

# PERSONALITY FACTORS AS PREDICTORS OF BULLYING AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SOUTH WESTERN NIGERIA

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**Abstract-** The study investigated the influence of Personality factors on Bullying among secondary school students in South western Nigeria. Participants consisted of 450 secondary school students and 150 teachers selected from 15 secondary schools across 10 Local government areas in south western Nigeria and 150 students 15 secondary schools across 10 local government area in Southwestern Nigeria in the second phase of the study. The study was guided by three research questions. The findings was analysed statistically and the result shows that negative affectivity and self control trait has an influence on bullies. It also indicate some techniques that could be used in addressing the challenges of bullying. This was followed by conclusions which was based on the findings of the study.

## 1. Introduction

Bullying is a social issue which has received great attention among scholars (Santrock, 2005, Bainbridge, 2012, Omoteso 2010). Bullying has negative effects in the lives of secondary school students hence, it cannot be overlooked by any reasonable society. Any perpetrator of bullying has to be physically stronger than his/her victim to enable him/her overpower in the physical struggle. Therefore, bullying is an undue advantage taken by any stronger or older individual(s) to oppress their victims or the weak ones. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological (Martin, Carson and Buskist, 2007). Bullying is the most common form of violence in our schools. Studies show that this violence makes schools unsafe places for children and has contributed to the perception that schools are not safe anymore (Maliki et al 2009). Bullying is commonly characterized as aggressive behavior that is intended to cause distress or harm and involves an imbalance of power or strength between the aggressor and the victim and commonly occur repeatedly overtime (Nansel & Overpeck 2001).

Bullies target students who are usually victims over the years are becoming an increasing problem in Nigerian schools and schools across America (Bainbridge 2012). The victims targeted are usually solitary, smaller in stature, or members of marginalized groups (Craig & Pepler 2007). According to Heinrich (2003), victims of bullying may be adolescents with exceptionalities because they are vulnerable. The victims can exhibit social skills deficit, verbal delays and impulsive or anxious behaviours which the bullies can use to advantage. Adolescents with exceptionalities who already had problems will likely have an increase in low rate of academic, social, and emotional problems (Mishna, 2003).

Allport (1961) defines personality as the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his personality character. Therefore the personality factors has to do with inner aspect of people that help to determine their actions or behaviour.

A bully can be defined as an individual or student who has the ability to persist in manifesting bullying characteristics. The characteristics are manifest in form of enduring characteristics such as self control and negative affectivity (Buss 1961, Watson & Clark 1984).

Buss (1961) indicated that self-control is related to the individual's ability to manage his or her frustrations. Moreover, Buss argued that individuals with low self control react easily than high individuals with high self control because low self control individuals lack strong inhibitions which is characteristics of high self control individuals. Green (1990) suggested that whereas individuals who posses higher levels of self control are likely to remain calm during provocative situations. Similarly, Baron and Richardson (1994) described low self-control individuals as those who exhibits a "stable tendency to react offensively to minimal provocations".

Negative affectivity is defined as the extent to which individuals express distressing emotions such as hostility, fear and anxiety (Watson and Clarke, 1984). They are more likely to experience distress and dissatisfaction, focus on their failures and dwell on the negative side of life in general (Watson and Kendall, 1989).

## 2. Statement of Problem

Bully is a very serious problem in secondary schools in Nigeria. The problem is very prevalent and the victims could experience negative effects such as absence from school, damage to school property or even death. It could also trigger ill health which will eventually lead to their hospitalization and consequently lead to a decline in their

academic performance. In some case the victims of bullying do not report incidence of bullying to their parents, guardians and teachers and eventually become truants or lead to depression, anxiety, phobia etc.

Therefore the study is design to investigate the influence of some personality factors on bullyies behaviour among secondary school students. There is the need to investigate the contribution of these personality factors on bullying behaviour and the techniques that could be used that could reduce bullying behaviour in our secondary schools.

**3. Research Questions**

- A. Will personality factor (self control) influence bullying?
- B. Will personality factor (negative affectivity) influence bullying?
- C. What techniques are appropriate for curbing the menace of bullying behaviour in our schools.

**4. Method**

The design of study was descriptive survey. The study that investigated the influence of personality factors on bullying and the technique that could be used to reduce bullying among secondary school students in Nigeria. The area of study is Southwest Nigeria comprising Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti states of Nigeria. Proportional random sampling technique was used to select the participants.

The study is made up of two phases. The first phase of the study consist of 450 secondary school students and 150 teachers selected from 15 secondary schools in 10 local government across the selected 5 states in Southwest Nigeria. This was done to select the bullies and the teachers. In the second phase of the study, 150 students who were bullies were selected across the states.

Three set of instrument which was structured questionnaire was used for the study. The questionnaires were four point rating scale that ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The first set of questionnaires consist of two types. It was developed by the researcher and has the Cronbach apalph of 0.70 and 0.80 respectively. The teachers’ questionnaire is made up of six items to allow the teachers to select the appropriate techniques that could be used to curb bullying. The second set of questionnaires is for the students to select the bullies among them. It consist of 12 items. While the second phase of one set of questionnaire which has two scales of 12 items scale of self control (Detsi, Hochstetler and Murphy 2003) and 10 items scale of negative affectivity (Watson and Clark 1984). The Cronbach alpha is 0.79 and 0.82 respectively. This is the third set of the questionnaire.

Two research assistants who were directed on how to administer the instruments was recruited. The data for the study were analysed by the use of means and standard deviation. The decision rule that guided the interpretation was as follows:

- A. 0.50 – 1.49 was interpreted as Strongly Disagree (SD)
- B. 1.50 – 2.49 was interpreted as Disagree (D)
- C. 2.50 – 3.49 was interpreted as Agree (A)
- D. 3.50 – 4.49 was interpreted as Strongly Agree (SA)

**Research Question 1**

S/N	Self control items	N	X	SD	Decision
1	I do not devote time and effort to preparing for the future.	150	3.35	1.08	SA
2	I act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think	150	2.56	1.05	SA
3	I do things that bring me pleasure here and now, even at the cost of future goals.	150	2.51	.859	A
4	I base my decisions on what will happen to me in the short run rather than the long run	150	3.41	.949	A
5	I try to avoid projects that I know will be difficult	150	2.78	.868	A
6	When things get complicated, I quit or withdraw.	150	2.15	1.02	SA
7	I do things in life which are the easiest and bring me the most pleasure	150	3.16	1.04	A
8	I avoid difficult tasks that stretch my abilities to the limit	150	2.78	.968	A
9	I test myself by doing things that are a little risky	150	2.59	.798	A
10	I take risks just for the fun of it.	150	3.32	.856	A
11	I find it exciting to do things for which I might get in trouble.	150	2.21	.786	A
12	Excitement and adventure are more important to me than security.	150	2.81	.856	A

Data presented in table 1 indicate that respondents strongly agree with item 1, 2 and 6. The respondents all agree with item 3, 4, 5, 7, 8,9, 10, 11 and 12 that Bullies strongly possess the personality factor (self control). On the other

hand, the standard deviation of all the items are not high, rather the means (x) are higher which shows that the difference between the mean (x) scores is little. This implies that the respondents views are almost at the same level.

**Research Question 2**

Will negative affectivity influence bullying behaviour?

S/N	Negative affectivity items	N	X	SD	Decision
1	I am quick tempered	150	3.80	1.03	A
2	I have a fiery temper	150	3.50	1.03	A
3	I am a hot-headed person	150	2.62	1.00	A
4	I get angry when I am slowed down by others mistakes	150	2.50	.898	SA
5	I feel annoyed when I am not given recognition for doing good work	150	2.20	.958	A
6	I feel infuriated when I do a good job and get a poor evaluation	150	2.62	1.04	SA
7	I fly off the handle	150	.863	.850	SA
8	When I get angry, I say nasty things	150	.978	.870	A
9	It makes me furious when I am criticized in front of others	150	2.12	1.01	A
10	When I get frustrated, I feel like hitting someone	150	2.02	1.02	A

Data presented on table 2 indicate that the respondents Strongly Agree to item 3,5 and 6, and Strongly agree on items 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, and 10 that negative affect has an influence on the respondents as observed with the negative affect scale. On the other hand, the standard deviation of all the items are not high, rather the means (x) are higher which shows that the difference between the mean (x) scores is little. This implies that the respondents views are almost at the same level.

**Research Question 3**

What techniques are appropriate for curbing the menace of bullying?

S/N	Bullying technique items	N	X	SD	Decision
1	Establish an anti bullying policy	150	3.92	1.05	A
2	Teach how to identify bullying	150	2.68	1.04	A
3	Create procedures to report bullying	150	3.18	.953	A
4	Teach how to respond to bullying	150	2.52	.982	A
5	Teach strategies to reduce victimization	150	2.18	.928	A
6	Replace aggression with pro-social habits	150	2.56	1.01	A

Data presented in table 3 shows that respondents Agree with 1-6 that these stated techniques will help to reduce bullying behaviour in our schools. Hence these techniques are appropriate for reduce bullying. The standard deviation of the items range from .93 – 1.05 which implies that the deviation between the respondents mean score is minimal. This also indicates that they operate with the same level in their decisions or their stands.

**5. Discussion of Results**

The results revealed that personality factors (self control and negative affectivity) have a strong influence on bullies behaviour. This however is in support of literature on self control (Buss, 1961, Green 1990) and negative affect (Watson and Clark 1984).

Also the respondents agree vehemently on the techniques of reducing bullying behaviour in our schools. This is in support of Borba (2014) who stated different ways of reducing bullying behaviour.

**6. Conclusion**

Personality factor (self control and negative affectivity) play a crucial role among bullies in our secondary schools. Also, the techniques enumerated above are all effective in reducing the menace of bullying behaviour.

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