


## Bullying Behaviour Among Primary School Pupils: Prevalence and Management in Ibadan

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### Abstract

This study investigated the prevalence of bullying behaviour among the pupils and the teachers' management of bullying behaviour among the pupils. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design in which 60 teachers from 20 primary schools in the Ido Local Government Area of Oyo State were selected using a multi-stage sampling procedure. Data were collected using a self-designed and validated questionnaire titled Teachers Perception of Prevalence and Management of Bullying Questionnaire ( $\alpha = 0.74$ ). The prevalence of bullying behaviour among the pupils in the LGA was high. There was no significant difference between public and private school teachers in their perception of the prevalence of bullying behaviour among primary school pupils ( $t = -1.44$ ;  $df = 58$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). There was no significant difference between public and private school teachers in the methods and strategies adopted to manage bullying behaviour among primary school pupils ( $t = -0.09$ ;  $df = 58$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). The teacher identifies teacher-parent collaboration as one of the strategies for managing bullying behaviour. It was recommended that primary schools be designed to build a safer, more welcoming and open climate for every pupil. This can be achieved through in-service training for the teachers on managing bullying behaviour.

*Keywords: Bullying behaviour, Teachers' management strategies, Primary School Pupils*

### Introduction

Primary education is essential for the development of individuals and society since it is intended for children still in their formative years. Primary education is the formal schooling that children between the ages of six and eleven and more receive. A standard definition of basic education is an education given to children while they are still in their childhood years. Students receive a foundational understanding of various knowledge and skills that they will need throughout their lives, particularly in their academic pursuits (Pozo-Muñoz et al., 2023). Primary education schools allow students to meet and engage with people of various races, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, primary school teachers have a special opportunity to teach their students respect, tolerance, and other socially and culturally acceptable values. Reading, writing, spelling, attention, and interpersonal communication are among the fundamental skills that students learn.

According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), primary education addresses the foundational elements of general education. The National Policy on Education states that students in primary school should be at least six to eleven years old (FRN, 2013). Therefore, among other things, it aims to inculcate in the child social, moral, and values; to help the child learn to adapt to a changing environment; and to give the child opportunities to develop manipulative skills that will allow them to function effectively in society within their capabilities. Accordingly, it can be claimed that primary school teachers must control some inherent antisocial behaviors that children exhibit, including egocentrism, intolerance, fighting, greed, emotional instability, bullying, and others (Osiesi, 2023).

In today's educational system, bullying in schools is a hot topic and an all-too-common issue that affects students' daily activities and their right to a safe environment. According to a study by Osiesi et al. (2025), peer pressure has affected up to 30% of students. During their time in school, the remaining 70% of students have probably witnessed bullying behavior. Bullying is characterized by recurrent acts of aggression where one or more people intentionally cause bodily, verbal, or psychological harm to another person. It can take many different forms, including social isolation, verbal or physical aggression, and more. It is a serious social issue that has probably existed for as long as people have lived. Bullying has been linked to adverse effects on a child's future development in addition to its impact on learning, according to researchers. Low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and academic failure are among the effects on victims. Low levels of happiness and delinquent behavior are consequences for aggressors (Igbaede-Edwards et al., 2023; Onyemah & Omoponle, 2022).

To protect themselves from bullying, victims of bullying grow more reluctant to participate in social activities; some even decide not to go to school (Igbineweka & Jesuorobo, 2022). According to Ogenyi, Eze, and Ugwu (2023), children who were bullied often faced a variety of issues and required targeted assistance to recover from these harmful relationships. Additionally, victims said they had fewer close friends and felt more alone and unhappy at school (Omoponle, 2023; Obioha et al., 2024). Bullying is not only detrimental to all parties involved, but it also has an impact on the school environment, which in turn has an indirect effect on every student's capacity to learn as best they can. Poor academic performance is a likely result of victimization; students are less focused on their studies if they are afraid of being victimized (Card & Hodges, 2008). The challenges many bullies and bully victims encounter can change their lives, impacting their education and/or future. These life-altering incidents ultimately jeopardize their safety and health and occasionally others. Bullying behaviors have the potential to be fatal in addition to changing lives (Fareo, 2015).

Bullying affects many students of all races, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds, which makes it a significant issue in our schools and society. More significantly, it may affect the student's mental and physical well-being. Compared to students who have not participated in the bullying process, students who have experienced bullying themselves or who have bullied others are more likely to experience social, emotional, and/or behavioral issues (Awhangansi et al., 2025). Bullies typically persist over time despite their propensity for opportunistic behavior. Bullies are prone to bad behavior and unfavorable life consequences. Bullies, for example, frequently engage in criminal activity and have poor psychosocial adjustment (Hong et al., 2022). The majority of bully victims are typically passive. They may be quiet, nervous, and insecure; they may cry or get angry easily; they may have few friends and be afraid of conflict. They typically have low self-esteem and think they are ugly, foolish, and even worthless. These kids don't have much confidence or self-worth. These bully victims frequently exhibit physical traits like small stature. They might also be awkward, have poor motor coordination, or lack physical strength. Furthermore, these bully victims often have physical flaws like elongated teeth, trouble speaking or having a strange accent, or a negative body image (Aliero, Mainagge & Tsagem, 2023; Adewuyi, 2021).

The detrimental effects that bullying in schools has on students' short- and long-term development have garnered international attention. Bullying's effects extend far beyond the school environment and can affect social integration, mental health, and academic achievement in later life. Bullying is a severe issue in many places, including Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State, Nigeria, but it is frequently disregarded or misunderstood. Although primary school students in Ibadan, like those around the world, are vulnerable to engaging in bullying as perpetrators, victims, or bystanders, there is a relative dearth of research on bullying in Ibadan. A thorough understanding of the prevalence and management of bullying in primary schools is therefore crucial for developing and implementing effective intervention strategies and support systems.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study's framework will come from Bandura's social learning theory. The developmental psychology social learning theory, which emphasizes how people learn by copying or observing others and modeling the results, gave rise to the social learning theory. According to the theory, people can learn new behaviors by watching and copying others (Bandura, 1986). According to the theory, learning is a cognitive process in a social setting and can happen just by direct instruction or observation, even without direct positive reinforcement or motor development (Kanmodi et al., 2020). The theory is applied to people's motivation, ability to inspire others, performance, approach to learning new skills, and self-control. Along with stating that people influence and are influenced by others, it also describes how these processes can alter personalities. To address and improve adult learning, the Social Learning Theory is one of the most popular learning theories in the workplace and human resource development (Dagogo, 2020). The social cognitive theory can thus explain how human behavior is shaped in the workplace and how it has been used.

This theory differs from psychodynamic and behaviorist approaches by incorporating three interrelated components to explain human behavior: personal factors, behavioral influences, and environmental conditions. It emphasizes the dynamic interaction among these elements. Specifically, the "personal" component encompasses personality traits such as beliefs, attitudes, prior knowledge and experiences, expectations, and individual goals. The "behavioral" component pertains to an individual's skills, practice, and perceived self-efficacy. The "environmental" component includes immediate social settings and broader societal influences. Moreover, the theory highlights an individual's capacity to change personality traits, behaviors, and competencies such as skills through social interactions, including performance feedback and observational learning through modeling and persuasion. It posits that individuals have the agency to influence the trajectory of their lives, or "destiny," by making informed decisions in response to chance life events. The theory also places significant emphasis on self-directed learning and personal development, which involve processes of change and self-regulation. Self-

regulation is the ability to guide one's behavior by determining appropriate actions and identifying behaviors to avoid, particularly when confronted with challenges. It inherently includes adherence to moral standards (Bandura, 1977).

This theory explains how bullying behavior can be picked up from others by watching and copying them, which makes it pertinent to this study. This serves as a reminder that older primary school students in Ibadan and the surrounding area can pick up bullying behaviors from the local children on the streets. The theory also explains how teachers can use a variety of tactics, such as modeling and giving clear instructions, to control bullying behavior.

### Research questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in this study:

1. What is teachers' perception about the prevalence of bullying among primary school pupils in the Ido Local Government area of Oyo state?
2. What methods or strategies are teachers adopting to manage bullying behaviour among primary school pupils in the Ido Local Government area of Oyo state?
3. Is there a significant difference in teachers' perception of the prevalence of bullying behaviour among primary school pupils based on school type?
4. Is there a significant difference in the methods/strategies adopted by the teachers to manage bullying behaviour among primary school pupils based on school type?

### Methods

#### Design

This study employed a descriptive survey research design deemed appropriate for gathering data related to the variables under investigation. As noted by Ayanwale et al. (2023), the descriptive survey design is well-suited for accurately capturing the prevalence of bullying behavior among pupils and examining how primary school teachers in Ido Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria, have been addressing and managing this form of antisocial behavior.

#### Participants

The target population for this study consisted of teachers from public and private primary schools located in Ido Local Government Area of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. In the first stage, a simple random sampling method was used to select 10 public and 10 private primary schools from the area's existing 40 public and 35 registered private primary schools. In the second stage, three teachers instructing lower primary classes (Primary I to III) were purposively selected from each of the chosen schools. Consequently, the final sample comprised 60 teachers from primary schools within the Ido Local Government Area of Oyo State.

#### Instruments

A self-constructed and validated questionnaire was utilized for data collection in this study. The instrument, the Teachers' Perception and Management of Bullying Behaviour Questionnaire (reliability coefficient = 0.72), consisted of two sections. Section A gathered demographic information from respondents, including the school's name, class taught, age, and years of teaching experience. Section B comprised 20 items designed to elicit responses using a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire was structured to include items related explicitly to teachers' perceptions of the prevalence and management of bullying behaviour among primary school pupils in the Ido Local Government Area.

### Results

**Table 1: Distribution of Teachers Based on Working Experience**

Experience ( years)	Frequency	Percentage
0-5	20	33.3
6-10	22	36.7
11-15	8	13.3
16-20	1	1.7
20 above	9	15.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 shows that 33.3% of the observed teachers had between 0 and 5 years of working experience, 36.7% of the observed teachers had between 6 to 10 years, 13.3% had between 11 to 15 years, only one teacher – 1.7% had between 16 to 20 years while 15.0% of the teachers had above 20 years of working experience.

**Table 2: Gender Distribution of Teachers**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	19	31.7
Female	41	68.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 shows that 31.7% of the observed teachers are male, while 68.3% are female.

**Answers to the Research Questions (RQs)** RQ1: What is teachers' perception about the prevalence of bullying among primary school pupils in Ido Local Government Area of Oyo State?

**Table 4: Perception of Teachers about the Prevalence of Bullying Behaviour among Primary School Pupils**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN
1	Bullying behaviours are not exhibited among primary school pupils in my school	10 (16.7)	24 (40.0)	14 (23.3)	12 (20.0)	2.533
2	Pupils often bully others with names, skin colour and body shapes	17 (28.3)	20 (33.3)	20 (33.3)	3 (5)	2.850
3	Bullying behaviour is common among primary school pupils in my school	3 (5)	23 (38.3)	23 (38.3)	11 (18.3)	2.300
4	The rate of bullying behaviour in primary school is uncontrollable	2 (3.4)	6 (10)	27 (45)	25 (41.7)	1.883
5	I think there is nothing as bullying behaviour among primary school pupils	5 (8.3)	14 (23.3)	20 (33.3)	21 (35)	2.050
6	I think bullying behaviours can only be found among boys, which is usually uncommon.	1 (1.7)	5 (8.3)	44 (73.3)	10 (16.7)	1.950
7	There is hardly a school where bullying behaviours among pupils will not be recorded in this LGA.	16 (26.7)	24 (40)	14 (23.3)	6 (10)	2.833
8	Pupils often make fun of someone when they are pushed, punched or slapped	15 (25)	35 (58.3)	8 (13.3)	2 (3.3)	3.050
9	Bullying behaviours can be found in both boys and girls in this school.	28 (46.7)	27 (45)	4 (6.7)	1 (1.7)	3.367
10	Bullying behaviours happen among primary school pupils occasionally.	7 (11.7)	29 (48.3)	19 (31.7)	5 (8.3)	2.633
<b>Weighted Average = 2.54</b>						

Table 4 shows that teachers' perception of the prevalence of bullying among primary school pupils in the Ido Local Government Area of Oyo State is positive (WA = 2.54) against the threshold of 2.5. The detailed analysis is as follows: The majority (56.7%) of the respondents agreed that bullying behaviours are not exhibited among primary school pupils (mean = 2.53), while the remaining (43.3%) disagreed; 61.6% of the teachers agreed that pupils often bully others with names, skin colour and body shapes (mean = 2.85) while the remaining 38.3% disagreed. Bullying behavior is common among primary school pupils (mean = 2.30). The rate of bullying behaviour in primary school is uncontrollable (mean = 1.88); I think there is nothing as bullying behaviour among primary school pupils (mean = 2.05); I think bullying behaviours can only be found among boys which are usually uncommon (mean = 1.95), There is hardly a school where bullying behaviours among pupils will not be recorded (mean = 2.83), Pupils often make fun of someone when they were pushed, punched or slapped (mean = 3.05), I think bullying behaviours can be found in both boys and girls (mean = 3.37), Bullying behaviours happens among primary school pupils occasionally (mean = 2.63).

RQ2: What methods or strategies are adopted by the teachers to manage bullying behaviour among primary school pupils in the Ido Local Government Area of Oyo state?

**Table 5: Perception of Teachers about the Management of Bullying Behaviour among Primary School Pupils**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN
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1	As a primary school teacher, I should identify and respond to cases of bullying behaviours among pupils immediately	43 (71.7)	15 (25)	1 (1.7)	1 (1.7)	3.667
2	I think it is ideal for me as a primary school teacher to identify and report cases of bullying behaviour among pupils	35 (58.3)	24 (40)	1 (1.7)	-	3.567
3	I am of the opinion that primary school teachers should address the needs of pupils who engage in bullying behaviour.	34 (56.7)	24 (40)	1 (1.7)	1 (1.7)	3.517
4	Primary school teachers should assist victims to act more assertively	26 (43.3)	26 (43.3)	3 (5)	5 (8.3)	3.217
5	Primary school teachers need training and support to effectively manage bullying behaviour among pupils	21 (35)	37 (61.7)	2 (3.3)	-	3.317
6	Primary school teachers should collaborate with parents and other stakeholders to address bullying behaviour among pupils	38 (63.3)	18 (30)	3 (5)	1 (1.7)	3.550
7	I feel teachers should discipline pupils who are found exhibiting bullying behaviours	34 (56.7)	21 (35)	5 (8.3)	-	3.483
8	I think good classroom management by the teachers will reduce or completely eradicate bullying behaviours	25 (41.7)	26 (43.3)	8 (13.3)	1 (1.7)	3.250
9	Setting rules and regulations by the classroom teachers will reduce the rate of bullying behaviours	36 (60)	23 (38.3)	1 (1.7)	-	3.583
10	Teachers have a role to play in preventing bullying behaviour among pupils	41 (68.3)	17 (28.3)	1 (1.7)	1 (1.7)	3.633
<b>Weighted Average = 3.12</b>						

Table 5 shows the methods and strategies adopted by teachers to manage bullying behaviour among primary school pupils in the Ido Local Government Area of Oyo State. The following are the identified methods or strategies: identifying and responding to cases of bullying behaviours among pupils immediately (mean = 3.67); identifying and reporting cases of bullying behaviour among pupils (mean = 3.57); addressing the needs of pupils who engage in bullying behaviour (mean = 3.52); , Primary school teachers should assist victims to act more assertively (mean = 3.22), Primary school teachers needs training and support to effectively manage bullying behaviour among pupils (mean = 3.32), Primary school teachers should collaborate with parents and other stakeholders to address bullying behaviour among pupils (mean = 3.55), I feel teachers should discipline pupils who are found exhibiting bullying behaviours (mean = 3.48), I think good classroom management by the teachers will reduce or completely eradicate bullying behaviours (mean = 3.25), Setting rules and regulations by the classroom teachers will reduce the rate of bullying behaviours (mean = 3.58), Teachers have a role to play in preventing bullying behaviour among pupils (mean = 3.63).

RQ3: Is there any significant difference in the perception of teachers about the prevalence of bullying behaviour among primary school pupils based on school type

**Table 6: Summary of T-test showing Difference in Public and Private School Teachers' Perception of Prevalence of Bullying Behaviour among Primary School Pupils**

Variable	N	Mean	Std.D	t	df	Sig.	Remark
Prevalence							
Public teachers	30	24.90	2.440	-	58	0.158	Not Significant
Private teachers	30	26.00	3.384	1.444			

Table 6 shows no significant difference between public and private school teachers in their perception of the prevalence of bullying behaviour among primary school pupils ( $t = -1.44$ ;  $df = 58$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). This implies that the prevalence of bullying behaviour among pupils in primary schools in Ido LGA cuts across both public and private schools.

RQ4: Is there a significant difference in the methods/strategies adopted by the teachers to manage bullying behaviour among primary school pupils based on school type?

**Table 7: Summary of T-test showing Difference in Public and Private School Teachers' Perception of Prevalence of Bullying Behaviour among Primary School Pupils**

Variable	N	Mean	Std.D	t	df	Sig.	Remark
Management							
Public teachers	30	34.733	3.629	-	58	0.926	Not Significant
				0.094			
Private teachers	30	34.833	4.572				

Table 7 shows no significant difference between public and private school teachers in the methods and strategies adopted to manage bullying behaviour among primary school pupils ( $t = -0.09$ ;  $df = 58$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). This shows that the management of bullying behaviour adopted by primary school teachers cut across both public and private schools in Ido LGA of Oyo State, Nigeria.

### Discussion

The first research question explored teachers' perceptions regarding the prevalence of bullying behaviour among primary school pupils in the Ido Local Government Area of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Findings from the study indicated that teachers perceive bullying behaviour as a prevalent issue among pupils in the area. The results further revealed a high level of awareness and perception among teachers concerning bullying, suggesting that they frequently observe various instances of such behaviour and actively respond to incidents as they occur. This finding could result from the peculiar situations in Ido LGA, one of which is the parent's socioeconomic status. The socioeconomic situation is germane to bullying behaviour in those pupils who could not have all their needs met by the parents would result in aggressive behaviour among peers. Besides, in many public primary schools, many overage pupils, especially in public primary schools, are among the underage ones. This also contributes to bullying behaviour as the overage pupils will always want to overpower the underage ones. The introduction of 1-year pre-primary sections into public primary schools since 2004 also contributes to this.

Additionally, this result supports the findings of Yilmaz & Cikili (2020), who conducted a study in Turkey and found that primary school teachers thoroughly understand bullying. They defined bullying as direct and indirect abuse rather than just physical bullying. Some researchers, however, thought that when defining bullying, teachers agreed more on what bullying is not than what it is (Adewuyi, 2023; Al-Raqqad et al., 2017). According to the majority of the literature that defined bullying, the investigation of teachers' perspectives on bullying also revealed the aspect of power imbalance that consistently appeared in the majority of the responses. Teachers who disagreed with the prevalence of some bullying behaviors must have been more likely due to this. The results of another study on Canadian teachers, also carried out in Canada by Craig and Pepler (2007), supported this opinion. According to Liu et al. (2024), bullying has been identified as one of the most common types of school violence despite teachers' efforts to provide a safe learning environment for students. This finding is consistent with the current findings.

The study also looked at the tactics and approaches elementary school teachers use in Oyo State's Ido Local Government Area to control bullying behavior among their students. It was also discovered that teachers employ a variety of tactics to reduce bullying among secondary school students, including counseling, punishment, parental involvement in the child's activities, moral teaching or instruction in schools, and positive teacher-student relationships. This is consistent with a study by Berger, Brotfeld & Espelage (2022), which found that positive interactions between teachers and students are a significant part of the school day and positively impact students' behavior. The study also confirmed that bullying behavior can be reduced by utilizing a positive teacher-student relationship. According to Jadambaa et al. (2021), school policies, teacher attitudes, and the general school culture can all help students grow socially and emotionally and reduce bullying. Their findings indicate that when students have positive attitudes about school support, there is a correlation between those attitudes and several outcomes, including those directly related to school support. Children who believe that their school environment is encouraging are less likely to experience bullying or participate in risky activities, according to Wang et al. (2025). This outcome validates the earlier studies. According to the study's findings, students who attend schools with appropriate environments can avoid the detrimental effects of bullying in the classroom (Adejumo, Asongu, & Adejumo, 2021; Akokuwebe, Ukpabi, & Ejeh, 2017).

The results of this study are also corroborated by the theoretical and empirical research of Ashiabi Alabi & Lami (2015), who both thought that bullying behaviors among students were negatively correlated with school expectations. They went on to say that children are kept from acting antisocial by the high standards the school

and teachers set. High expectations were linked to a lower incidence of antisocial behavior in adolescents who had not previously exhibited behavioral problems. Initially, they taught the school's expectations for how students should treat each other differently. Previous studies, like those by Berger, Brotfeld & Espelage (2022) and Farina (2019), demonstrated numerous ways to express the rules. Some of them were linked to particular actions and were quite detailed. These are usually presented in a negative light, teaching students what they should not do instead of what they should do. Others deal more with how people interact with one another, like treating or including people the way you want to be treated. At many schools, these were referred to as the "golden rules" because students believed they were the institution's pillar and an expression of its core values.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been made:

- ✓ Schools, teachers, parents and peers should always be aware and be available if help is needed on bullying behaviour in the school environment. Teachers, especially, must be mindful of the problems the pupils face.
- ✓ Counsellors should help increase pupils' coping skills when they are victimized.
- ✓ Schools need to adopt and maintain a whole-school prevention program by not only creating school rules and regulations that will outlaw bullying behaviour among the pupils but also ensure strict implementation.
- ✓ The Local Government Authority should endeavor to provide in-service training for primary school teachers on new and effective ways of managing bullying behaviour. The LGA can adopt the train-the-trainers method if there is a shortage of educational funds.

### Conclusions

Bullying has emerged as a critical challenge facing schools across various educational levels. If left unaddressed, the consequences of bullying behaviour can be long-lasting, with potentially severe impacts on the well-being and development of children and young people. This study revealed that bullying among primary school pupils is significantly influenced by factors related to teachers, the school environment, and the surrounding community. The findings underscore that bullying does not occur in isolation; rather, it is shaped by multiple interconnected influences, including educational practices. Specifically, how teachers manage their classrooms and respond to inappropriate student behaviour plays a pivotal role in mitigating or reinforcing bullying behaviour within the school setting. Consequently, programs that assist educators in enhancing their subject matter and pedagogical knowledge are crucial in creating a culture that discourages bullying.

Bullying is also widespread in the Ido Local Government Area of Ibadan. The prevalence of bullying behavior and teachers' strategies to address it are nearly identical in the LGA's public and private primary schools. This could be due to some unusual circumstances in the region. Teachers are managing bullying behavior among students in their formative years by employing outdated techniques and strategies. Future developmental mistakes for the students could result from this, particularly since it could impact the affective learning domains if not all of them.

### Ethics Statement

All procedures involving human participants in this study were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the National Research Committee, the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its subsequent amendments, or comparable ethical guidelines. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study.

### Ethics Statement Acknowledgments

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### Availability of Data Statement

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### Competing Interests

The author of this study declares that there are no commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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