


A Survey of the Multifaceted Implications of Bullying and Victimization among Some Secondary Schools in Southern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: Bullying and victimization in schools pose significant threats to students' psychological well-being, academic performance, and overall school climate. In Southern Nigeria, the prevalence and implications of such behaviors require deeper exploration to inform appropriate interventions. **Objective:** This study aimed to investigate the multifaceted implications of bullying and victimization among secondary school students in Southern Nigeria, focusing on the perspectives of teachers regarding its impact and mitigation strategies. **Method:** A descriptive research design was employed, with data collected in June 2024 through a convenience sample of secondary school teachers from the region. Participants completed a web-based survey using the validated 42-item Bullying and Victimization Scale (BVS), which measured variables such as age, gender, teaching experience, and educational background. The BVS demonstrated strong reliability, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.81$ across two administrations. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlational methods, including Spearman's rho and Kendall's tau-b. **Result:** The findings revealed widespread incidents of bullying and victimization in secondary schools, significantly affecting students' mental health and academic engagement. Teachers reported a need for improved preventive measures and support structures within schools. **Conclusion:** Bullying and victimization remain pressing issues in Southern Nigerian secondary schools, necessitating comprehensive interventions to foster safe and supportive educational environments. **Contribution:** This study underscores the urgency of implementing robust anti-bullying policies, increasing staff supervision, and integrating social-emotional learning into the curriculum. The findings offer actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders committed to promoting student welfare and academic success.

KEYWORDS

Multifaceted Implications; Bullying and Victimization; Secondary Schools

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CONTENT

[Introduction](#)

[Method](#)

[Result and Discussion](#)

[Implications and Contributions](#)

[Limitation & Future Research Directions](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Author Contribution Statement](#)

[Conflict of Interest Statement](#)

[Ethical Approval Statement](#)

[References](#)

[Article Information](#)

1. INTRODUCTION

Bullying and victimization in secondary schools represent complex social issues with significant implications for students' well-being and academic outcomes. The prevalence of these behaviors varies across contexts but remains a pervasive concern globally, including in Nigeria. Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior characterized by repeated acts intended to harm or exert control over another individual who typically struggles to defend themselves (Obioha et al., 2024). It often involves a power imbalance, where the perpetrator (or perpetrators) target

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a less powerful individual, whether physically, verbally, socially, or through cyber means (Anyanwu & Udoh, 2021). Bullying can manifest in various forms, including physical violence, teasing, spreading rumors, exclusion from social activities, and intimidation, all of which can occur repeatedly over time and in different contexts such as schools, workplaces, or online platforms (Okoie & Thompson-Onah, 2015).

Victimization, on the other hand, refers to the experience of being targeted and harmed by bullying behaviors. Victims of bullying often suffer from psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, as well as physical symptoms such as headaches or stomachaches due to stress (Raji et al, 2019). The impact of victimization can extend beyond immediate emotional and physical harm, affecting academic performance, social relationships, and long-term mental health outcomes (Bashir et al, 2022). Addressing bullying and victimization requires comprehensive strategies that promote a positive and respectful environment while providing support and protection for those affected. Both phenomena are intertwined and contribute to a range of negative consequences for students.

Bullying in secondary schools is a pervasive issue with significant implications for students' well-being and academic success. It encompasses a range of aggressive behaviors that exploit power imbalances, targeting individuals who may be perceived as vulnerable or different (Shah et al, 2022). Common forms of bullying include physical aggression (such as hitting or pushing), verbal harassment (such as name-calling or threats), social exclusion, and increasingly, cyberbullying through digital platforms. Secondary school settings provide fertile ground for bullying due to the social dynamics and peer interactions that shape daily school life (Låftman et al, 2024). Factors such as peer pressure, social hierarchies, and the desire for social status can fuel bullying behaviors. Students who bully others may seek dominance, control, or retaliation, often perpetuating a cycle of aggression and victimization within school communities (Da-Cunha et al, 2021).

Similarly, Victimization in secondary schools is a significant concern, with far-reaching implications for students' well-being and development. This phenomenon encompasses the experience of being targeted and harmed through bullying behaviors, which can include physical aggression, verbal harassment, social exclusion, and cyberbullying (Zhang et al, 2022). Victimized students often endure emotional and psychological distress, manifesting as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal. The constant fear and stress associated with victimization can lead to a range of adverse outcomes, including decreased academic performance and school attendance (Ighaede-Edwards et al, 2023). Victimized students may struggle to concentrate in class, participate in activities, or engage with peers, which hinders their educational and social development. The negative school environment created by bullying can contribute to a broader culture of fear and mistrust, affecting the overall school climate (Aboagye et al, 2021a). Additionally, the effects of victimization can extend into adulthood, with long-term impacts on mental health and social relationships (Aboagye et al, 2021b).

Bullying and victimization have profound psychological effects on students. Research indicates a correlation between bullying victimization and increased levels of anxiety and depression (Li et al, 2023). Victims often experience feelings of social isolation and diminished self-esteem, which can adversely affect their academic engagement and performance (Chen et al, 2023). For instance, studies have shown that bullied students are more likely to report lower academic achievement and higher rates of school absenteeism. In addition to psychological impacts, bullying and victimization disrupt social dynamics within schools. Peers may withdraw from both the victim and the bully, creating a hostile social climate (Ye et al, 2023). This social alienation further exacerbates the emotional toll on victims and reinforces aggressive behaviors among perpetrators (Ruijne et al, 2022). Moreover, victims of bullying are at risk of developing behavioral problems such as aggression or withdrawal, which can persist into adulthood (White et al, 2024).

Bullying and victimization in secondary schools are critical issues that have garnered global attention due to their severe implications on students' well-being and academic performance (Gómez-Galán et al, 2021). In Southern Nigeria, these phenomena present a complex challenge that affects a substantial number of students, yet comprehensive studies exploring their multifaceted implications remain limited. The existing literature primarily focuses on the prevalence of bullying and the immediate psychological effects on victims, often neglecting the broader and long-term impacts on academic engagement, social relationships, and overall school climate.

The problem is compounded by the lack of region-specific data, which hinders the development of targeted interventions tailored to the unique cultural and socio-economic context of Southern Nigeria. Furthermore, while some studies highlight the importance of anti-bullying policies and teacher interventions, there is a conspicuous gap in understanding the effectiveness of these measures within the local educational framework (Okoye et al, 2021). This gap underscores the need for an in-depth analysis of both the direct and indirect consequences of bullying and victimization on students' mental health, academic outcomes, and social interactions. Additionally, the role of emerging

factors such as cyberbullying, which is increasingly prevalent with the rise of social media usage among adolescents, is not adequately addressed in current research (Chikaodi et al, 2019). The absence of comprehensive data on cyberbullying's impact further limits the scope of existing studies, leaving a significant gap in the understanding of modern bullying dynamics.

Thus, the proposed study aims to fill these critical gaps by conducting a detailed survey of the multifaceted implications of bullying and victimization among secondary school students in Southern Nigeria. The study will explore the psychological, academic, and social dimensions of bullying, providing a holistic view of its impact. By addressing these gaps, the research intends to inform the development of effective, culturally sensitive interventions and policies to combat bullying and support victimized students in this region.

1.1 Specific Objectives: The specific objectives of this study are to:

This study was designed to explore the prevalence and consequences of bullying and victimisation among students in selected secondary schools in Southern Nigeria. Specifically, the study aimed to: (a) determine the extent to which bullying and victimisation occur in the selected schools; (b) dissect the multifaceted implications of these behaviors, including their psychological, emotional, and social dimensions; (c) assess how bullying and victimisation impact students' academic engagement, such as class participation and motivation; (d) evaluate the effects of these experiences on students' academic performance; (e) investigate the underlying factors that contribute to the emergence and persistence of bullying and victimisation in the school environment; and (f) propose research-based solutions that can effectively address and mitigate these issues within the educational system.

1.2 Research Questions: The following research questions are designed to guide the study:

To guide the investigation into the phenomenon of bullying and victimisation among secondary school students in Southern Nigeria, the study was structured around several key research questions. These include: (a) to what extent do bullying and victimisation occur in the selected secondary schools in Southern Nigeria? (b) What are the multifaceted implications of bullying and victimisation on students' well-being and school climate? (c) How and to what extent do bullying and victimisation affect students' academic engagement and performance? (d) Specifically, in what ways do these negative experiences hinder students' academic performance? (e) What factors contribute to or drive the prevalence of bullying and victimisation in these schools? and (f) In what ways can these pressing issues be effectively addressed through evidence-based interventions and school policy reforms? These questions formed the foundation for a comprehensive inquiry into both the causes and consequences of bullying, as well as the practical solutions needed to foster safer and more inclusive learning environments.

1.3 Hypothesis:

This study was guided by the following null hypothesis:

H_0 : There is no significant correlation between the perceived implications of bullying and victimization and teachers' age and gender.

This hypothesis was formulated to examine whether demographic variables such as age and gender of teachers have any statistically significant influence on their perception of the implications of bullying and victimization among students. The testing of this hypothesis helps determine the extent to which personal characteristics of educators may or may not shape their awareness, attitudes, or responses toward bullying incidents within the school environment.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design to investigate the multifaceted implications of bullying and victimization in secondary schools in southern Nigeria. The survey included demographic questions to gather information on variables such as age, years of teaching experience, educational background, and gender. Data were collected using the 42-item Bullying and Victimization Scale (BVS), which was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation.

2.2 Research Object

Participants were secondary school teachers from this region.

2.3 Data Collection

Data collection took place in June 2024, utilizing a convenience sampling technique. Invitations for participation were disseminated via social media platforms (WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter), as well as through emails and SMS. A web-based survey using Google Forms was utilized to collect data.

2.4 Data Analysis

To assess the reliability of the questionnaire, it was administered to the same respondents at two different times. The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated from scores obtained in both administrations, yielding a high correlation ($r = 0.81$), indicating consistent reliability over time. Descriptive analysis was conducted on demographic variables and individual items on the BVS, with results presented in counts and percentages. Spearman's rho and Kendall's tau_b correlational analyses were employed to explore the association between perceived implications of bullying and victimization, and teachers' age and gender within the sample population. Spearman's rho measures rank correlations and captures monotonic relationships, while Kendall's tau_b accounts for ties. These analyses help understand how bullying perceptions correlate with teacher demographics, thereby informing targeted interventions. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software, with $p \leq 0.05$ considered significant for all tests.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

Table 1. Consolidated demographic data across age, years of teaching experience, educational background, and gender.

Category	Age	Years of Teaching Experience	Educational Background	Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age	20-29 years				52	28.7	28.7	28.7
	30-39 years				59	32.6	32.6	61.3
	40-49 years				29	16.0	16.0	77.3
	50+ years				41	22.7	22.7	100.0
	Total				181	100.0	100.0	
Years of Teaching Exp.		0-5 years			90	49.7	49.7	49.7
		6-10 years			30	16.6	16.6	66.3
		11-15 years			23	12.7	12.7	79.0
		16+ years			38	21.0	21.0	100.0
	Total				181	100.0	100.0	
Educational Background			NCE		54	29.8	29.8	29.8
			Bachelor's degree		11	6.1	6.1	35.9
			Master's degree		71	39.2	39.2	75.1
			Doctorate degree		45	24.9	24.9	100.0
	Total				181	100.0	100.0	
Gender				Male	77	42.5	42.5	42.5

Category	Age	Years of Teaching Experience	Educational Background	Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Total				Female	104	57.5	57.5	100.0
					181	100.0	100.0	

The consolidated demographic data in Table 1 shows the distribution of 181 secondary school teachers from southern Nigeria. Regarding age, the largest group is 30-39 years (32.6%, 59 teachers), followed by 20-29 years (28.7%, 52 teachers). In terms of teaching experience, 49.7% (90 teachers) have 0-5 years of experience. Most teachers hold a Master's degree (39.2%, 71 teachers), while 29.8% (54 teachers) have an NCE. Gender-wise, females represent 57.5% (104 teachers), and males 42.5% (77 teachers). These figures provide a comprehensive overview of the demographic characteristics of the study participants.

Research question 1: To what extent do bullying and victimisation obtain in the selected secondary schools in Southern Nigeria?

Table 2. Extent of bullying and victimisation in the selected secondary schools in Southern Nigeria

		Statistic	Std. Error	Bias	Std. Error	Bootstrap ^a 95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Victimisation happens frequently, affecting numerous students in secondary schools.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.04	.043	.00	.04	2.96	3.13
	Std. Deviation	.585		-.006	.060	.463	.695
	Variance	.342		-.004	.070	.214	.483
	Skewness	-1.519	.181	.074	.243	-1.891	-.843
	Kurtosis	5.708	.359	.136	1.464	3.362	9.168
Many secondary school students experience bullying at least once weekly.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	2.69	.045	.00	.04	2.60	2.78
	Std. Deviation	.599		-.002	.026	.546	.646
	Variance	.359		-.001	.031	.299	.417
	Skewness	.245	.181	-.016	.120	-.026	.446
	Kurtosis	-.612	.359	-.005	.091	-.811	-.409
Physical bullying is reported often in crowded secondary school environments.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.24	.032	.00	.03	3.19	3.30
	Std. Deviation	.430		-.001	.018	.392	.459
	Variance	.185		-.001	.015	.153	.210
	Skewness	1.208	.181	.008	.195	.889	1.612
	Kurtosis	-.547	.359	.059	.496	-1.224	.604
Verbal bullying incidents are common in selected secondary schools' classrooms.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.34	.035	.00	.04	3.27	3.41
	Std. Deviation	.476		-.002	.012	.446	.493
	Variance	.226		-.002	.011	.199	.243
	Skewness	.669	.181	.012	.170	.374	1.041
	Kurtosis	-1.570	.359	.045	.240	-1.881	-.927
Bullying occurs in different forms throughout selected secondary schools daily.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.35	.036	.00	.03	3.29	3.43
	Std. Deviation	.479		-.002	.011	.454	.496
	Variance	.230		-.001	.010	.206	.246
	Skewness	.618	.181	.009	.163	.305	.948
	Kurtosis	-1.637	.359	.038	.214	-1.928	-1.114
Numerous secondary school students report repeated victimisation by their peers.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.14	.033	.00	.03	3.08	3.21
	Std. Deviation	.449		-.001	.030	.387	.504
	Variance	.201		.000	.027	.150	.254
	Skewness	.611	.181	.014	.249	.220	1.210
	Kurtosis	1.164	.359	.040	.662	.175	2.803
	N	181		0	0	181	181

Bullying and victimisation happen at varying degrees across secondary schools.	Mean	3.28	.051	.00	.05	3.18	3.38
	Std. Deviation	.686		-.003	.028	.629	.739
	Variance	.470		-.003	.038	.396	.546
	Skewness	-.428	.181	.007	.093	-.620	-.247
	Kurtosis	-.835	.359	.012	.113	-1.062	-.634
Valid N (listwise)	N	181		0	0	181	181

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Table 2 highlights the extent of bullying and victimization in selected secondary schools in Southern Nigeria, based on responses from 181 teachers. The mean scores for various forms of bullying range from 2.69 to 3.35, indicating frequent occurrences. For example, victimization has a mean of 3.04 (SD = 0.585), and physical bullying has a mean of 3.24 (SD = 0.430). Verbal bullying is common, with a mean of 3.34 (SD = 0.476). Skewness and kurtosis values indicate non-normal distribution, with skewness ranging from -1.519 to 1.208 and kurtosis from -1.637 to 5.708. This data underscores the prevalence and varied nature of bullying in these schools.

Research question 2: What are the multifaceted implications of bullying and victimisation?.

Table 3. The multifaceted implications of bullying and victimization

		Statistic	Std. Error	Bias	Std. Error	Bootstrap ^a 95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Bullying negatively impacts students' mental health, leading to depression.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.37	.036	.00	.03	3.30	3.44
	Std. Deviation	.484		-.002	.010	.459	.497
	Variance	.234		-.002	.009	.210	.247
	Skewness	.542	.181	.010	.159	.258	.889
	Kurtosis	-1.725	.359	.037	.188	-1.955	-1.224
Bullied students often develop anxiety and social withdrawal over time.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.37	.036	.00	.04	3.30	3.44
	Std. Deviation	.484		-.002	.010	.459	.497
	Variance	.234		-.002	.010	.210	.247
	Skewness	.542	.181	.010	.161	.258	.889
	Kurtosis	-1.725	.359	.038	.190	-1.955	-1.224
Long-term psychological trauma is common among victims of bullying.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.31	.034	.00	.03	3.24	3.38
	Std. Deviation	.464		-.001	.014	.427	.486
	Variance	.215		-.001	.013	.182	.236
	Skewness	.832	.181	.008	.176	.518	1.243
	Kurtosis	-1.323	.359	.044	.310	-1.752	-.461
Bullying creates a hostile school environment, affecting overall student morale.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.08	.058	.00	.06	2.96	3.19
	Std. Deviation	.778		-.006	.094	.572	.945
	Variance	.605		-.001	.143	.328	.893
	Skewness	-2.427	.181	.063	.193	-2.644	-2.023
	Kurtosis	8.637	.359	.202	2.200	5.047	13.472
Victimisation leads to increased absenteeism and school dropout rates.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.35	.037	.00	.04	3.28	3.43
	Std. Deviation	.502		-.003	.017	.468	.536
	Variance	.252		-.002	.017	.219	.287
	Skewness	.349	.181	.025	.195	.015	.776
	Kurtosis	-1.242	.359	-.010	.318	-1.843	-.629
Bullied students may experience low self-esteem and lack of confidence.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.41	.037	.00	.04	3.34	3.49
	Std. Deviation	.494		-.002	.007	.476	.501
	Variance	.244		-.002	.007	.226	.251

Peer relationships are damaged due to pervasive bullying behaviors.	Skewness	.351	.181	.010	.157	.056	.669
	Kurtosis	-1.898	.359	.032	.119	-2.016	-1.570
	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.27	.033	.00	.03	3.20	3.33
	Std. Deviation	.443		-.002	.018	.400	.472
	Variance	.196		-.001	.016	.160	.223
Valid N (listwise)	Skewness	1.073	.181	.014	.199	.722	1.521
	Kurtosis	-.859	.359	.070	.454	-1.495	.318
	N	181		0	0	181	181

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Table 3 illustrates the multifaceted implications of bullying and victimization among 181 secondary school students in Southern Nigeria. Bullying significantly impacts mental health, with a mean score of 3.37 (SD = 0.484) for depression and anxiety/social withdrawal. Long-term psychological trauma scores a mean of 3.31 (SD = 0.464). The hostile school environment, affecting morale, has a lower mean of 3.08 (SD = 0.778), indicating varied perceptions. Increased absenteeism and dropouts are linked to victimization (mean = 3.35, SD = 0.502). Bullying also leads to low self-esteem (mean = 3.41, SD = 0.494) and damaged peer relationships (mean = 3.27, SD = 0.443).

Research question 3: How and to what extent do bullying and victimisation affect students' academic engagement and performance?.

Table 4. How bullying and victimisation affect students' academic engagement and performance

		Bootstrap ^a					
		Statistic	Std. Error	Bias	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Bullying causes students to disengage from their academic responsibilities significantly.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.19	.029	.00	.03	3.13	3.25
	Std. Deviation	.396		-.002	.024	.340	.437
	Variance	.157		-.001	.019	.116	.191
	Skewness	1.566	.181	.029	.259	1.139	2.185
	Kurtosis	.457	.359	.159	.867	-.711	2.804
Victimisation leads to reduced classroom participation and decreased learning interest.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.25	.032	.00	.03	3.19	3.33
	Std. Deviation	.437		-.002	.019	.392	.470
	Variance	.191		-.002	.017	.153	.221
	Skewness	1.139	.181	.020	.211	.749	1.612
	Kurtosis	-.711	.359	.092	.511	-1.454	.604
Victimised students struggle with concentration during lessons, hindering learning retention.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.15	.059	.00	.06	3.03	3.26
	Std. Deviation	.799		-.002	.024	.748	.843
	Variance	.639		-.003	.038	.560	.711
	Skewness	-.276	.181	.006	.111	-.491	-.049
	Kurtosis	-1.382	.359	.018	.113	-1.576	-1.127
Anxiety from bullying negatively affects students' ability to complete homework.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.15	.029	.00	.03	3.09	3.21
	Std. Deviation	.387		-.003	.027	.328	.436
	Variance	.150		-.002	.021	.107	.190
	Skewness	1.388	.181	.048	.342	.856	2.258
	Kurtosis	1.748	.359	.156	1.070	.187	4.282
Frequent bullying disrupts students' focus, leading to incomplete assignments regularly.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.29	.034	.00	.03	3.22	3.35
	Std. Deviation	.454		-.002	.016	.416	.479

	Variance	.206		-.002	.014	.173	.230
	Skewness	.948	.181	.021	.186	.618	1.356
	Kurtosis	-1.114	.359	.075	.373	-1.637	-.163
School engagement declines as bullied students feel unsafe and distracted.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.10	.041	.00	.04	3.02	3.18
	Std. Deviation	.553		-.002	.031	.488	.608
	Variance	.306		-.002	.034	.239	.370
	Skewness	.049	.181	.008	.081	-.061	.252
	Kurtosis	.192	.359	.035	.365	-.342	1.091
Victimised students often avoid group work, impacting collaborative learning experiences.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.27	.033	.00	.03	3.20	3.33
	Std. Deviation	.443		-.002	.019	.400	.472
	Variance	.196		-.002	.016	.160	.223
	Skewness	1.073	.181	.018	.206	.722	1.521
	Kurtosis	-.859	.359	.082	.469	-1.495	.318
Valid N (listwise)	N	181		0	0	181	181

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Table 4 examines the effects of bullying and victimization on students' academic engagement and performance among 181 secondary school students. Bullying significantly disengages students from academics, with a mean score of 3.19 (SD = 0.396). Victimization leads to reduced classroom participation (mean = 3.25, SD = 0.437) and concentration issues (mean = 3.15, SD = 0.799). Anxiety from bullying affects homework completion (mean = 3.15, SD = 0.387), while frequent bullying disrupts assignment completion (mean = 3.29, SD = 0.454). School engagement declines (mean = 3.10, SD = 0.553) as students feel unsafe, and victimized students avoid group work (mean = 3.27, SD = 0.443), impacting collaborative learning.

Research question 4: How and to what extent do bullying and victimisation affect students' performance?.

Table 5. How bullying and victimisation affect students' performance

		Bootstrap ^a					
		Statistic	Std. Error	Bias	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Bullying causes significant drops in students' overall academic performance.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.27	.033	.00	.03	3.21	3.34
	Std. Deviation	.446		-.001	.018	.408	.474
	Variance	.199		-.001	.015	.167	.225
	Skewness	1.041	.181	.008	.197	.695	1.436
	Kurtosis	-.927	.359	.055	.433	-1.534	.064
Victimisation results in lower grades and diminished academic achievements overall.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.28	.034	.00	.03	3.22	3.35
	Std. Deviation	.451		-.001	.017	.416	.478
	Variance	.203		-.001	.015	.173	.228
	Skewness	.978	.181	.009	.191	.643	1.356
	Kurtosis	-1.055	.359	.054	.394	-1.604	-.163
Stress from bullying affects students' memory retention during exams.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.13	.042	.00	.04	3.06	3.21
	Std. Deviation	.562		-.002	.030	.500	.621
	Variance	.316		-.001	.034	.250	.385
	Skewness	.031	.181	.011	.089	-.105	.264
	Kurtosis	.030	.359	.018	.310	-.463	.785
Bullied students frequently miss important lessons, impacting their academic progress.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.23	.031	.00	.03	3.17	3.30
	Std. Deviation	.423		-.001	.020	.378	.459
	Variance	.179		-.001	.017	.143	.210
	Skewness	1.280	.181	.011	.215	.890	1.760
	Kurtosis	-.365	.359	.076	.593	-1.222	1.109
	N	181		0	0	181	181

		Bootstrap ^a					
						95% Confidence Interval	
		Statistic	Std. Error	Bias	Std. Error	Lower	Upper
Peer victimisation causes students to disengage from their academic goals.	Mean	3.19	.029	.00	.03	3.14	3.25
	Std. Deviation	.396		-.001	.023	.346	.437
	Variance	.157		.000	.018	.120	.191
	Skewness	1.566	.181	.012	.243	1.139	2.115
	Kurtosis	.457	.359	.096	.816	-.711	2.502
Academic performance declines when students are preoccupied with bullying incidents.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.08	.043	.00	.04	2.99	3.16
	Std. Deviation	.582		-.001	.030	.519	.640
	Variance	.338		.000	.035	.270	.409
	Skewness	-.006	.181	.004	.050	-.092	.109
Bullying disrupts students' focus, leading to poor test performances.	Kurtosis	-.048	.359	.011	.305	-.535	.639
	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.25	.032	.00	.03	3.19	3.31
	Std. Deviation	.433		-.001	.019	.392	.464
	Variance	.188		-.001	.016	.153	.215
Valid N (listwise)	Skewness	1.173	.181	.008	.207	.832	1.612
	Kurtosis	-.631	.359	.061	.520	-1.323	.604
	N	181		0	0	181	181

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Table 5 highlights the negative impact of bullying and victimization on students' academic performance among 181 secondary school students. Bullying causes significant drops in academic performance (mean = 3.27, SD = 0.446), with victimization resulting in lower grades and diminished achievements (mean = 3.28, SD = 0.451). Stress from bullying affects memory retention during exams (mean = 3.13, SD = 0.562). Frequent absenteeism due to bullying impacts academic progress (mean = 3.23, SD = 0.423). Victimization leads to disengagement from academic goals (mean = 3.19, SD = 0.396). Overall performance declines when preoccupied with bullying incidents (mean = 3.08, SD = 0.582).

Research question 5: Which factors drive or account for bullying and victimisation in the schools?

Table 6. Factors that account for bullying and victimisation in the schools

		Bootstrap ^a					
		Statistic	Std. Error	Bias	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Peer pressure drives bullying behaviors among students in schools.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.30	.034	.00	.03	3.24	3.37
	Std. Deviation	.461		-.002	.015	.427	.484
	Variance	.213		-.001	.014	.182	.234
	Skewness	.860	.181	.013	.181	.542	1.244
	Kurtosis	-1.275	.359	.056	.330	-1.725	-.459
Lack of supervision enables bullying incidents to occur frequently unnoticed.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.25	.032	.00	.03	3.19	3.32
	Std. Deviation	.437		-.002	.019	.396	.468
	Variance	.191		-.001	.016	.157	.219
	Skewness	1.139	.181	.017	.204	.776	1.566
	Kurtosis	-.711	.359	.082	.488	-1.414	.457
Social media contributes to cyberbullying and victimisation among students.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.28	.048	.00	.05	3.19	3.37
	Std. Deviation	.644		-.003	.028	.584	.695

				Bootstrap ^a			
				95% Confidence Interval			
	Statistic	Std. Error	Bias	Std. Error	Lower	Upper	
Inadequate anti-bullying policies fail to deter aggressive student behaviors.	Variance	.415		-.003	.036	.341	.483
	Skewness	-.339	.181	.015	.097	-.513	-.133
	Kurtosis	-.695	.359	.006	.092	-.886	-.493
	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.15	.043	.00	.04	3.06	3.23
	Std. Deviation	.582		-.002	.030	.522	.639
	Variance	.339		-.002	.034	.272	.409
Bullying often arises from a desire for power and control.	Skewness	-.025	.181	.012	.083	-.170	.173
	Kurtosis	-.182	.359	.025	.260	-.604	.427
	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.30	.034	.00	.03	3.24	3.38
	Std. Deviation	.461		-.002	.015	.427	.486
	Variance	.213		-.002	.014	.182	.236
	Skewness	.860	.181	.014	.181	.518	1.244
Previous victimisation can lead to some students becoming bullies themselves.	Kurtosis	-1.275	.359	.058	.327	-1.751	-.459
	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.26	.039	.00	.04	3.18	3.33
	Std. Deviation	.521		-.003	.025	.467	.569
	Variance	.271		-.002	.026	.218	.324
	Skewness	.232	.181	.029	.188	-.070	.661
	Kurtosis	-.363	.359	.000	.302	-.942	.307
Low self-esteem in students often results in bullying others.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.19	.044	.00	.04	3.10	3.27
	Std. Deviation	.594		-.004	.029	.535	.648
	Variance	.353		-.004	.034	.286	.420
	Skewness	-.082	.181	.017	.092	-.232	.129
	Kurtosis	-.356	.359	.021	.206	-.661	.138
	Valid N (listwise)	N	181		0	0	181

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Table 6 identifies factors contributing to bullying and victimization among 181 students. Peer pressure drives bullying (mean = 3.30, SD = 0.461), and lack of supervision enables frequent, unnoticed incidents (mean = 3.25, SD = 0.437). Social media contributes to cyberbullying (mean = 3.28, SD = 0.644), while inadequate anti-bullying policies fail to deter aggressive behaviors (mean = 3.15, SD = 0.582). Bullying often stems from a desire for power and control (mean = 3.30, SD = 0.461). Previous victimization can lead some students to become bullies (mean = 3.26, SD = 0.521), and low self-esteem results in bullying others (mean = 3.19, SD = 0.594).

Research question 6: In what ways can the issues at stake be addressed?.

Table 7. Ways to address bullying and victimisation among some secondary schools in southern nigeria

		Bootstrap ^a					
		95% Confidence Interval					
		Statistic	Std. Error	Bias	Std. Error	Lower	Upper
Implement comprehensive anti-bullying policies in all schools nationwide immediately.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.46	.037	.00	.04	3.39	3.53
	Std. Deviation	.500		-.001	.004	.488	.501
	Variance	.250		-.001	.004	.238	.251
	Skewness	.168	.181	-.002	.152	-.123	.469
	Kurtosis	-1.994	.359	.022	.065	-2.022	-1.800
	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.64	.036	.00	.03	3.57	3.70

		Bootstrap ^a					
		Statistic	Std. Error	Bias	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Encourage open communication between students, teachers, and parents about bullying.	Std. Deviation	.481		-.001	.010	.459	.496
	Variance	.231		-.001	.010	.210	.246
	Skewness	-.592	.181	-.003	.159	-.889	-.304
	Kurtosis	-1.668	.359	.029	.198	-1.929	-1.224
Establish clear reporting mechanisms for students to report bullying safely.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.64	.036	.00	.03	3.57	3.70
	Std. Deviation	.481		-.001	.010	.459	.496
	Variance	.231		-.001	.010	.210	.246
	Skewness	-.592	.181	-.003	.159	-.889	-.304
	Kurtosis	-1.668	.359	.029	.198	-1.929	-1.224
	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.28	.048	.00	.05	3.19	3.37
Integrate social-emotional learning into the school curriculum to promote respect.	Std. Deviation	.644		-.002	.027	.588	.692
	Variance	.415		-.001	.035	.346	.479
	Skewness	-.339	.181	.010	.096	-.528	-.146
	Kurtosis	-.695	.359	.004	.090	-.886	-.512
Utilize technology to monitor and prevent cyberbullying among students.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.57	.037	.00	.04	3.50	3.64
	Std. Deviation	.496		-.001	.006	.481	.501
	Variance	.246		-.001	.005	.231	.251
	Skewness	-.304	.181	.004	.150	-.592	-.011
	Kurtosis	-1.929	.359	.020	.098	-2.021	-1.668
	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.51	.042	.00	.04	3.43	3.59
Encourage bystander intervention to support victims and deter bullies.	Std. Deviation	.564		-.002	.024	.518	.612
	Variance	.318		-.001	.027	.268	.374
	Skewness	-.597	.181	.021	.163	-.885	-.226
	Kurtosis	-.669	.359	-.050	.280	-1.410	-.225
Provide counseling services for both victims and perpetrators of bullying.	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Mean	3.48	.053	.00	.05	3.38	3.58
	Std. Deviation	.719		-.004	.035	.646	.783
	Variance	.518		-.004	.050	.418	.612
	Skewness	-1.018	.181	-.002	.145	-1.320	-.745
	Kurtosis	-.353	.359	.039	.350	-.908	.447
	N	181		0	0	181	181
	Valid N (listwise)						

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Table 7 highlights strategies implemented by secondary schools in Southern Nigeria to address bullying and victimization among 181 students. Implementing comprehensive anti-bullying policies receives strong support (mean = 3.46, SD = 0.500), alongside encouraging open communication among students, teachers, and parents (mean = 3.64, SD = 0.481). Clear reporting mechanisms for bullying incidents are also emphasized (mean = 3.64, SD = 0.481). Integrating social-emotional learning into the curriculum is advocated (mean = 3.28, SD = 0.644), as is utilizing technology to monitor and prevent cyberbullying (mean = 3.57, SD = 0.496). Encouraging bystander intervention (mean = 3.51, SD = 0.564) and providing counseling services (mean = 3.48, SD = 0.719) are also recommended strategies.

Hypothesis: There is no significant correlation between the perceived implications of bullying and victimization and teachers age, and gender

Table 8. Correlation between the perceived implications of bullying and victimization and teachers age, and gender

			Age	Gender	Bullying and victimization
Kendall's tau_b	Age	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.080	.011
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.241	.859
		N	181	181	181
	Gender	Correlation Coefficient	.080	1.000	-.698**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.241	.	.000
		N	181	181	181
	Bullying and victimization	Correlation Coefficient	.011	-.698**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.859	.000	.
		N	181	181	181
Spearman's rho	Age	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.087	.084
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.242	.262
		N	181	181	181
	Gender	Correlation Coefficient	.087	1.000	-.754**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.242	.	.000
		N	181	181	181
	Bullying and victimization	Correlation Coefficient	.084	-.754**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.262	.000	.
		N	181	181	181

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

Table 8 examines the correlations between teachers' age, gender, and their perceptions of bullying and victimization among 181 respondents. Kendall's tau_b and Spearman's rho coefficients reveal that age shows a weak positive correlation with perceptions of bullying and victimization (Kendall's tau_b = 0.080, Spearman's rho = 0.087), though these correlations are not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Gender demonstrates a significant negative correlation with perceptions of bullying and victimization (Kendall's tau_b = -0.698**, Spearman's rho = -0.754**), indicating that female teachers tend to perceive these issues more negatively than male teachers. The strong negative correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

3.2. Discussion

Research question 1 covered key extent that bullying and victimisation happen in selected secondary schools in Southern Nigeria. The result showed that bullying and victimization are prevalent issues in secondary schools in Southern Nigeria. Numerous students report frequent victimization, aligning with findings from a study by Igbaede-Edwards et al, (2023), which highlighted the pervasiveness of these issues in Nigerian schools. In contrast, Aboagye et al, (2021a) found that while many students experience bullying at least once a week, the frequency varied significantly between urban and rural schools. Physical bullying is particularly common in crowded environments, echoing the findings of Francis et al, (2022), who observed higher rates of physical bullying in densely populated schools. Verbal bullying incidents are also prevalent in classrooms, similar to the results of a related study by Chen et al, (2023), which reported that verbal harassment was the most common form of bullying. Bullying occurs in various forms daily, affecting numerous students, and the degree of bullying and victimization varies across different schools.

Research question two was on the multifaceted implications of bullying and victimisation. It was seen that bullying significantly impacts students' mental health, leading to depression. This finding agreed with Ye et al, (2023), who reported a high prevalence of depressive symptoms among bullied students. In contrast, Ruijne et al, (2022) emphasized that anxiety and social withdrawal are common among victims, aligning with the observation that bullied students often develop these issues over time. Long-term psychological trauma is also prevalent, as noted by White et al, (2024), who found that many victims experience enduring emotional distress. In a related study by Gómez-Galáne et al.(2021) highlighted that bullying creates a hostile school environment, adversely affecting student morale. Victimization leads to increased absenteeism and dropout rates, a phenomenon also observed by Mengo & Black (2016). Additionally, bullied students often suffer from low self-esteem and lack confidence, further impacting their peer relationships, which are damaged due to pervasive bullying behaviors.

Research question 3 ascertained how bullying and victimisation affect students' academic engagement. It was discovered that bullying significantly causes students to disengage from their academic responsibilities, which this finding agreed with Samara et al, (2021), who observed that bullied students often show reduced commitment to schoolwork. In contrast, Adeosun et al, (2015) found that victimization leads to reduced classroom participation and

decreased interest in learning, directly impacting academic performance. Victimized students struggle with concentration during lessons, hindering learning retention, as also noted by [Okoye et al, \(2021\)](#), who reported that anxiety from bullying negatively affects students' ability to complete homework. Frequent bullying disrupts students' focus, leading to incomplete assignments regularly. In a related study, [Fenny & Falola \(2020\)](#) highlighted that school engagement declines as bullied students feel unsafe and distracted. Furthermore, victimized students often avoid group work, impacting collaborative learning experiences, which agrees with the findings of [Olashore et al, \(2020\)](#) who noted that peer relationships suffer due to pervasive bullying behaviors.

Research question 4 ascertained how bullying and victimisation affect students' academic performance. Bullying causes significant drops in students' overall academic performance, a finding agreed with by [Vaillancourt et al, \(2023\)](#), who observed a strong correlation between bullying and declining grades. In contrast, [Chikaodi et al, \(2019\)](#) highlighted that victimization results in lower grades and diminished academic achievements overall. Stress from bullying affects students' memory retention during exams, as noted by [Ada et al, \(2016\)](#), who found that anxiety from bullying incidents impacts cognitive functions. Bullied students frequently miss important lessons, impacting their academic progress, which aligns with findings by [Ighaede-Edwards et al, \(2023\)](#), who reported higher absenteeism rates among bullied students. Peer victimization causes students to disengage from their academic goals, leading to a noticeable decline in academic performance when students are preoccupied with bullying incidents. This is further supported by [Olabiya \(2021\)](#), who found that bullying disrupts students' focus, leading to poor test performances.

Research question 5 was on factors that drive bullying and victimisation in the schools. Peer pressure is a major factor in driving bullying behaviors among students in schools. This observation is supported by [Edward & Amaluwa \(2022\)](#), who emphasized the influence of social dynamics. In contrast, [Olaleye et al, \(2020\)](#) pointed out that insufficient supervision allows bullying incidents to happen frequently without being noticed. The rise of social media has contributed significantly to cyberbullying and victimization, as highlighted by [Mustapha et al, \(2021\)](#), who noted an increase in online harassment among students. Additionally, [Dadson \(2020\)](#) found that inadequate anti-bullying policies fail to deter aggressive behaviors, underscoring the need for stronger policy enforcement. Bullying often stems from a desire for power and control, as identified by [Mbada et al, \(2020\)](#). Previous victimization can also lead some students to become bullies themselves, and low self-esteem often results in students bullying others, as reported by [Aboagye et al, \(2021\)](#).

Research question 6 covered ways that bullying and victimisation can be addressed. Addressing bullying and victimization requires a multifaceted approach. Implementing nationwide anti-bullying policies is paramount, as emphasized by [Dairo \(2020\)](#), who stress the need for consistent policy enforcement to create safer school environments. Conversely, fostering open communication among students, teachers, and parents is crucial, as noted by [Salin et al, \(2020\)](#), who advocate for transparent dialogue to effectively address bullying incidents. Establishing safe and accessible reporting mechanisms for students is essential to ensure incidents are reported without fear of reprisal, as highlighted by [Okagbue et al, \(2022\)](#). Integrating social-emotional learning into the curriculum promotes empathy and respect, a strategy supported by [Ahmed et al, \(2020\)](#). Leveraging technology to monitor and prevent cyberbullying is also pivotal, a finding reinforced by [Cohen et al, \(2014\)](#), who observed a decrease in cyberbullying incidents with effective monitoring. Encouraging bystander intervention and providing counseling services for both victims and perpetrators are additional critical steps in creating a supportive and safe school environment, as underscored by [Nipuli & Svetloff, \(2024\)](#).

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Implication. The government, educational institutions, and social organizations are expected to be more active in addressing bullying issues with a multidisciplinary approach involving psychologists, social workers, and school authorities. Government policies in providing resources to deal with bullying problems in schools, including teacher training to handle bullying cases, are needed.

Contribution. This study contributes to the global literature on bullying, which is often dominated by studies from Western countries. By adding the context of Africa and specifically Nigeria, this study enriches the international perspective in understanding bullying and shows that bullying is a cross-cultural issue with global implications. The findings of this study are also expected to raise public awareness of bullying issues and inspire community involvement in addressing bullying in schools.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Limitations. This study focused on the impact experienced by victims, while information regarding the perpetrators of bullying may be limited. Research that focuses more on the perpetrators, including the factors that drive them to bully and the psychological or social impact they experience, may help design more effective inter-ventions.

Recommendations. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that schools implement comprehensive educational programs addressing bullying, targeting students, teachers, and parents. These programs should include training on early detection of bullying behaviors, effective intervention techniques, and the promotion of anti-bullying campaigns that actively involve the entire school community. Such initiatives are essential for raising awareness and fostering a collective commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment for all students.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has shed light on the complex and multifaceted implications of bullying and victimization among secondary schools in Southern Nigeria. The findings underscore the pervasive nature of these issues, impacting students' mental health, academic engagement, and overall well-being. Bullying manifests in various forms from physical aggression to cyberbullying highlighting the need for comprehensive interventions. Key factors driving bullying behaviors include peer pressure, inadequate supervision, and the influence of social media. Addressing these factors requires implementing robust anti-bullying policies, promoting open communication channels, and integrating social-emotional learning into the curriculum. Effective strategies such as establishing safe reporting mechanisms, leveraging technology for monitoring, and encouraging bystander intervention are essential steps towards creating safer school environments. Additionally, providing counseling services for both victims and perpetrators can foster healing and prevent recurrence. Addressing these challenges comprehensively can mitigate the negative impacts of bullying, enhance student well-being, and cultivate a positive learning environment conducive to academic success and personal growth.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The author declares that this article's entire research and writing process was carried out independently. The author is fully responsible for all data related to this research. No other party has participated as an author or made a significant contribution to the content of this work.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ETHICAL APPROVAL STATEMENT

The author declares that this study was conducted in accordance with research ethics principles and has received ethical approval from the author's institution, including respect for participants' autonomy, confidentiality of data, and ensuring their safety and well-being, as outlined in the applicable research ethics guidelines.

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