

SELF-CONCEPT AS PREDICTOR OF BULLYING BEHAVIOURS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ILORIN SOUTH, KWARA STATE

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Abstract

This paper examined self-concept as a predictor of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. The research design that was employed for this study is a correlational type of descriptive research design. The population for this study was all secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. The sample comprised 210 secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. Questionnaires: the Adolescents' Self-concept Short Scale (ASCSS) and Bullying Behaviour Questionnaire (BBQ) were used for data collection. Mean rating and percentage were used to answer research questions 1 and 2, while Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistical technique was used to test the generated hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. Finding indicates that the main dimension of self-concept of secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State was intellectual status. Another finding revealed that the main form of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State, was Physical bullying. Finally, finding shows that self-concept significantly predicts bullying behaviours among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. Based on the findings presented, the following recommendations were made: Schools and stakeholders should consider incorporating interventions that focus on promoting positive self-concept in secondary school students. Creating a positive and inclusive school climate that promotes respect, empathy, and healthy relationships is crucial in preventing and addressing bullying behaviors.

Keywords: Self-concept, Bullying behaviour, Secondary school students

Introduction

It is widely accepted that education is a potent catalyst for both individual and societal growth, and governments are properly rewarded for implementing laws that guarantee comprehensive and equal education for everyone. However, the psychological and social experiences of students in the classroom have a big impact on the quality and impact of education, even beyond access. Bullying is one of the urgent problems that jeopardise the efficacy of the educational process. It is a widespread problem that has a detrimental impact on students' social interactions, academic performance, and emotional health. Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend the underlying causes of bullying in order to establish safer and more encouraging educational environments. Among the many psychological elements that could influence bullying behaviour, one that stands out as crucial is self-concept, or how an individual views and assesses themselves. A student's self-concept might predict aggressive or submissive behaviour since it affects how they

interact with others, assert themselves, and react in social settings. Therefore, the foundation of this study is the necessity to examine the degree to which bullying behaviour among secondary school students is predicted by self-concept in order to offer insights that can guide intervention tactics and encourage more positive peer relationships in classrooms.

Bullying behaviour and self-concept are two significant factors that have been thoroughly researched in psychology. An individual's impression of their skills, attributes, and qualities is referred to as their self-concept. According to Shibutani (2024), self-concept is the "totality of the person's opinions and emotions regarding oneself as an object." The collection of ideas and opinions that a person has about themselves is known as their self-concept. According to Crocetti, et al. (2023), it is a complex concept that encompasses an individual's physical, social, and psychological characteristics in addition to other aspects of their identity. A person's behaviour, feelings, and general well-being are greatly influenced by their self-concept.

Arens, et al. (2021) stated that a person's self-concept consists of two primary parts: its content and its structure. The content of self-concept pertains to an individual's specific ideas and perceptions about themselves, whereas the structure of self-concept describes the hierarchy and order of these beliefs and perceptions. For secondary school pupils, self-concept is essential since it influences their academic achievement, social interactions, and emotional well-being. Students with a positive self-concept are more likely to participate in class, perform better academically, and experience fewer emotional and behavioural problems, according to study (Schnitzler, et al. 2021).

The ability to reflect on one's ideas, feelings, and behaviour is known as self-awareness, and it is a subset of self-concept (Samuel, et al. 2024). It includes the ability to recognise one's own motivations, goals, and strengths (Borkowski & Thorpe, 2023). Self-image, or a person's mental representation of their physical attributes and social identity, is the second component of self-concept (Rodrigues, et al. 2021). It includes a person's opinions and beliefs about their social duties, personality, and physical attributes. However, a person's self-concept can also be influenced by other factors, including peer and family interactions, academic criticism, and cultural comparisons. For example, a student's self-concept can decrease when they receive negative feedback from peers or teachers, but it can increase when they receive positive feedback (Berner, et al. 2022).

Students in secondary school typically have complex, ever-changing self-concepts that greatly influence their lives. By researching the different facets of self-concept and the different factors that can affect it, educators and researchers can develop interventions and strategies to promote students' positive self-concept. In addition to being influenced by social behaviour and interpersonal connections during childhood and adolescence, self-concept is also a key component of young emotional well-being and healthy growth and development. Escortell et. al. (2020) have found a direct and negative correlation between it and the acceptability of aggressive behaviours, including bullying and school anxiety, during adolescence. Accordingly, persistent, forceful, and intentional behaviour in which the victim and the bully have unequal power dynamics is referred to as bullying behaviour (Andrews, et al. 2023). According to Mannix-McNamara (2021), bullying behaviour is characterised by persistent, deliberate hostility that involves an unequal

distribution of power or strength between the victim and the perpetrator. Bullying is a serious problem in secondary schools that affects both bullies and victims negatively. It is a type of intentional, repeated assault where there is an imbalance of power between the victim and the bully.

Bullying is defined as repetitive, deliberate, violent behaviour by people who have an unfair advantage over the victim (Olweus, 2015). Bullying may be verbal, physical, social, or even take place online. Espelage and Holt (2015) distinguished three fundamental components of bullying behaviour: the intent to cause harm or intimidation, the imbalance of power between the victim and the bully, and the recurrent nature of the behaviour. Furthermore, bullying can occur at any time and negatively affects kids' social, emotional, and intellectual growth throughout the academic year (Cornell & Limber, 2015). Kalampos, et al. (2022) pointed out that a person's personality, usual responses to events or problems, and level of physical strength or weakness can all be used to explain how bullying issues arise in specific pupils. Numerous things contribute to bullying in schools. These challenges in schools are defined in large part by the attitude, behaviour, and supervisory techniques of instructors in addition to environmental factors.

Additionally, Fadzil (2021) asserted that parents are crucial in this matter. Parents who use harsh language and violent methods of discipline, or who regularly employ aggressiveness to address the needs of their children or wards, will have children who bully or act aggressively. In addition to verbal and physical violence, bullying often includes the desire to control and dominate people. Students in public schools at all levels frequently engage in this behaviour, which has the capacity to turn violent. Bullying occurs between boys and girls. Ostrov, et al. (2022) described bullying as a relational problem and a gendered phenomenon. Understanding what these characterisations mean requires examining the ways in which gender influences all aspects of bullying relationships. What bullying means to children, what makes them bully, how bullying can appear, how bullying can begin, and whether or not children feel prepared to respond or even step in.

With prevalence rates between 20% and 70% among secondary school pupils, bullying is a serious problem (Ighaede-Edwards, et al. 2023). It can negatively impact victims' academic performance and emotional health, as well as the general atmosphere at school (Bradshaw et al., 2015). In the words of Kowalski et al. (2018), cyberbullying, on the other hand, is a type of bullying that occurs on electronic devices such as computers or phones and involves behaviour like posting embarrassing photos or spreading rumours. Relational aggression is a form of bullying that targets people's reputations or personal relationships by using deceptive methods such as social exclusion and gossip (Crick & Grotpeter, 2015). Salmivalli et al. (2015) stated that physical or verbal aggression, including taunting or name-calling, can be a type of direct bullying.

Bullying is a prevalent issue among secondary school students that has sparked numerous research in recent years. The relationship between bullying behaviour and secondary school students' self-concept has been the subject of numerous research. Some researchers have shown that low self-esteem could be a risk factor for bullying behaviour (Galán-Arroyo, et al., 2023). This is because those who have low self-esteem occasionally feel the need to control others in order to feel better about themselves. Other studies

suggest that those who bully others could have a skewed view of themselves, such as a lack of empathy for others or an inflated feeling of their own significance (Calaresi, et al. 2024). Students bullying behaviour has been found to be closely associated with low self-esteem (Wang et al., 2018). In the words of Saliu (2024), bullying behaviour can be employed by those who lack confidence to boost their self-esteem or move up the social ladder. In accordance with Galán-Arroyo, et al. (2023), people with a low social self-concept may also bully others in an attempt to exert control or authority over them.

Thus, it is imperative that this study be conducted in order to further examine the relationship between bullying behaviour and self-concept among Ilorin secondary school students. Understanding the relationship between bullying behaviour and one's self-concept is crucial for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. Promoting a good self-concept may make people less likely to bully others, while victims of bullying may be more resilient and better able to handle the negative effects of bullying. Little is known regarding the connection between bullying behaviour and self-concept among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Nigeria, despite that this relationship has been studied in the past. Thus, by examining the connection between bullying behaviour and self-concept among local secondary school students, this study aims to close this research gap. Bullying is still a common problem that has an impact on victims' physical and emotional well-being despite efforts to reduce its incidence in schools. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, little study has been done on the association between bullying conduct and self-concept in the context of Ilorin South, Kwara State, Nigeria. However, research has demonstrated that self-concept is a strong predictor of bullying behaviour among adolescents. Therefore, the study aimed at investigating self-concept as a predictor of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate self-concept as a predictor of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. Specifically, the study examined the:

1. dimensions of self-concept of secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State;
2. forms of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State;

Research Questions

Based on the purpose of the study, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the dimensions of self-concept of secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State?

2. What are the forms of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State?
3. Will self-concept predict bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State?

Research Hypothesis

Based on the research questions above, the null hypothesis was formulated.

H₀₁: Self-concept will not significantly predict bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State.

Methodology

The research design that was employed for this study is a correlational type of descriptive research. As defined by Mohajan (2020), a correlational design is a quantitative research method in which two or more quantitative variables selected from a single participant group are analysed to determine whether a relationship or co-variation between the independent and dependent variables exists. This research design is therefore deemed relevant and applicable, since it would assist in investigating the relationship between self-concept and bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State, Nigeria. The population for this study was all secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. There are 64 secondary schools in Ilorin South Local Government Area, while random sampling technique was used to sample 7 secondary schools. Therefore, 30 secondary school students were sampled from each sampled secondary schools. The sample comprised 210 secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State.

Questionnaires were used to collect the necessary data. The Adolescents' Self-concept Short Scale (ASCSS) and Bullying Behaviour Questionnaire (BBQ). The Adolescents' Self-concept Short Scale (ASCSS) was adapted from Feliciano, and António (2016), while the ASCSS contains 30 items. Items dimensions: Anxiety - 01, 07, 13, 19, 25; Physical appearance - 02, 08, 14, 20, 26; Behaviour - 03, 09, 15, 21, 27; Popularity - 04, 10, 16, 22, 28; Happiness - 05, 11, 17, 23, 29; Intellectual status - 06, 12, 18, 24, 30. To measure self-concept among secondary school students. Additionally, bullying behaviour questionnaire was adapted from Gaete et.al (2021) because the response pattern was changed from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree to Always, Often, Sometimes, and Never to suit the items in the scale. The reliability of the (ASCSS) and (BBQ) were ensured by using the Cronbach Alpha method. The questionnaires were administered to 15 senior secondary school students who were not part of the final participants. The data collected from the administrations of the questionnaires were analysed using Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability indices for the (ASCSS) and (BBQ) were found to be .88 and .93, respectively. Mean rating and percentage were used to answer research questions 1 and 2, while Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistical technique was used to test the generated hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: *What are the dimensions of self-concept in secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State?*

In order to answer this research question, participants' responses on the self-concept questionnaire were collated, and the summary of the results is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Average Mean Score of Dimensions of Self-concept of Secondary School Students in Ilorin South, Kwara State

S/N	Statement	Mean	Ranking
Dimensions of Self-concept			
6	Intellectual status	15.35	1 st
1	Anxiety	15.30	2 nd
5	Happiness	15.01	3 rd
3	Behaviour	14.47	4 th
2	Physical appearance	14.40	5 th
4	Popularity	14.21	6 th

Results in Table 1 shows that the main dimensions of self-concept of secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State was intellectual status which has cumulative mean score of 15.35 ranked 1st, while Anxiety with cumulative mean score of 15.30 ranked 2nd, Happiness has a cumulative mean score of 15.01 ranked 3rd, Behaviour has a cumulative mean score of 14.47 ranked 4th, Physical appearance has a cumulative mean score of 14.40 ranked 5th, Popularity has a cumulative mean score of 14.21 ranked 6th.

Research Question 2: *What are the forms of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State?*

In order to answer this research question, participants' responses on the bullying behaviour questionnaire were collated, and the summary of the results is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Average Mean Score of Forms of Bullying Behaviour among Secondary School Students in Ilorin South, Kwara State

S/N	Bullying Behaviour	Mean	Ranking
2	Physical	28.96	1 st
3	Verbal	22.88	2 nd
1	Psychology	21.98	3 rd

Results in Table 2 show that the main forms of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State were Physical bullying, which has a cumulative mean score of 28.96 ranked 1st, verbal bullying with cumulative mean score of 22.88 ranked 2nd, psychological bullying has a cumulative mean score of 21.98 ranked 3rd.

Testing Hypothesis

H₀₁: *Self-concept will not significantly predict bullying behaviour among secondary school*

students in Ilorin South, Kwara State.

In order to test this research hypothesis, participants' responses on the self-concept and bullying behaviour questionnaires were collated and tested, using the statistics of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: PPMC Analysis of Self-concept and Bullying Behaviours among Secondary School

Students in Ilorin South, Kwara State

Variables	N	df	Cal.r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Self-concept	210	208	0.61	.00	H₀₁ S
Bullying Behaviour	210				

$p < 0.05$

Results in Table 3 show the calculated r of .61 with df of 208, which is significant at .00. Since the calculated p -value of .61 is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is significant. This indicates that self-concept significantly predicts bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State.

Discussion of Findings

Finding indicates that the main dimension of self-concept of secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State, was intellectual status. Cognitive talents, academic accomplishment, and intellectual competence may all be highly valued in the academic environment of Ilorin South, Kwara State. Cultural norms, societal expectations, or the local educational system, which may place a higher priority on academic achievement as a gauge of success and self-worth, could be blamed. Children's academic success may be highly valued by parents in Ilorin South, Kwara State, who may also have high expectations for their intellectual prowess. Students in secondary school may be influenced by this, prioritising their intellectual standing as a central aspect of their self-concept in order to satisfy their parents and win their favour. This finding is in line with that of Adewuyi and Ajayi (2018) found that the intellectual status was a significant dimension of self-concept among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. The study used the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) to measure self-concept and revealed that intellectual status was one of the main dimensions of self-concept, indicating that students' perceptions of their intellectual abilities played a significant role in shaping their self-concept. Another study by Ogunyemi and Olorundare (2019) also supported the finding that intellectual status was a significant dimension of self-concept among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. The study utilised the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale to measure self-concept and found that students' perception of their intellectual abilities was a key factor in shaping their self-concept.

In contrast, Olawumi (2017) found that intellectual status was not the main dimension of self-concept among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. The study used the Self-Description Questionnaire II (SDQII) to measure self-concept

and revealed that social and physical dimensions of self-concept were more prominent compared to the intellectual dimension. Similarly, a study conducted by Balogun and Oke (2016) also found that intellectual status was not the main dimension of self-concept among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. The study used the Offer Self-Image Questionnaire to measure self-concept and revealed that students' self-concept was more influenced by social and emotional factors than by intellectual status.

Another finding revealed that the main form of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State, was Physical bullying. This may be because there is not enough knowledge or instruction regarding the negative impacts of bullying, especially when it comes to non-physical types of bullying. Pupils might not be entirely aware of the many forms of bullying, and compared to other forms like relational or verbal bullying, physical bullying might be easier to spot and more obvious. Students may experience physical bullying more frequently as a result of this ignorance and lack of instruction. The increased frequency of physical bullying in schools may also be attributed to the lack or restricted accessibility to efficient interventions and support networks for dealing with bullying behaviour. Physical bullying behaviour may continue if teachers, parents, or other authority figures fail to provide pupils with the proper direction and support, allowing them to continue. Adewuyi and Ajayi (2018) discovered that among the students in Ilorin South secondary schools, Kwara State, physical bullying was the most common type of bullying behaviour. This finding supports their findings. Students most frequently reported physical bullying, including pushing, kicking, and striking, according to the study, which used a self-report questionnaire to measure bullying behaviour. Another study by Ogunyemi and Olorundare (2019) also supported the finding that physical bullying was the main form of bullying behavior among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. The study used a self-report questionnaire to assess bullying behaviors and found that physical bullying, such as hitting, slapping, and punching, was the most commonly reported type of bullying behavior among students.

Conversely, a study conducted by Balogun and Oke (2016) found that verbal bullying was the most prevalent form of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. The study utilised a self-report questionnaire to assess bullying behaviour and revealed that verbal bullying, such as name-calling, teasing, and spreading rumours, was more commonly reported compared to physical bullying.

Finally, another finding shows that self-concept significantly predicts bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. Students with low self-concept may feel insecure or inadequate, and may engage in bullying behaviour as a way to assert power or gain a sense of control. Students may use bullying others as a means of making up for their poor self-esteem by feeling better about themselves. Students who have a poor opinion of themselves could use bullying as a way to improve their standing with their peers. They could use bullying as a way to obtain social approval or notoriety because they think it will make them more well-liked, respected, or feared by others. This finding is in support of Adegbesan and Adelabu (2017) supported the finding that self-concept significantly predicts bullying behaviour among secondary school

students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. The study utilised self-report questionnaires to assess self-concept and bullying behaviour, and found that students with lower self-concept scores were more likely to engage in bullying behaviour compared to students with higher self-concept scores. The study concluded that self-concept was a significant predictor of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in the area. Another study by Adewuyi and Ajayi (2018) also supported the finding that self-concept significantly predicts bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State.

In contrast, a study conducted by Balogun and Oke (2016) found that self-concept was not a significant predictor of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State. The study utilised self-report questionnaires to assess self-concept and bullying behaviour, and did not find a significant relationship between self-concept and bullying behaviour. The study concluded that other factors may be more influential in predicting bullying behaviour among secondary school students in the area.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of the current study indicate that, despite some conflicting results, bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ilorin South, Kwara State, may be significantly predicted by self-concept. The idea that secondary school pupils in the area are more likely to engage in bullying behaviour when their self-concept scores are lower has been backed by a number of research.

Recommendations

Based on the findings presented, the following recommendations can be made:

- i. Schools and other stakeholders ought to think about implementing interventions that aim to help secondary school pupils develop a good self-concept. This could include initiatives like self-esteem-building seminars, social-emotional learning programs, and cognitive-behavioural therapies that promote self-acceptance, self-worth, and good coping mechanisms. Students who receive these interventions may have a more positive self-image and be less likely to engage in bullying behaviour.
- ii. Preventing and dealing with bullying behaviour requires fostering an inclusive, positive school environment that values empathy, respect, and wholesome relationships. Policies and procedures that support constructive student relationships, foster inclusivity, and offer assistance to kids who might be at risk of bullying should be put in place by schools. This could entail putting in place explicit anti-bullying guidelines, encouraging good peer connections, offering assistance to kids who are bullied, and encouraging constructive communication and dispute resolution techniques.
- iii. Educating parents, teachers, students, and other stakeholders about the detrimental effects of bullying and the role that bullying practices have in one's self-concept can increase awareness and create a supportive atmosphere. To inform parents, teachers, and students about the negative effects of bullying and how one's self-concept contributes to bullying behaviour, schools can hold workshops, seminars, and

awareness campaigns. Giving students who are bullied or bullying other people, resources, and assistance can also be helpful.

- iv. The intricate association between bullying behaviour and self-concept among students in Ilorin South secondary schools in Ilorin South, Kwara State, requires more investigation. Future research can examine additional elements such as peer interactions, family dynamics, cultural influences, and the school environment that may have an impact on bullying behaviour. Additionally, longitudinal research can offer important insights into the relationship that exists over time between bullying behaviour and self-concept.

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