiently understood especially in Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling approach was used to obtain the study sample, resulting in 400 students identified as victims. Three instruments were used for their evaluation: Bullying Behaviour Scale; Psychosocial Challenges of Bullied Questionnaire; and Coping Strategies of Bullied Questionnaire. Results showed that age or type of school attended did not influence the psychosocial challenges experienced by bullied respondents, and it was also observed that students from private and public schools employed varying coping approaches. On this basis, it would be advisable for school counsellors to develop effective intervention strategies to help bullied students overcome their psychosocial challenges, and for school counsellors to focus more on bullied adolescents in their schools to train them in the best methods of coping and overcoming victimisation experience.

Keywords: bullied in-school; adolescents; coping strategies; demographic variables; psychosocial challenges

Resumen

Los y las adolescentes acosados/as experimentan ciertos retos psicosociales y emplean diversas estrategias de afrontamiento. Sin embargo, el impacto de las variables demográficas en los enfoques de adaptación utilizados por adolescentes escolarizados/as no se conoce suficientemente, especialmente en Nigeria. Para obtener la muestra del estudio se empleó un enfoque de muestreo multi-etapa que dio como resultado 400 estudiantes identificados como víctimas. Para su evaluación se utilizaron tres instrumentos: Escala de conducta intimidatoria; Cuestionario sobre los retos psicosociales de los/as acosados/as; y Cuestionario sobre las estrategias de afrontamiento de los/as acosados/as. Los resultados mostraron que la edad o el tipo de escuela a la que asistían no influían en los retos psicosociales experimentados por los encuestados y encuestadas acosados, y también se observó que los estudiantes de escuelas privadas y públicas empleaban distintos enfoques de afrontamiento. A la vista de los resultados, sería aconsejable que los orientadores escolares desarrollaran estrategias de intervención eficaces para ayudar a los alumnos acosados a superar sus retos psicosociales, y que los orientadores escolares se centraran más en los adolescentes acosados de sus centros para formarles en los mejores métodos de afrontamiento y superación de la experiencia de victimización.

Palabras clave: acoso escolar; adolescentes; estrategias de afrontamiento; variables demográficas; retos psicosociales

Bullying has been identified as one of the most pervasive anti-social behaviours in the world. It is a common phenomenon within the family setting, the public sector, the military, social services, political sphere, and educational institutions. Its manifestations include behaviours such as exclusion, intimidation, assault, slander, and nonverbal body language. Other examples of bullying behaviours are direct or indirect harassment, minor annoyance, serious assault, just having a little fun, and breaking the law. A student may experience bullying from a single person or from a group of people for years, intermittently or continuously. Researchers (Bradshaw et al., 2015; Bauman and Bellmore, 2015) have observed that a student is being bullied when they are subjected to unfavourable behaviour from one or more students repeatedly and over time. Bullying is any behaviour that a person exhibits with the intent to harm the victim, either physically or psychologically. Adolescents experience bullying all over the world, Nigeria inclusive.

More than half of students in a study conducted in Nigeria schools acknowledged that they have been bullied, and half of them confirmed that they have been perpetrators (Umoke et al., 2020). According to Raji et al. (2019) study of chronic victimization rates among adolescents in metropolitan schools, 51.1% of students reported physical victimisation, 22.7% reported verbal victimisation, 8.4% reported relational victimisation, and 35.8% reported damage-to-property victimisation. Two-third of the victims claimed to have experienced at least a type of victimisation. This finding is in line with Alex-Hart et al. (2015) study which found physical bullying as the most frequent forms of bullying. Bullying victimisation is common among male and female in-school adolescents.

Gender and victimization

Alex-Hart et al. (2015) stressed that more boys were victims and bullies while more girls were bully-victims. However, Fanti and Kimonis (2012) found that patterns of bullying and conduct issues are not significantly influenced by gender. Gender, however, had an impact on the associations between some forms of bullying and anxiety experienced by adolescents (Yen et al., 2013). Similarly, gender has significant influence on the relationship among victimisation, internalization of anxiety issues, and depression (Iyer-Eimberbrink et al., 2015; Yen et al., 2013). Studies focusing the general impacts of bullying reported equal effects on boys and girls, even if bullying victimisation experience takes different forms (Guerra et al., 2011; Hymel and Swearer, 2015).

Bullying roles and behavioural outcomes

Children and adolescents can perpetrate bullying behaviour (bully), they can also experience victimisation (bullied/victim), and some teenagers can play both parts (bully-victims). Bullies typically exhibit behavioural issues (low social skills, rejection, or isolation), victims typically exhibit emotional issues (increased stress and anxiety, depression, acting out violently, and low self-esteem), and bully-victims typically exhibit both emotional and behavioural issues (increased stress and anxiety, depression, acting out violently, low self-esteem, poor social skills, and peer group rejection) (Elgar et al., 2013). The victims typically have the most issues and are most at risk of negative outcomes (Shakoor et al., 2012). According to Thornberg and Knutsen (2011), adolescents' situational cognition is a key factor responsible for their aggressive act or lack of mediation (bystanders). Therefore, those who bully others have poor self-control, low parental involvement and high-risk behaviours, all of which contribute to their impulsive aggressive behaviour (Xue et al., 2022). Additionally, being subjected to prior abuse, humiliation, and rejection from peers can lead some people to bully others (Aricak, 2016).

The difficulties adolescents experience in various areas of personal and social functioning are referred to as psychosocial challenges (World Health Organization, 2017). These difficulties are characterized as maladaptive, unhealthy, or negative emotional, intrapersonal states of behaviour, and as a result, they cause a person to develop negative, unhealthy, and maladaptive behaviours.

Mental health outcomes

Victims of bullying report a number of psychosocial issues, including low self-esteem, a sense of sadness, losing control over emotions, anxiety, and low interpersonal relationship (Mustapha and Adeboye, 2022). Kuyendall (2012) claimed that cyberbullying, verbal bullying (such as name-calling and spreading rumours), and physical bullying (such as beating, slapping, etc.) increase the risk of emotional problems in adolescents, which can result in eating disorders and suicidal thoughts. Early bullying exposure is linked to higher mental health challenges, boys are more susceptible to the harmful effects than girls (Källmén and Hallgren, 2021). In a similar vein, Wolke et al. (2013) hypothesized that those who experienced bullying as children were at risk for poor adult health.

Bullying victims who struggle with their social skills might avoid social situations, try to avoid situations at work or school, and express feelings of loneliness or isolation (Pörhölä et al., 2019). Bullying victims reported significantly higher levels of psychological distress, including

more severe issues like anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts (Fitzpatrick and Bussey, 2011). Compared to their peers who were not bullied, victims of bullying report having more physical symptoms like headaches and stomach-aches. Mustapha and Muhammed (2016) found that the common effects of bullying behaviour on in-school adolescents include, displaying aggression toward friends and experience of general pains on body joints and muscles when perpetrators engaged them in a fight. Additionally, those who are bullied may experience psychosomatic symptoms like insomnia, bedwetting, anxiety, self-harm among other issues (Wolke and Lereya, 2015). Also, they are more likely to experience suicidal thoughts and, in severe cases, even attempt suicide. Bullying victims' fear can cause them to leave school, which starts a downward cycle of hardship (Adams, 2015).

School, age and gender influence on psychosocial challenges

Bullying behaviours at school are a long-standing issue that have drawn attention because of the harm they cause to the psychosocial development of their victims. Depending on the type of school, the age group, and the gender, bullying victims may face varying psychosocial challenges. Researchers (Bear et al., 2019) reported that school type influenced victimisation experience of secondary school students who did not gain promotion to the next class. In similar studies (Sansait et al., 2023; Shiba et al., 2018) found that bullied students in both public and private schools showed similar negative psychosocial outcomes because of the victimisation act.

According to earlier researches (Guerra et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2019), there were differences between males and females in the associations between bullying victimisation and psychosocial problems. Victimized males were more likely to have depressive symptoms and their female counterparts disclosed more suicidal ideation; moreover, female bully-victims were more likely to experience psychological distress. According to Marengo et al. (2019), there is a sizable difference in how bullying victimization affects male and female victims. It was further emphasised that male victims tended to have conduct issues whereas female victims tended to isolate themselves. Peer victimization was found to be positively correlated with loneliness, anxiety/depression symptoms, and social difficulties for male participants by Kochenderfer-Ladd and Skinner in 2002.

According to research by Stapinski et al. (2014), adolescents who frequently experienced peer victimization were two to three times more likely to develop an anxiety disorder at the age of 18 years than non-victimized adolescents. When Bowes et al. (2015) looked at depression in a sizable sample of participants who reported being the target of bullying at age 13, they

discovered higher rates of depression at age 18 compared to peers who had not been bullied. They specifically stated that 14.8% of participants who reported experiencing frequent bullying as a child at age 13 were clinically depressed at age 18, and that the population attributable fraction was 29.2%, indicating that bullying in childhood could account for close to a third of the variance in depression. According to Omoteso (2010), ongoing exposure to bullying among adolescents in school, regardless of their age, caused them to develop problems with attention, retention, apprehension, and violent behaviour. According to Mustapha and Muhammed (2016), there is no discernible difference in the effects of bullying on in-school adolescents based on age. Some adolescent students who attend school have developed coping mechanisms for bullying because they cannot avoid it.

Adjustment approaches to bullying experience

Adjustment approaches help a person to control his/her emotional response to certain psychological or social concerns, the approaches empower individual to neutralize the negative aspects of a problem, hence, leading to the resolution or modification of such concern (Slonje et al., 2013). Riebel et al. (2009) identified four types of adjustment skills used by bullied individuals: social (i.e., asking for help from friends, family, teachers, and peers); aggressive (retaliation, physical attacks, verbal threats); helpless (hopelessness, passive reactions, such as avoidance; displays of emotion); and cognitive (responding assertively, using reason; analyzing the bullying episode and the bully's behaviour). Imran (2020) identified 12 coping strategies for dealing with bullying in the literature that fall under the categories of problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies. Self-control, compliance, retaliation, verbal aggression, victimization, relaxation, concealment, self-blame, self-harm, drug abuse, seeking social support, and distance are among the adjustment coping mechanisms.

Gender, age and school type influence on adjustment approaches

Studies have shown that boys and girls use different adjustment approaches (Hellström and Beckman, 2020). Girls typically rely on relational and assertive techniques, while boys frequently employ aggressive and distancing methods (Yuksel-Sahin, 2015). According to Hellström and Beckman (2020), boys use techniques, in which they confront their stressor, whereas girls primarily use avoidance techniques and internalize their stress. Imran (2020) discovered that "helplessness" and "counter-aggression" were behaviours connected to the start or continuation of bullying in female victims. For male victims, however, only "counter-

aggression" was connected to this. Female respondents who did not employ "helplessness" and "nonchalance" and male respondents who did not use "counter aggression" were found to experience less or no victimisation. According to Kristensen and Smith (2004), girls significantly preferred internalizing and seeking social support, while boys significantly preferred externalizing problems. In contrast to the non-involved group, male and female bully-victims were found to use self-blame and blaming others more frequently (Potard et al., 2022).

According to Hunter et al. (2007) and Kristensen and Smith (2004), the adjustment approaches of victims differ by age to the extent that younger school-age children reported peer victimization to an adult more frequently than older school-age children. The studies show that older bullies cope by avoiding their victims and tend not to be as emotional as younger ones (Frydenberg and Lewis, 2009; Hansen et al., 2012; Lodge and Feldman, 2007). According to Kristensen and Smith (2004), children in grades four through six favoured internalizing, seeking social support, and avoiding conflict significantly more than kids in grades seven through nine. The most common coping approaches employed by bullied children in England between the ages of 10 and 14 were ignoring the bullies, followed by telling them to stop, asking an adult for assistance, and fighting back (Smith et al., 2001). The least prevalent coping approaches were fleeing, turning to friends for support, and crying. While older children more frequently reported ignoring the bullies, younger children more frequently reported, cried or fled.

Victims of bullying adopt a variety of coping approaches depending on the type of school. For instance, Kort-Butler (2009) found that bullying is more common in private schools compared to those that are run by the government, but that bullied students in private schools adjusted better by using social adjustment approaches. Bullying and victims' psychosocial adjustment were not different between public and private schools (Glew et al., 2005). There is conflicting evidence in the literature when it comes to how gender, age, and the type of school bullying affects adolescents in school. The impact of age, gender, and the type of school on the adjustment approaches used by adolescents enrolled in school is also not sufficiently understood especially in Nigeria. The study's main emphasis is on these. This present study, therefore, investigated the influence of demographic variables of gender, age and school type on psychosocial challenges and coping strategies of bullied in-school adolescents in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Methods

Design

This research employed a descriptive survey design to explore the impact of demographic factors, including age, gender, and school type, on the psychosocial challenges faced by bullied adolescents within Kwara State's educational institutions. The study utilized an exploratory investigative approach, gathering first-hand opinions from direct sources, to delve into the coping strategies employed by these adolescents in response to bullying,

Population and sample

The target population for this study was made up of bullied in-school adolescents from a variety of chosen secondary schools in the three senatorial districts of Kwara State. The population for this study was made up of 29,107 bullied in-school adolescents in Kwara State (spread across Kwara North, Kwara South and Kwara Central senatorial districts). The Kwara state Ministry of Education and Human Capital Development (2020) estimates that there are 223,893 secondary school students in Kwara State as a whole. However, prior researches (Mustapha, 2020; Mustapha et al., 2016) have found that 13% of in-school adolescents in Kwara State experienced bullying, which is consistent with some international researches (Stein et al., 2007). The estimated number of bullied in-school adolescents in Kwara State is 29,107, or 13% of 223,893. However, for a population within the range of the above figure (that is; 29,107), a sample size of 378 was recommended (Newsom, 2004). For the purpose of this study, this figure was rounded up to 400.

Procedures for selecting the participants

The selection of respondents for this study followed a multi-stage sampling approach. In the initial stage, eight local government areas were selected from the three senatorial districts of Kwara State (with seven from Kwara South, five from Kwara North, and four from Kwara Central) using proportionate sampling in the ratios of 3:3:2. In the second stage, a total of sixteen (16) secondary schools were chosen through stratified sampling, with two (2) schools selected from each of the previously chosen local government areas to ensure balanced representation across the senatorial districts. The third stage involved administration of 2000 copies of Bullying Identification Questionnaire (BIQ) on in-school adolescents with the support of class teachers using accidental sampling technique. Each BIQ was labelled with student's number in attendance register. Of the 2000, 400 respondents fit the description of victims. The four

hundred identified victims were therefore purposively selected to constitute the final sample for this study.

Instruments

Three instruments were all used to collect data for this study: Bullying Behaviour Scale; Psychosocial Challenges of Bullied Questionnaire; and Coping Strategies of Bullied Questionnaire.

The Bullying Behaviour Scale (BBS) was adapted from Mustapha (2012) to identify those in-school adolescents that qualified to participate in the study (that is; the bullying victims among in-school adolescents) and the instrument has a reliability coefficient of .70. The adapted scale (BBS) was re-validated by three experts from the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin. The instrument contained 10 items altogether. The instrument was patterned after a 4-point Likert-Type rating scale of “5 times/more” = 4 points, “3 to 4 times” = 3 points, “Once/twice” = 2 points and “Never” = 1 point. Therefore, the participants who picked “5 times/more” and “3 to 4 times” in at least 2 of 10 items (for example, insulted by someone stronger than you; threatened by someone stronger than you; called derogatory name by someone stronger than you; hit/kicked by someone stronger than you; excluded from group tasks by someone stronger than you and so on.) were considered to be bullied in-school adolescents and thus this set of participants were purposively selected for this study.

The questionnaires *Psychosocial Challenges of Bullied Questionnaire (PSCBQ)* and *Coping Strategies of Bullied Questionnaire (CSBQ)* were designed by Mustapha and Adeboye (2022). PSCBQ contained 20 items on psychosocial challenges which include “as a result of being bullied, I: have developed low self-esteem; often feel embarrassed among my peer group; am not always happy; find it difficult to forget bullied experience; often feel lonely and among others”. Similarly, CSBQ also contained 20 items which was segmented into “cognitive adjustment”, “helpless adjustment”, “aggressive adjustment”, and “social adjustment”. Both instruments were structured after a four-point Likert-Type Scale with the following scoring format of Very True of Me (VTM) = 4 points; True of Me (TM) = 3 points; Not True of Me (NTM) = 2 points; and Not Very True of Me (NVTM) = 1 points. The instruments have reliability coefficients of .73 and .82 respectively.

Research ethics

The researchers upheld ethical standards while collecting and analyzing the data. The work is an original study and all sourced data and information cited are referenced. The researchers

sought for the permission of the schools' authorities where questionnaire forms were administered. Also the consents of the students' and parents were sought. Students who volunteered to take part in the study participated and none of them was coerced or paid to take part.

Results

Demographic data

The researchers administered 400 copies of the questionnaire forms (Psychosocial Challenges of Bullied Questionnaire and Coping Strategies of Bullied Questionnaire) to bullied in-school adolescents out of which 390 were valid for data analysis. The majority of the participants were female ($n = 220$), that constituted 56.4% of the total respondents. The bullied in-school adolescents in this study were between 10-18 years of age and above with majority being within 14-17 years ($n = 232$) constituting 59.5%. Students from both private and public secondary schools participated in the study where the majority (68.7%) of them were from public schools ($n = 268$).

Hypotheses testing

With regard to the influence of demographic variables of age, gender and school type on the psychosocial challenges of the bullied in-school adolescents in Kwara State, Nigeria, Univariate analysis was conducted to determine the difference between the psychosocial challenges of bullied in-school adolescents across age strata, male and female bullied as well as bullied in-school adolescents in private and public schools. The mean and standard deviation for each group are in Table 1. The results of the 3-way Analysis of Variance shows that bullied in-school adolescents have similar psychosocial challenges regardless of their age $F(1, 385) = 0.407$, $p > .05$; gender $F(1, 385) = 0.586$, $p > .05$; and school type $F(1, 385) = 1.725$, $p > .05$. Male bullied in-school adolescents ($M = 61.86$, $SD = 12.77$) have similar psychosocial challenges compared to female bullied in-school adolescents ($M = 62.76$, $SD = 12.76$). Although, there is slight difference in mean scores but there is no significant difference. Similarly, bullied in-school adolescents attending private schools ($M = 61.06$, $SD = 13.71$) slightly differ in their psychosocial challenges when compared with bullied in-school adolescents attending public schools ($M = 62.97$, $SD = 12.28$) however, this indicated that there is no significant difference in their mean scores. The interaction observed between male and female bullied in-school adolescents attending private and public schools was not significant, $F(1, 385) = .008$, $p = .93$.

Table 1

Means and standard deviations in the psychosocial challenges of respondents by gender and school type

Gender		School type	
Male (n = 170) M(SD)	Female (n = 220) M(SD)	Private (n = 122) M(SD)	Public (n = 268) M(SD)
61.86 (12.77)	62.76 (12.76)	61.06 (13.71)	62.97 (12.28)

With respect to the coping strategies of bullied in-school adolescents, a 3-way Analysis of Variance was carried out in order to determine the difference in the adopted coping strategies of bullied in-school adolescents across age, gender and school type. The mean and standard deviations obtained for each group are in Table 2. The ANOVA results showed that bullied in-school adolescents of different age group $F(1, 385) = 0.263, p > .05$ and gender $F(1, 385) = .043, p > .05$ adopted similar coping strategies while bullied in-school adolescents in private and public schools adopted different coping strategies $F(1, 385) = 8.06, p < .05$. Male bullied in-school adolescents in private schools ($M = 64.82, SD = 11.30$) adopted more positive coping strategies when compared to male bullied in-school adolescents in public schools ($M = 59.29, SD = 8.53$) and this showed that there is significant difference. Also, there is slight difference in the coping strategies of female bullied in-school adolescents in private schools when compared to female bullied in-school adolescents in public schools ($M = 61.50, SD = 9.96$). The result also shows that there were significant interactive effects between gender and school type. This implies that when two of the demographic variables are combined there were interactive effects ($F(1, 385) = 5.08, p < .05$) on adjustment approaches of bullied in-school adolescents.

Table 2

Means and standard deviations in the coping strategies of respondents by gender and school type

Gender			
Male (n = 170)		Female (n = 220)	
Private school (n = 49) M(SD)	Public school (n = 121) M(SD)	Private school (n = 73) M(SD)	Public school (n = 147) M(SD)
64.82 (11.30)	59.29 (8.53)	62.22 (9.50)	61.50 (9.96)

Discussion

The outcomes of this study revealed that bullied in-school adolescents in Kwara State experienced similar psychosocial challenges irrespective of their age, gender and school type. This implies that psychosocial challenges of bullied male and female respondents regardless of their age and school type were not different. The study's findings are consistent with Omoteso's (2010) argument that ongoing exposure of adolescents in school to bullying, regardless of their age, causes them to experience problems with attention, retention, apprehension, and violent behaviour. No age-related differences in the effects of bullying behaviour on adolescents in school were found by Mustapha and Muhammad (2016). Similarly, Crothers and Levinson (2004) discovered that students of various age groups who were frequent targets of peer harassment experienced short-term issues, such as difficulty focusing, and some had even admitted to developing a fear of going to school.

The result of Marengo et al. (2019) study, which found a significant difference in the impact of bullying victimization on male and female victims, is not in tandem with this finding. It was further emphasised that male victims tended to have conduct issues whereas female victims tended to isolate themselves. The reasons for differences in the findings of Marengo et al. (2019) and this study could be that the former considered behavioural and social problems while the later considered psychological and social problems. Furthermore, Stein et al. (2007) discovered that female bully victims face more psychological difficulties than male victims of bullying. This may be because bullying in Kwara State affects both male and female in-school adolescents similarly. Male and female students who had been victimised, faced similar psychosocial difficulties, perhaps no significant measures had been taken to help victims of bullying behaviour.

The result backs up a study by Rigby et al. (1997) that found no appreciable difference between the effects of bullying on victims in public and private schools in Australia. According to research by Kaltiala-Heino et al. (2010), bullied students are more likely to experience psychological issues like anxiety and depression in the future. It is possible that bullying occurs most frequently in schools, and as a result, those who are bullied also suffer a similar outcome.

The findings of this study also showed that age and gender did not significantly influence coping strategies of bullied in-school adolescents in Kwara State but school type had significant influence on their coping strategies. This means that male and female respondents across ages employed similar coping strategies but bullied in-school adolescents in private and public schools employed different coping strategies. Although there is no clear-cut influence of gender

in the coping strategies of bullied in-school adolescents across ages however, school type played a significant interactive role in the coping strategies of male and female respondents, as male respondents in private schools showed better coping strategies. The result is not in line with the argument made by Folkman and Moskowitz (2007), who discovered significant gender-based differences in coping strategies of their respondents. Further emphasis was placed on the fact that bullied male and female victims adopted various coping mechanisms. In contrast to female victims, bullied male students have better coping mechanisms, according to research by Hampel et al. (2009). According to Smith et al. (2008), both male and female bullies employed the same coping mechanisms. This could be that both male and female bullied in-school adolescents experienced bullying in the same setting, they both developed similar coping mechanisms.

This result does not corroborate with the study of Moazeni et al. (2017) which claimed that in more advanced stages of development, active approaches occur while adjustment is less beneficial in younger adolescents. Regardless of the type of bullying they experienced, Smith et al. (2008) found that both young and older bullied students did not significantly differ in their ability to develop effective coping mechanisms. According to Nansel et al. (2004), bullied people of all ages have developed various coping mechanisms to deal with the problems caused by bullying. This might be because respondents are informing teachers or the school administration about the offenders as a way to deal with the threat. This finding is consistent with those of Ali et al. (2020), who discovered significant differences between secondary school bullied students from public and private schools in terms of their emotional and social adjustment. The finding backs up research by Hampel et al. (2009), who discovered that bullying is more common in private schools compared to those that are run by the government, but that victims of bullying fared better in private schools due to the adoption of social adjustment strategies. Bullying and victims' psychosocial adjustment were not different between public and private schools, according to Glew et al. (2005) research. The significant difference was in favour of participants from private schools. The significant influence of the school type may be due to different factors such as parental involvement, effective monitoring and supervisions by school management, students' engagement in different task, manageable class size and counselling interventions.

Conclusion

This research examined the influence of demographic variables of gender, age and school type on psychosocial challenges and coping strategies of bullied in-school adolescents in Kwara State, Nigeria. From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that all bullied in-school

adolescents have similar psychosocial challenges regardless of their age, gender and school type. Also, male and female bullied in-school adolescents across ages employed similar coping strategies in handling their challenges. However bullied in-school adolescents in private school differ in their coping strategies compared to those from public secondary schools. In addition, school type played significant interactive roles in the coping strategies of male and female respondents.

Implications for counselling

The findings of this study have several implications for counsellors. School Counsellors with the cooperation of stakeholders need to identify and orientate bullied in-school adolescents who are experiencing various psychosocial challenges. School counsellors need to develop intervention to assist bullied in-school adolescents in addressing their challenges across ages, gender and schools. School counsellors need to use Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to assist bullied in-school adolescents to develop effective coping strategies. The findings suggest that there might have not been any strong measure in addressing bullying problems in schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. There is the need for school counsellors in both public and private schools to identify bullied in-school adolescents to assist them in addressing the various challenges they are having, irrespective of their age and gender.
2. School Counsellors should develop intervention approaches that will be suitable for bullied in-school adolescents across age, gender and school type, in addressing their psychosocial challenges.
3. There is the need for all educational stakeholders in Kwara State to develop and mainstream Anti-Bullying policies into their system of operation.
4. School counsellors need to help bullied in-school adolescents across gender and age to adopt effective coping strategies.

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Date of receipt: 3 March 2023.

Date of revision: 21 November 2023.

Date of acceptance: 25 November 2023.

Date of publication: 15 December 2023.