

**PERCEIVED PARENTAL RESPONSIVENESS AND
NEUROTICISM AS PREDICTORS OF BULLYING
BEHAVIOUR AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN
IBADAN, OYO STATE**

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ABSTRACT: Bullying has been considered a public health issue because it causes psychosocial and academic problems in thousands of children worldwide. This study investigated how perceived parental responsiveness and neuroticism predict bullying behaviour among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Oyo State. This was a cross-sectional study involving 428 purposively sampled participants from both private and public secondary schools whose mean age was 15.06 ± 1.52 years. A 37-item self-report questionnaire comprising socio-demographics, perceived parental responsiveness ($\alpha=.93$), neuroticism ($\alpha=.68$), and bullying behaviour ($\alpha=.86$) was administered. Four hypotheses were tested using multiple regression, independent t-tests and one-way ANOVA at the 0.05 level of significance. The results showed that perceived parental responsiveness and neuroticism jointly predicted bullying behaviour [$F_{(2,363)}=56.40$, $R=.49$, $R^2=.24$, $p<.001$]. Independently, perceived parental responsiveness ($\beta = -.46$; $t = -8.89$; $P<.001$) and neuroticism ($\beta = .14$; $t = 2.92$; $P<.05$) significantly predicted bullying behaviour. The results further revealed that male adolescents ($\bar{x} = 13.12$) reported significantly more bullying behaviour than female adolescents ($\bar{x} = 10.31$). Furthermore, the results revealed a significant difference in the mean score of parental marital status on bullying behaviours [$F(4, 422) = 4.41$; $P<.01$]. Adolescents whose parents were divorced ($\bar{x} = 19.73$) reported more bullying behaviour. Moreover, the results show that bullying is more common in private schools than in public schools. In conclusion, bullying behaviour differs by gender, type of school, level of parental responsiveness, neuroticism and marital status of their parent.

Keywords: Bullying Behaviour, Perceived Parental Responsiveness, Neuroticism, In-School Adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

The school has been a gathering place for children and adolescents to study, play, and make new friends. However, adolescence refers to the period in a child's life when he or she is transitioning from childhood to adulthood. This period allows the adolescent to begin modifying childhood behaviours and adopting the adult lifestyle. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2024), adolescence is the second decade of life (10 to 19 years of age) and is separated into two stages: preadolescence (10 to 14 years of age) and adolescence (15 to 19 years of age) (late adolescence). It is a period marked by intellectual, physiological, sociological, and emotional development, as well as increased involvement in bullying (Brasil et al., 2019). Bullying has long been seen as a general behavioural issue that occurs in schools during a vital stage in a child's development (Osiesi, et al., 2023). Bullying is a deviant behaviour that involves frightening, intimidating, harassing, or assaulting a weaker individual by making the individual appear defenceless.

Bullying is a repeated pattern of harmful behaviour directed towards individuals who are unable to defend themselves or retaliate. It occurs when one or more students seek to assert dominance over another student through physical, verbal, mental, or violent means, with the intent to injure, intimidate, or instil fear in the victim, causing them anxiety (Iyekolo, et al., 2021). According to Carvalhosa (2017), bullying can be identified by specific characteristics: the intention behind the behaviours, the types of violence employed, and the power imbalance between the bully and the victim. The primary intention behind bullying behaviour is to instil fear and exert control over the victim. This behaviour is typically carried out repeatedly and over an extended period. Bullying can manifest in two forms: direct hostility, such as physical aggression or verbal abuse, and indirect hostility, such as social exclusion or spreading rumours. The power imbalance between the bully and the victim is a crucial aspect, as it enables the bully to dominate and intimidate the victim consistently. Direct abuse includes physical violence, theft of property or money, destruction of belongings, coercion of unwanted sexual acts, and verbal abuse, such as insults, derogatory nicknames, and mockery (Obilor & Miwari, 2021). Indirect bullying involves social manipulation, such as isolating the victim from their peer group, threatening to end friendships, spreading rumours, damaging reputations, and manipulating their social interactions (Çakar-Mengü & Mengü, 2023).

The consequences of bullying extend to both the victims and the perpetrators. Bullies often struggle to maintain friendships, experience depression at school, and perform poorly academically (Ugochukwu et al., 2022). Victims, on the other hand, may engage in avoidance behaviours and feel compelled to bring weapons to school for protection. As bullies grow into adulthood, they are at a greater risk of developing antisocial personality disorder and engaging in risky behaviours detrimental to their health, such as smoking, drinking, and using illicit drugs (Ahmed et al., 2022; Erazo, et al., 2023).

When analysing bullying behaviour from a psychological perspective, evaluating how unique personality qualities affect a child's ability to adjust to school is critical. Neuroticism, for instance, highlights individual differences in experiencing distress, anxiety, depression, frustration, guilt, or self-consciousness. These experiences are often associated with irrational thinking, ineffective coping strategies, poor impulse and appetite control. Individuals lacking confidence tend to adopt a defensive approach and experience heightened worry and insecurity. Therefore, adolescents who have high levels of neuroticism may react to bullying victimization with high levels of distress, which may contribute to the development of depressive and social anxiety symptoms (Hellström & Lundberg, 2020) and mental well-being (Mark et al., 2019). However, parental participation also plays a crucial role in adolescent bullying behaviour.

Parents establish the first significant and enduring interaction in a child's life, and recent academic focus has highlighted the importance of parental responsiveness. Adolescent bullying and other outcomes have been linked to parenting practices. Parental responsiveness can manifest in various ways, including initiating conversations, offering hugs, reshaping the child's perspective on events, fulfilling the child's needs, building close bonds, and showing empathy when the child is in need. Highly responsive parents consider their child's perspective and provide for their needs (Arigbabu et al., 2024). These reactions to children's behaviours are influenced by parents' tendencies and traits. Greater empathy in parents is correlated with greater responsiveness to child-generated stimuli (Boorman et al., 2019).

Bullying is an ongoing act of aggression that negatively affects victims; it has been recognized as a societal problem. According to studies, adolescents who have experienced bullying are

more fearful, anxious, and depressed, and their quality of life, connection to their school, and participation in extracurricular activities are all declining (Brewer et al., 2020; Aliyu, & Aransiola, 2023). However, Kelly (2021) also explored parents' reactions to peer victimization. Bullying is prevalent among adolescent students in school. A 12-year-old teenager named Sylvester Oromoni was killed by a group of five teenage students at Downen College in Lagos State, Nigeria (The Guardian, 2022), most recently in May (2024) Namtira Bwala, a female student, was assaulted by her fellow students at Lead British International School. Therefore, further study is required to investigate how specific outcomes, both social and emotional, have been connected with various roles in bullying scenarios and how each of those roles is associated with particular outcomes, both social and emotional. However, there is an increasing understanding of the nature, scope, and impacts of school bullying. However, in light of the identified gap in the extant literature, this study sought to examine how perceived parental responsiveness and neuroticism predict bullying behaviour among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Oyo States.

The following hypotheses were tested:

1. Perceived parental responsiveness and neuroticism would independently and jointly predict bullying behaviour among adolescents in Ibadan
2. There will be a significant gender difference in bullying behaviour among adolescents in Ibadan
3. There will be significant differences in parental marital status on bullying behaviour
4. There will be significant differences in bullying behaviour between adolescents in public schools and those in private schools

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999)

Social Dominance Theory (SDT), developed by Sidanius and Pratto in 1999, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the mechanisms behind social hierarchy and group-based inequality. The theory posits that societies are structured as group-based hierarchies, wherein groups are ranked based on arbitrary criteria, such as race, class, or gender, leading to the systemic privilege of dominant groups and the oppression of subordinate ones (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). One of the core tenets of SDT is the concept of social dominance orientation (SDO), which refers to an individual's preference for inequality among social groups. Individuals with high SDO tend to support policies and ideologies that reinforce hierarchical group relations, such as racism, sexism, and nationalism (Pratto et al., 1994). This preference is not merely a reflection of personal prejudice but is deeply embedded in the societal structures and institutions that perpetuate inequality. Thus, SDT integrates both psychological predispositions and structural factors to explain the persistence of social hierarchies.

SDT also introduces the idea of legitimizing myths, which are societal beliefs and ideologies that justify and maintain group-based hierarchies. These myths can be either hierarchy-enhancing (e.g., the belief in meritocracy, which suggests that social positions are earned based on individual merit) or hierarchy-attenuating (e.g., the belief in equality and social justice). The balance between these myths within a society influences the degree of social inequality (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Institutions such as education, media, and the legal system play

critical roles in propagating these myths, thereby either reinforcing or challenging the existing hierarchies. (Ajibade, et al., 2021).

Social Dominance Theory (SDT) offers a compelling framework for understanding bullying behaviour among adolescents by emphasising the role of hierarchical social structures and individual predispositions toward dominance. Bullying can be viewed as a manifestation of the desire for dominance and power within social hierarchies. Adolescents with higher levels of social dominance orientation (SDO) were significantly more likely to engage in bullying, supporting the idea that a preference for hierarchical social relations translates into aggressive behaviours aimed at reinforcing social dominance (Jegade, et al., 2022; Oyelade & Adebayo, 2023). However, according to SDT, bullying is not merely an individual act but a collective process that is sanctioned and reinforced by peer group dynamics. Teenagers bully one another to establish and reinforce social supremacy, both within their groups and on an individual level. This quest for dominance is driven by the bully's need to elevate their social status, often through the intimidation and humiliation of weaker peers. The peer group plays a crucial role in this process, as the social hierarchy within the group dictates the bully's perceived or actual power. Furthermore, Akinpelu, (2023) indicated that relational aggression is often used strategically by individuals to climb the social ladder within peer groups. This supports the idea that relational violence contributes to both group- and individual-based social hierarchies, as outlined by SDT.

Moreover, SDT's concept of legitimizing myths can be applied to understand the social narratives that justify bullying behaviour. Adolescents may adopt beliefs that certain groups deserve to be bullied based on arbitrary characteristics, such as physical appearance, social class, or ethnicity. These myths serve to normalize and perpetuate bullying, aligning with SDT's assertion that societal beliefs play a crucial role in maintaining group-based hierarchies (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). However, Ighaede-Edwards, et al., (2023) believed that bullying behaviour is closely linked to social status goals among adolescents. However, bullies often target peers who are perceived as threats to their social standing, thereby reinforcing their dominance within the peer group. Similarly, Olashore, et al., (2020) highlighted that bullies tend to enjoy elevated social status and are often perceived as popular by their peers, further substantiating the link between bullying and social dominance. In conclusion, Social Dominance Theory provides a robust framework for understanding the dynamics of bullying, emphasizing the role of group-based social hierarchies in perpetuating aggressive behaviours.

METHODS

Design and Sampling

This study adopts a cross-sectional research design to investigate the role of perceived parental responsiveness and neuroticism as predictors of bullying behaviour among in-school adolescent students in Ibadan, Oyo State. The sampling method employed a combination of purposive and systematic sampling techniques to ensure a representative and focused sample. First, the researcher used purposive sampling to define the target population. This technique was chosen because the study focused on a specific group of interest: in-school adolescents in Senior Secondary School. Next, the researcher employed a systematic sampling technique to select the participating schools. Systematic sampling involves selecting every *n*th item from a list or a sequence. In this case, the comprehensive list of all public and private secondary schools in Ibadan North was obtained from the Local Government. Using systematic sampling,

two public schools and two private schools were selected from this list. The researcher selected every 10th school on the list to ensure a random yet systematic selection process. After selecting the schools, the researcher aimed to distribute the questionnaires equally among the four schools and the three selected classes (SSS1, SSS2, and SSS3) within each school. To select individual participants within each class level, the researcher used a simple random sampling technique. A list of all students in each class was obtained, and each student was assigned a unique identifier, such as a number. The researcher then used a balloting method to select participants. This process was repeated for SSS2 and SSS3 in each school, ensuring that every student had an equal chance of being selected, thus minimizing selection bias and enhancing the representativeness of the sample.

Research Setting

This study was carried out in the Ibadan North Local Government, the capital of Oyo State, Southwest Nigeria. There are forty-two (42) public schools and seventy-three (73) private schools in the Ibadan North Local Government. The researcher systematically selected two public and two private schools whose names were not mentioned for confidentiality reasons for the study.

Research Participants

The population of the study consisted of in-school adolescent students (both male and female) who fell into the SSS1 to SSS3 class categories. The sample of this research was calculated using the Taro Yamane (Yamane 1,973) formula with a 95% confidence level. (14,508 public secondary school students and 4,299 private secondary school students from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology). A total of four hundred and twenty-eight (428) in-school adolescent students participated in the study. Their ages ranged between 12 and 19 years, and the mean age was 15.06 years (SD = 1.52; See Table 1).

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

The participants must:

- i. Be in the SSS1 to SSS3 class
- ii. Individuals who indicated their willingness and whose parents signed the parental consent form to participate in the study
- iii. Understand English

Those who fell short of the inclusion criteria were excluded from the study.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ministry of Health, Department of Planning, Research and Statistics Division, Agodi, Ibadan, Oyo State. NO. 5027, AD 13/479/44265A by the Oyo State Ethical Review Committee. In conducting this study, several ethical considerations were addressed to ensure the protection and well-being of the adolescent participants. These considerations included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and addressing potential risks associated with the study.

- **Informed Consent:** Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Given that the study involved adolescents who are minors, this process included two critical steps: securing consent from the students themselves and obtaining parental or guardian consent. Information sheets and consent forms were distributed to both students and their parents or guardians, detailing the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.
- **Confidentiality:** The confidentiality of the participants was protected throughout the study. All data collected were anonymised, with participants identified only by codes rather than names or any other personally identifiable information. This anonymization process ensured that individual responses could not be traced back to specific participants. Additionally, data were stored securely, with access limited to the research team only.
- **Addressing Potential Risks:** To address potential psychological risks associated with discussing bullying behaviour and personal traits like neuroticism, the researcher took several precautionary measures. Participants were assured that there were no right or wrong answers and that their honesty was crucial for the integrity of the study. The questionnaires were designed to minimise discomfort, with sensitive questions worded carefully to avoid causing distress.
- **Beneficence and non-maleficence:** The commitment to doing well and promoting the well-being of participants, was demonstrated by ensuring that the research aimed to contribute positively to understanding and mitigating bullying behaviour among adolescents. This involved providing valuable insights that could inform interventions and support mechanisms in schools. On the other hand, non-maleficence, the obligation to avoid causing harm, was equally prioritised. This principle was upheld by designing the study to minimize any potential psychological distress or harm to the participants.

Research Instruments

The data were collected through structured questionnaires. The questionnaire comprised four sections: sections A, B, C and D.

Section A: This section consists of the socio-demographic item, which requires the participant to give a response. Socio-demographic variables such as age, sex, religion, student class level, parent educational level, parent occupation, who are you living with, etc.

Section B: Bullying Participant Behaviours Questionnaire (BPBQ)

This scale was developed by Michelle, Kelly, Lyndsay and Becker (2014) and was developed to measure adolescents' perceptions about bullying in their school. The Bullying Scale examines various adolescent behaviours considered to be bullying, which was measured with 10 items. The scale was developed and tested on 801 sixth- to eighth-grade students from a school in the Midwest (392 males and 404 females). The respondents responded on a 5-point response scale (0 = never, 1 = 1 to 2 times, 2 = 3 to 4 times, 3 = 5 to 6 times, 4 = 7 or more times). The BPBQ has a high-reliability coefficient of .88. This study reported a Cronbach's alpha of .86

Section C: Parenting Responsiveness Scale

This scale was developed by Abdul Gafoor and Abidha Kurukkan (2014). The items in the scale were drafted based on a directive given by Baumrind, Maccoby and Martin for parental responsiveness. The items measure how adolescent children perceive the responsiveness of their parents. All 19 items were matched for the involvement of both parents. The PPR scale was developed and standardized in a study of 832 higher secondary school students from Kerala State. The participants included 467 girls and 365 boys (Mean =147.16; SD 1= 7.93). The students were required to respond on a five-point scale: 'Very right' (5), 'Mostly right' (4), 'Sometimes right, Sometimes wrong' (3), 'Mostly wrong' (2), and 'Very wrong' (1). The score ranged from five to one. Abdul Gafoor and Abidha Kurukkan (2014) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84. This study reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93.

Section C: Big Five Inventory (BFI)

This scale was developed by Goldberg (1993). The scale has 8 items that measure neuroticism, which is a dimension of personality. Sample questions include (a) "I see myself as someone who gets nervous easily" and (b) "I see myself as someone who can be tense". Each item is rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale is meant to be filled with a minute or thereabout, though it sacrifices some of the reliability and validity found in longer measures of the Big Five personality dimensions. Scale scoring. The scale has 3R items. This study reported a Cronbach's alpha of .68

Procedure

After proper introduction and approval from the school management, the researcher and the research assistant visited the selected school to distribute the questionnaires. The researcher introduced herself to the participants and explained in detail the purpose of the data collection using the questionnaire method. Primary data were collected in accordance with ethical research standards. The issue of parental informed consent was observed by collecting data from students whose parents willingly indicated interest in participating in the study. Informed consent included a brief description of the research, assuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the information. However, in the process of briefing the participants, they were assured that every bit of information supplied would be used for research purposes and that no personal identification such as names or other particulars would be required to participate in the study to ensure confidentiality.

Statistical analysis

Responses to the questionnaire were coded and entered into SPSS. Hypotheses one was tested using multiple regression analysis, hypothesis two was tested using a t-test of an independent sample and hypotheses three and four were tested using analysis of variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive demographic characteristics of the participants

Variables	Category	n=(428)	%	Mean	SD
Gender	Male	187	43.7	13.12	8.72
	Female	241	55.3	10.31	8.94
Ethnic	Yoruba	308	72.0	10.97	8.70
	Igbo	65	15.2	14.05	8.89
	Hausa	19	4.4	11.68	10.79
	Others	36	8.4	11.75	9.63
	Christian	312	72.9	11.42	9.04
Religion	Islam	113	26.4	11.40	8.32
	Traditional	3	.7	29.00	6.08
Parental Occupation					
	Government worker	126	29.4	13.03	8.56
	Private worker	154	36.0	10.84	9.04
	Trader	125	29.2	10.62	8.67
	Artisan	22	5.1	12.77	11.17
Parental Marital Status					
	Single Parent	63	14.7	11.51	9.11
	Married	314	73.4	10.82	8.72
	Separated	27	6.3	14.56	9.57
	Divorced	11	2.6	19.73	9.57
	Widowed	13	3.0	15.69	6.85
Present Class					
	SSS1	148	34.6	10.28	7.40
	SSS2	144	33.6	11.60	9.02
	SSS3	136	31.8	12.84	10.20
Name of School					
	Public 1	110	25.7	5.74	6.07
	Public II	107	25.0	10.50	8.98
	Private I	102	23.8	19.69	4.60
	Private II	109	25.5	10.76	9.03

Table 2: Intercorrelations showing the relationships among perceived parental responsiveness, neuroticism, and bullying behaviours among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Oyo State

Variables	X	SD	1	2	3
Perceived parental responsiveness	144.12	29.80	--		
Neuroticism	23.32	5.15	-.09	.--	
Bullying behaviours	11.54	8.94	-.47**	.19**	--

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 presents the intercorrelations among perceived parental responsiveness, neuroticism, and bullying behaviours among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Oyo State. The results revealed a significant negative relationship between perceived parental responsiveness and

bullying behaviours ($r = -.47, p < .01$). This implies that adolescents whose parents are more responsible are less likely to exhibit bullying behaviour, which means that the greater their parental responsiveness is, the less likely they are to engage in bullying behaviours. Furthermore, neuroticism was found to have a positive significant relationship with bullying behaviour ($r = .19, p < .01$). This finding implies that adolescents with high neuroticism are more likely to engage in bullying behaviour.

The first hypothesis, which states that perceived parental responsiveness and neuroticism jointly and independently predict bullying behaviours among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Oyo state, was tested using multiple regression, and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Multiple regression showing the independent and joint prediction of perceived parental responsiveness and neuroticism on bullying behaviours

Predictors	β	t	Sig	R	R ²	F	p
Perceived parental responsiveness	-.46	-8.89	<.001	.48	.24	56.39	<.001
Neuroticism	.14	2.92	<.05				

The results presented in Table 3 show that perceived parental responsiveness and neuroticism jointly predicted bullying behaviours [$F_{(2,363)}=56.39, R=.48, R^2=.24, p<.001$]. This finding implies that perceived parental responsiveness and neuroticism jointly accounted for 24% of the variance observed in bullying behaviour. However, perceived parental responsiveness ($\beta = -.46; t = -8.89; P<.001$) and neuroticism ($\beta = .14; t = 2.92; P<.05$) independently and significantly predicted bullying behaviour, accounting for 46% and 14% of the variance observed in the dependent variable, respectively. Based on this result, the hypothesis was fully supported.

The second hypothesis, which states that adolescent male adolescents will significantly score higher on bullying behaviour than females, was analysed using an independent sample t-test, and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of independent t-tests showing the influence of gender on bullying behaviours

Neuroticism	N	\bar{x}	SD	df	T	P
Male	186	13.12	8.72	425	3.27	<.01
Female	241	10.31	8.94			

The results presented in Table 4 show that gender significantly influenced bullying behaviour [$t(425) = 3.27; P < .01$]. The mean scores showed that male adolescents ($\bar{x} = 13.12$) reported significantly more bullying behaviour than female adolescents ($\bar{x} = 10.31$). Based on this result, the hypothesis was fully supported.

The third hypothesis states that there will be a significant difference in marital status on bullying behaviour. This was tested using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: One-way ANOVA summary table showing the differences in parental marital status on bullying behaviours

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1368.843	4	342.211	4.414	.002
Within Groups	32715.345	422	77.525		
Total	34084.187	426			

Table 5 reveals that there was a significant difference in the mean score of parental marital status on bullying behaviours [$F(4, 422) = 4.41; P < .01$]. Therefore, the stated hypothesis is fully supported. A post hoc test was carried out to determine the level of parental marital status differences in bullying behaviour.

Table 5a: Post hoc multiple comparisons showing differences in adolescent bullying behaviour among single-parent, married, divorced and widowed

Parental Marital Status	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Single Parent	--					11.51	9.11
Married	.69	--				10.82	8.72
Separated	-3.05	-3.73	--			14.56	9.57
Divorced	-8.22*	-8.91*	-5.17	--		19.73	9.57
Widowed	-4.18	-4.87	-1.14	4.03	--	15.69	6.58

The results presented in Table 5a show that adolescents whose parents were divorced ($\bar{x} = 19.73$) reported more bullying behaviour, followed by adolescents whose parents were widowed ($\bar{x} = 15.69$) or separated ($\bar{x} = 14.56$). Furthermore, adolescents who were single parents ($\bar{x} = 11.51$) or married ($\bar{x} = 10.82$) were included.

The fourth hypothesis states that there will be a significant difference in school choice on bullying behaviour. This was tested using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 6: One-way ANOVA summary table showing the school differences in bullying behaviours

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10643.056	3	3547.685	64.019	.000
Within Groups	23441.132	423	55.416		
Total	34084.187	426			

Table 5 revealed that there was a significant difference in the mean score of school differences [F (3, 423) = 64.02; P<.001]. Therefore, the stated hypothesis is fully supported. A post hoc test was carried out to determine school differences in bullying behaviour.

Table 6a: Post hoc multiple comparisons showing differences in adolescent bullying behaviour between private and public schools

Schools	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Public 1	--					5.74	6.07
Public II	-4.75*	--				10.50	8.89
Private I	-13.94*	-9.19*	--			19.68	4.60
Private II	-5.02*	-.26	-8.92*	--		10.76	9.03

The results in Table 6a show that adolescents who attended Private 1 ($\bar{x} = 19.68$) or Private II ($\bar{x} = 10.76$) reported more bullying behaviour than adolescents who attended Public I ($\bar{x} = 5.74$) or Public II ($\bar{x} = 10.50$).

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to understand the predictive role of perceived parental responsiveness and neuroticism on bullying behaviour among adolescents in Ibadan.

The first hypothesis revealed that perceived parental responsiveness and neuroticism jointly and independently predict bullying behaviours. However, an inverse relationship was discovered for perceived parental responsiveness, which implies that adolescents whose parents are more responsive are less likely to engage in bullying behaviour. Furthermore, the predictive strength and the positive prediction observed for neuroticism on bullying behaviour, implies that adolescents with high neuroticism are more likely to engage in bullying behaviour. This study aligned with the results of Ryan and Dylan (2020), who discovered that the responsive dimension of parenting is a crucial factor in reducing bullying behaviour. Furthermore, parental attentiveness minimizes the risk of a child participating in bullying behaviour. Moreover, it was noted that adolescents who consider their parents to be responsive are less likely to engage in bullying (Pascual-Sanchez et al., 2022). According to Stephen and Mohammed (2018) and Oluwaseun and Tahan (2018), neuroticism is associated with bullying behaviour. This might be due to the emotional anxiety associated with neuroticism. Students

with high neuroticism are more likely to display antagonistic behaviour and feelings of revulsion towards others, which may lead to bullying.

The second hypothesis revealed significant gender differences in bullying. It was discovered that male adolescents engage more in bullying behaviour than their female counterparts. This result aligns with that of Ilona, et al., (2021), who reported that males bullied others more than females did. Kadek, et al., (2017) revealed that types of verbal bullying were reported by subjects (93.1%) and victims (93.1%). Bullying is usually perpetrated by males (94.1%), while females are the victims. The majority of bullies do not belong to a gang (94.5%), whereas those who do belong to a gang are victims (95.2%). Most adolescents, on the other hand, are more aware of bullying. The majority of the bullying was verbal and occurred mostly in the classroom. However, Oyelade and Adebayo, (2023) discovered that male students were found to report higher bullying compared to their female counterparts

The third hypothesis revealed a significant difference in marital status in terms of bullying behaviour. Adolescents whose parents were divorced reported greater bullying behaviour, followed by adolescents whose parents were widowed or separated. Furthermore, adolescents who were single parents and married reported less bullying behaviour. This result was supported by that of Yibin et al. (2022), who discovered that parental marital status plays a moderating role in the association between bullying and self-injurious behaviour among primary and middle school students. This suggests that parental marital status influences the relationship between bullying and other outcomes.

The fourth hypothesis revealed significant differences in the effect of school choice on bullying behaviour. It was further discovered that adolescents who attend private schools are more likely to engage in bullying behaviour than their counterparts in public schools. This study aligned with the results of Michelle Faye Wright (2016), who discovered that bullying and victimization were greater among adolescents in private programmes than among adolescents in public schools. Bullying was shown to occur not only in public schools but also in highly secure schools.

Conclusions

This study has established how perceived parental responsiveness and neuroticism significantly predict bullying behaviours. The following are the major findings of this study. The findings of this study revealed that perceived parental responsiveness and neuroticism jointly and independently predicted bullying. The findings revealed a significant negative relationship between perceived parental responsiveness and bullying behaviours. Furthermore, it was discovered that male adolescents engage more in bullying behaviour than female adolescents. However, significant differences were detected between parental marital status and bullying behaviour. It was discovered that adolescents whose parents are divorced engage more in bullying behaviour. Similarly, significant differences were detected between school choice and bullying behaviour. Adolescents in private schools exhibit more bullying behaviour than those in public schools.

Implication and Recommendation of Findings

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to mitigate bullying behaviours among adolescents. These recommendations emphasise the crucial role of parental

responsiveness, targeted interventions, and systemic changes within educational institutions to create a supportive and safe environment for all students.

First, enhancing parental responsiveness should be prioritized. Schools and community organisations should collaborate to offer programs and workshops that educate parents on effective communication, empathy, and emotional support. These resources should cover topics such as active listening, emotional validation, and consistent disciplinary strategies to help parents foster a nurturing home environment. Given the significant negative relationship between parental responsiveness and bullying, it is essential for schools to actively involve parents in their anti-bullying strategies. Regular parent-teacher meetings, counselling sessions, and parental involvement in school activities can strengthen this connection. Engaging parents in the development and implementation of anti-bullying policies can also create a unified front against bullying behaviours. Schools should provide platforms for parents to share their concerns and suggestions, fostering a collaborative approach to addressing bullying.

Addressing the higher prevalence of bullying among male adolescents requires targeted interventions. Gender-specific programs that focus on emotional regulation, empathy training, and positive peer interactions could be beneficial. These programs should include activities that promote self-awareness, conflict resolution skills, and the development of healthy masculinity. Schools can create safe spaces where male adolescents can express their emotions and learn constructive ways to handle conflicts, thereby reducing instances of bullying. Incorporating role models and mentors who exemplify positive behaviours can provide adolescents with tangible examples of respectful and empathetic interactions. Schools should also implement peer mentoring programs where older students guide younger ones in positive behaviour and conflict resolution.

The findings highlight the need for additional support for adolescents from divorced families. Schools should provide counselling services and peer support groups to help these students navigate their emotions and reduce the likelihood of engaging in bullying. These support structures can offer a sense of stability and belonging, mitigating the adverse effects of familial disruptions. School counsellors should be trained to recognise the unique challenges faced by students from divorced families and offer tailored interventions that address their specific emotional and social needs. Additionally, schools can collaborate with external organizations to provide workshops and resources for these students and their families.

The significant differences between private and public schools in terms of bullying behaviours suggest that private schools may need to implement stricter anti-bullying policies and more comprehensive support systems. Private schools should adopt evidence-based practices for bullying prevention and intervention, ensuring that these policies are consistently enforced. Teachers should be equipped with the skills to recognize early signs of bullying and intervene promptly and effectively. Private school administrators should establish a clear protocol for reporting and addressing bullying incidents, ensuring that students feel safe and supported. Schools should also foster a culture of inclusivity and respect, where diversity is celebrated and every student feels valued.

The Ministry of Education, school counsellors, teachers, parents, and psychologists should assist in training and educating adolescents with high neuroticism to help them understand and manage their personality type efficiently without creating a threat to others. Workshops and seminars that focus on emotional intelligence, stress management, and resilience building can

empower these students to handle their emotions constructively. Schools should integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) programs into their curricula to provide ongoing support for all students, promoting a holistic approach to mental health and well-being. Educators and mental health professionals should work together to create individualised support plans for students with high neuroticism, ensuring they receive the necessary guidance and resources to thrive.

Limitations of the study

The number of participants included in this study was too small, and the researcher focused only on the Ibadan North Local Government area in Ibadan, Oyo State. Only school-aged adolescents were used for this study. If it had been possible to assess or evaluate more students and other categories of adolescents who did not attend secondary schools, it would have been possible to determine whether they differed in certain respects from the present sample on the variables that were measured. Another important limitation is that the research was limited to some psychological variables predicting bullying behaviour.

Future research suggestions

A single study cannot examine all the pertinent issues relevant to a research problem. Therefore, prospective researchers are advised to involve larger samples from a wider population. The effects of other psychosocial factors, such as self-esteem, coping strategies, cultural differences, and parent-child relationships, should also be considered. Nevertheless, data collected at one point in time can still be relevant in testing predictions, as was the case in the present study. Finally, a replication of the present study must be within the limits in which this study was conducted.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Due to privacy and ethical concerns, access to the data is restricted and will require a formal data-sharing agreement.

For further information or to request access to the data, please contact Aruoture Ezekiel at aruoture20@gmail.com.

Declarations

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ministry of Health, Department of Planning, Research and Statistics Division, Agodi, Ibadan, Oyo State. Approval was granted under reference number NO. 5027, AD 13/479/44265A by the Oyo State Ethical Review Committee.

Consent to Participate

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Participants were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved,

and any potential risks or benefits. They were also assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions.

Consent to Publish

Consent to publish was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Participants were informed about the potential for their data to be published in scientific journals, ensuring that their privacy and confidentiality would be maintained. The authors agreed to the publication of their anonymised data as part of the study's findings.

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Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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