



Bullying Behavior among Secondary School Students in Hai District, Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the extent to which bullying behavior exists among secondary school students in Hai District, Moshi Region-Tanzania. Mixed approaches, and convergent parallel design were applied in this study. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews. The study collected data from the sample of one hundred and seventy-one (171) persons selected from 13,945 target population. The SPSS software package was used to examine quantitative data while qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings of the study show that, bullying behaviour exists in Secondary schools at Hai district. The study concludes that, the rate of bullying acts such as hitting, beating, stealing, senior students oppressing junior students, gossiping and spread rumours about others, use of insulting words, bad name-calling and excessive punishment were practiced by students in schools. It has impact to students' academic achievement and the whole life in general. The study recommended that policy makers should encourage the practice of

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effective control of bullying in schools by formulating anti-bullying policies to guide effectiveness in bullying management.

Keywords: Bullying; bullying behavior; students; secondary school students.

1. INTRODUCTION

The meaning of bullying ranges from different perspectives, such as; cyber bullying and working place bullying. Bullying is not a new phenomenon. Historically, bullying could be traced back to 18th and 20th centuries, where it was defined as physical harm and harassment that caused strong isolation and death to the youths and adults worldwide (Burk, 1897). A number of studies on bullying were carried out in Scandinavian countries from the 1970s by different scholars including; Pickas, 1972; Whitney and Smith, 1993; Rigby; [1] and Olweus [2]

It is good to remember that, bullying exists in schools and its management is a worldwide problem [3] It therefore, requires teachers' effectiveness to mitigate it because of their significant role of parental care, students, directors, guidance and counselors. This task however, requires also collaboration with parents, students, professionals and government policy makers [4].

In spite of all these anti-bullying policies and management strategies, bullying is still prevalent in Tanzanian secondary schools as Ndibalema [5,6] Shayo & Lawala, 2019; Kakuru, [7] point out. Moreover, the few empirical studies which have been conducted in the country on bullying, have not addressed the extent to which bullying behavior exists among secondary school students in Hai District, Kilimanjaro Region-Tanzania. Thus, this study covered this gap by assessing the extent to which bullying behavior exists among secondary school students in Hai District, Kilimanjaro Region-Tanzania.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Jacobsen & Bauman [8] bullying is present in schools. This study which was conducted in America identifies three essential features of bullying which are: intention to harm, repetition and the power difference between the bully and the victim. The effects occur in three areas which are physical, verbal and relational. Another scholar, Malette, (2017) conducted the study in Canada on fighting. The study contends

that, bullying happens due to differences in social rank and physical strength between the bully and the victim. Physical bullying comes through beating the weaker person as acts of peer violence. On the other hand, there are cases where a victim retaliates by gathering strength to confront the bully in a most fatal way of using anything, including a knife to physically hurt the tormentor as a way of self-defense and thus ending the long acts of bullying. This is where the role of teacher's intervention features out to enable students to have a safe environment that allows effective teaching and learning.

Again, we can see the study by Patton et al, [9] who researched on school bullying and victimization. The study employed a qualitative method to examine the presence of bullying, the effects and ways to prevent bullying in schools. The study points out the acts of bullying such as; pushing, hitting and verbal bullying, which may involve teasing, which have many effects to the student's personal life and social life and more effects on students' academic performance. These kinds of bullying are also supported by Fenny & Falola [10] who conducted a study in Nigeria on the prevalence and correlation of bullying behaviour in schools using cross-sectional data from a sample of 192 junior secondary schools. The study established the forms of bullying such as physical bullying, verbal bullying and emotional bullying. This study also manages to establish relationship between gender and bullying where more girls are bullied than boys and the reasons associated with bullying include; delinquent friends, hostile school environment and culture which allow the practice of bullying behaviour in schools. In this situation therefore, the schools must ensure that bullying behaviour is not existing in schools through guaranteeing teacher's effective management and application of anti-bullying programs where students will be involved in preventing bullying behaviour in school.

In Tanzania few studies have been conducted and recommend that, effective prevention and intervention of bullying requires rescuing students from low self-esteem, depression, anxiety and physical injuries, which affect

students" social and academic life [7] This is why Mwalimu Julius Nyerere in one of his speeches says that; teachers are expected to relate and associate with pupils who are their immediate clients and other interested parties in their respective societies [11]. This will remove long term sufferings to the bullied and bullies [6,12]. This is the way to good performance since presence of bullying behaviour in schools contributes to poor academic achievement among students who tend to bully others as well as bullying victims [13].

3. METHODOLOGY

The study used mixed research paradigm. This approach enabled the researcher to obtained more evidence and detailed information about the existence of bullying behavior in public secondary schools. This study employed convergent parallel research design which allowed the researcher to collect both forms of data concurrent, analyzed them independently and blended the outcomes during the overall

explanation. The study collected data from the sample of one hundred and seventy-one (171) persons selected from 13,945 target populations. This study, employed questionnaires and interviews to obtain primary data from the field. In this study, the researcher adhered different ethical issues including; research clearance, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and reciprocity.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study show that, majority of the respondents both teachers and students affirmed with "Yes" the existence of bullying in their schools. See Fig. 1.

To support the findings; the researcher investigated various bullying practices in Hai Secondary schools. Both; teachers and students filled the Likert scale with various bullying acts and behaviour. The findings were presented in Table 1 and Table 2 while those from interviewed respondents were qualitatively presented after.

Table 1. Students responses on bullying acts and behaviours

S/N	Bullying behaviour/acts	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Students practice hitting, slapping, kicking, pushing and spitting acts	31(32%)	25(26%)	11(11%)	14(15%)	15(16%)
2	Stealing, and destroying of students" properties	39(40.6%)	30(31.2%)	10(10.4%)	11(11.4%)	6(6.2%)
3	Students use abusive language towards other students	51(53%)	14(15%)	25(26%)	0(0%)	6(6%)
4	Forcing junior students by senior students to do work for them	53(55%)	16(17%)	10(10%)	8(8%)	9(9%)
5	Existence of spreading rumors and gossiping about other students	40(41.6%)	29(30.2%)	11(11.4%)	9(9.3%)	7(7.2%)
6	Existence of bad name- calling and threatening other students	15(15.6%)	9(9.4%)	7(7.3%)	50(52.1%)	15(15.6%)
7	Students" adoption of isolation, unhappiness, low-self-esteem, being quiet and poor performance	19(19.8%)	35(36.5%)	13(13.5%)	10(10.4%)	19(19.8%)

Key: SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree M – Neutral; D - Disagree SD=Strongly Disagree
Source: Field data, (2021)

Table 2. Teachers responses on the existence of bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Hai District

S/N	Bullying acts	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	Practicing of hitting,slapping, kicking, pushing and spitting Acts	10(16.9%)	9(15.3%)	3(5.1%)	18(30.5%)	19(32.2%)
2	Stealing, and destroying of other students" properties	11(18.6%)	5(8.5%)	7(11.9%)	22(37.3%)	14(23.7%)
3	Students use abusive language towards other students	1(1.7%)	1(1.7%)	10(16.6%)	19(32.2%)	28(47.5%)
4	Senior students use to force junior students to do work for them	0(0%)	8(14%)	8(14%)	31(53%)	11(19%)
5	Spreading rumors and gossiping about other students	5(8.5%)	13(22%)	9(15.3%)	28(47.5%)	4(6.8%)
6	Absence of bad name-calling and threatening other students	23(39%)	20(33.9%)	5(8.5%)	11(18.6%)	0(0%)
7	Adoption of isolation, unhappiness, low-self-esteem, being weak, being quiet and poor performs	14(23.7%)	3(5.1%)	2(3.4%)	10(16.9%)	30(50.8%)
8	Absence of provision of excessive punishment in the School	6(10.2%)	11(18.6%)	8(13.6%)	4(6.8%)	30(50.8%)

Key: SD – Strongly Disagree, D – Disagree, N – Neutral, A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree
Source: Field data, (2021)

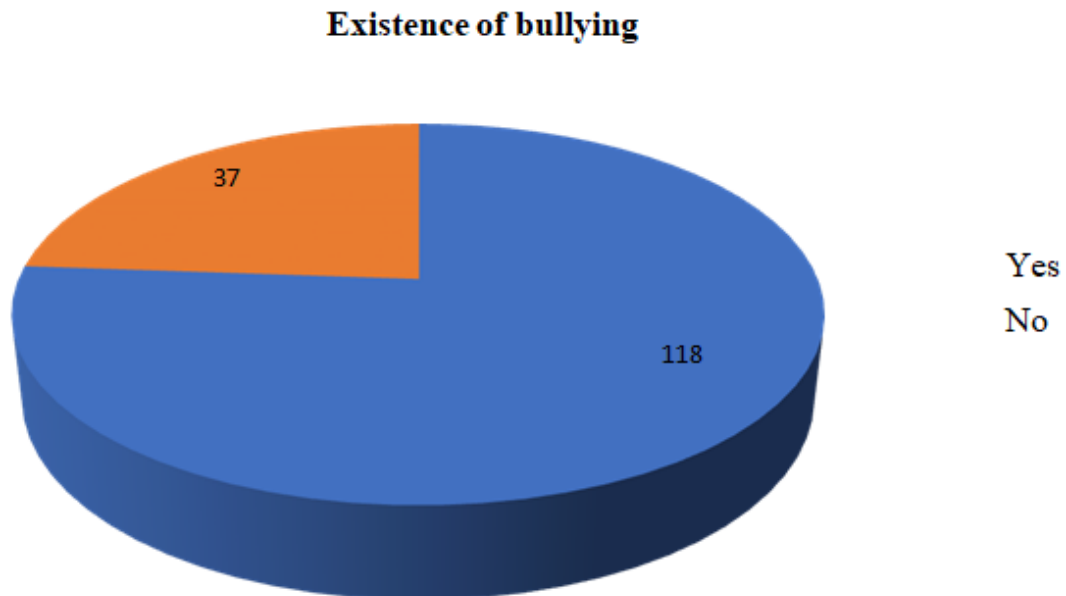


Fig. 1. Teachers and students responses on the existence of bullying in Hai district secondary schools
Source: Field data (2021)

From the Table 1 students' practices of hitting, slapping, kicking, pushing and spitting acts were rated as one of the indicators of the existence of bullying among students. The findings show that, 58 per cent of students strongly agreed and agree on their existence revealing the presence of bullying among students, while 31 per cent of students responded with disagree and strongly disagree that such acts did not prevail among them. The majority of the respondents (58 per cent) constitutes of the greater per cent hence implies that the practising of these acts remains an indicator of the existence of bullying. Such acts are threats to the well-being of the victims, affecting their concentration on their studies. These acts are said to be highly practised to younger students who are younger enough to be defeated by senior students and become not only unfamiliar to them but also to the school rules that may protect their rights. On the other hand, minority (31 per cent) disagreed on the existence of the acts. These findings concur with Tangi (2019) whose findings asserts that, bullying and violence have recently become a serious issue in schools among students in Tanzania and all over the world where children are faced with a high level of intimidation.

Another aspect of the bullying acts existing at schools was said to be theft and destruction of students' properties by fellow students. As regards to this, 71.8 per cent of the students responded with strongly agree and agree on their existence. In contrast, only 17.6 per cent of students rejected the existence of this problem. To make the matter clear, the response from one student-leader who was interviewed shows that theft of other students' properties is practiced by their fellow students. When asked whether bullying acts were practised among students; the student leader from school "C" said; "Hmmm! here in our school there are no such acts. Some minor theft acts occur rarely, like stealing other students' exercise books" (Interviewee's response, STL 3 August 2021).

Even the teachers acknowledge the existence of such problem as the head of school D commented during the interview saying that;

Yes, in our school students use to steal from each other as you may found that some of the students were not buying exercise books, they stole them from their fellow students the situation which led the one the exercise stolen ending up punished for not having an

exercise book for a certain subject and further he or she can also be punished at home for being careless it so painfully real (Interviewee's response, HoS 3 August 2021).

The above statements reveal the fact that, theft is practised by students in schools. Again, the use of abusive language is one of the indicators of bullying behaviour. The findings of the study show that, 65 per cent of students responded with strongly agreed and agree that students were using abusive language toward fellow students. And only 6 per cent of students strongly disagreed with none existence of abusive language among the students. Abusing a fellow student may also be attributed to disclosing one's confidential information without his/her consent which as a result affects him/her emotionally. This is supported by Shin [14] who holds that; failure to protect students' privacy or to respect confidentiality exposes children to stigma, humiliation, and retaliation. This is born from failure to take the allegations seriously, initiate investigations, or refer cases to the appropriate authorities.

The findings of the study also shows that, 74 per cent of students affirmed existence of behavior where senior students force junior students to work for them. Only 18 per cent of students doubted the existence of such behavior. This behaviour turns schools into prisons- like area and is clearly supported by Joyce et al. [15] who presents a prefect who bullied a form two students and the school principal suspended that prefect, the following day the school captain and other prefect stormed principles office and destroy the properties in the principle office, Even during the interview from school "A" a head prefect was quoted saying:

At our school the form four students use to force form one and form two students in various areas such as taken their plates and use it during lunch time very painful after eating they return the plates to the owner or throw them away (Interviewee's response, STL 1 August 2021).

Apart from the above findings, the study also shows that spreading rumours and gossiping about other students are bullying behaviours. In this aspect 71.8 per cent of students acknowledged with strongly agreed and agreed on their existence. And only 9.3 per cent of students disagreed on the existence of those

behaviours. Such behaviours, however, can result in physical harm as it gets intensified. The parties involved are likely to engage in fighting. Fenny & Falola [10] supports this fact saying that, availability of bullying forms such as physical bullying, verbal bullying and emotional bullying in schools tend to occur more to girls than boys. During the interview at school "D" a discipline master acknowledged that: "Gossiping and rumors are dangerous for sure, last year one of our students poisoned herself because other students from the neighborhood spread rumors that the girl was pregnant and aborted. Failing to contend the situation she, decided commit suicide" (Interviewee's response, DT 3 August 2021).

The findings correspond with (Koo, 2007) [16] who stated that gossiping has many psychological and emotional effects on the victims that destruct victims' emotions and take their minds from studies and proper socialization.

Also the findings of the study unveil that, bad nick names are forms of bullying. This behaviour exists as 67.7 per cent of students acknowledged by strongly agreed and agreed. In some schools nowadays, a student would be called „dwarf" if he/she is short, if this student does not get used to the name; would feel embarrassed.

The study findings reveal that, adopting melancholic behaviour is a form of bullying. This behaviour involves; isolation, unhappiness, low self-esteem, being weak, being quiet and poor performance. From the findings, 66.3 per cent acknowledged existence of such behaviours. This finding has corresponded with Hughes & Laffier (2016) [17] who asserted that bullying acts contribute much to lowering students' confidence, courage and self-esteem. These are necessary traits to participate effectively in class activities and socializing with other students.

Table 2 portrays various findings on the existence of bullying among Hai secondary school students. The findings of the study portray the teachers acknowledging that, Hitting, Slapping, Kicking, Pushing and Spitting Acts are bullying behaviour and they exist in schools. This is clear as 62.3 per cent) of the teachers responded with strongly agree and agreed on the issue. The rest were either neutral or they disagreed. In supporting this, the teachers, heads of schools, discipline masters/mistresses and the District Education Officer supported the findings as they were interviewed. In answering

this, the head of the school "A" had this to say; "Some of our students from lower classes might be forced to do various activities by those from higher classes; even their facilities and materials might be forcibly taken away" (Interviewee's response, HoS 1 August 2021).

On the same issue, the District Education officer had this to say; "In some instances, older students mostly of higher classes have been bullying the young ones. Upon being assigned with various activities; a form three student for instance would force those form one students to do them on their behalf" (Interviewee's response, DEO August 2021).

As discussed earlier, these findings concur with Koo, [16] who remarks that, bullying acts such as gossiping, kicking, biting, and severe punishment have many psychological and emotional effects. Stealing and destroying students' properties are bullying acts and they exist in schools. The findings of the study reveal that, 61 per cent of teachers responded with strongly agree and agree the existence of such behaviours. The rest who are minority were either neutral or they disagreed. Parallel to that, the findings reveal the habit of forcing junior students to work for senior students. In this regards 72 per cent of teachers strongly agreed and agreed on the existence of such behaviours. The minority 28 per cent were either neutral or disagreed on the matter. This kind of bullying has been reported by (Malette, 2017), who argues that bullying happens due to differences in social rank and physical strength between the bully and the victim.

The existence of spreading rumors and gossiping about other students was acknowledged by the teachers. The findings reveal 54.3 per cent of the teachers strongly agreed and agreed on the existence of such behaviours. This concurs with the views of the interviewee as one headmistress remarked; "Are you talking of gossipers!? Sure! They do exist. We have received several bullying cases. Some have underestimated others. One could ask another student, what does your father have?"

A report from Kinyaga (2016) reveals that a female student from one secondary school who used to perform well in academics once quitted from studies opting to work as a housemaid. Rumours spread that she had affair with one of the male students. Her future became ruined because of rumours from among fellow students.

Nick naming each other which is a form of bullying exists as the majority of teachers (81.4 per cent) strongly agreed, agreed and neutral. Bad name-calling involves embarrassing names like those that describe one's height such as „dwarf” and calling a student of irrespective of gender. Bad name-calling and threats tend to torture students psychologically making it difficult for them to freely engage in studies. This is supported by Shin [14] that, students in most countries suffer violence, bullying, and discrimination. Nick naming is associated with the use of abusive languages towards each other. On this regards 79.7 per cent of teachers strongly agreed and agreed on the presence of such phenomenon. The minority of the respondents 20.3 was either neutral or rejected the existence of such phenomenon.

Melancholic behaviour which results from the bullying is associated with isolation, unhappiness, low self-esteem, being weak, quiet and poor performance. The findings affirm the existence of such behaviour as 67.7 of the teachers strongly agreed and agreed on their presence. The minority 32.3 per cent were either neutral or disagreed on the matter.

Provision of appropriate punishment in the schools is a mechanism of controlling bullying. The finding reveals punishments exist in a low rate as only 28.8 per cent acknowledged its prevalence. The rest 71.2 were either neutral or disagreed. Response from a majority of teachers shows that schools were not providing appropriate punishment. This implies that excessive punishment is ineffective in controlling bullying for it creates more problems than solutions. Corporal punishment, for instance, has been reported to increase the number of student bullies as they adopt the behaviour from the defensive mechanism. Excessive punishments have always physically harmed students whereas in rare cases some students have been reported to die. Godwin, [18] reports this saying that; one of the serious problems in dealing with bullying is that, some teachers are not competent enough to deal with bullying cases.

The findings presented in Fig. 1 show that student who indicated that bullying was a problem in their school; were 47 students from the form I; 31 students from form II; and 18 students from Form III. The number of responses decreased as the class level changed to the higher-class level which is an implication that bullying was prominent to lower

class levels. The variation is sought to have resulted from age difference and unfamiliarity of younger students with the school (school rules that may protect them). This variation is therefore as valid as well, as Cornell, Susan & Limber [19] put better that bullying is determined and recognized by a power imbalance between aggressor and victim. However, a power imbalance is difficult to assess. Although judgments about physical size and strength are feasible in cases of physical bullying, bullying is most often verbal or social and requires that there be a power differential that requires an assessment of peer status, self-confidence or cognitive capability. Hence, according to the findings bullying is more practised by students from higher classes than from lower classes, this indicates that school administration and all school members must find out the way to solve bullying challenges faced by students from lower classes who are termed as weak by higher classes and torture them instantly.

Findings from interviews concurrently show that bullying prevails among secondary school students in Hai District. Both DEO Heads of schools, discipline masters/mistresses and student-leaders answered the interview questions “Does bullying prevail in your school?” “Can you point out some of the bullying behaviours and acts that prevail in your school?” argued that bullying was practised in their schools.

Respondents who answered the question of the interview pointed to various bullying practices that prevailed in their schools. These acts were mostly said to be stealing fellow students’ properties, kicking other students and gossiping. Upon being interviewed; the first Head of the school “E” had this to say;

Some of our students from lower classes might be forced to do various activities by those from higher classes, even their facilities and materials might be forcibly taken away. That is one of the kinds of bullying in our school, nevertheless, bullying is a wider term. On another hand we may also talk of fighting, however, that is not highly practised in our school. (Interviewee’s response, HoS 5 August 2021).

The second head of school “C” argued;

“In our school bullying is not openly noticeable since some secret quarrels are said to be extended at their streets when

going back to their homes. Few of those which are reported at school we deal upon them?" (Interviewee's response, HoS 3 August 2021).

On the other hand, discipline mistresses were asked the same question. One from school "B" responded; "Are you talking of gossipers!? Sure! They do exist. We have received several bullying cases. Some have underestimated others. One could ask another student, what does your father have?" (Interviewee's response, DT 2 August 2021).

The second discipline teacher from school "E" responded slightly different from the former as she said,

"Oh! Fighting and theft have mostly been reported from our students by young students. I shortly say there are, in our school"

The researcher also interviewed the District Educational Officer (DEO). Being the administrator of educational affairs in the district could be aware of the circumstances the schools within the district were going through. To answer the interview question, "Does bullying exist in your school among students?" This administrator said;

In some instances, older students mostly of higher classes have been bullying the young ones. Upon being assigned with various activities; a form three student for instance would force those form one students to do them on their behalf. However, orientation course has reduced the rate of these acts guaranteeing younger students to resist most of the bullying acts. (Interviewee's response, DEO August 2021).

The findings from interviewees reveal that, there is bullying among students of Hai District secondary schools. The findings are agreed by Tangi who holds that there is bullying in schools consisting of both physical and psychological ones, done by both students and teachers to students. The major causes of bullying are said to be gender variables, disciplinary procedures, classroom management practices, poor students' behaviour and the reaction of teachers to students' poor academic achievement. Felista holds that bullying further affects both; students' performance in their continuous assessment tests as well in the national examinations. Therefore, through the above information obtained from the field,

bullying acts exist among secondary school students at Hai District hindering students to acquire the proper knowledge and skills because of bullying destruction among them [20,21].

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that, the rate of bullying acts such as hitting, beating, stealing, senior students oppressing junior students, gossiping and spread rumours about others, use of insulting words, bad name-calling and excessive punishment were practiced by students in schools. It has impact to students' academic achievement and the whole life in general. The policy makers should encourage the practice of effective control of bullying in schools by formulating anti-bullying policies to guide effectiveness in bullying management. The availability of policy that guide effective bullying management would enable teachers to have clear direction on handling bullying behaviour in schools that facilitate to create conducive environment which is free from torture. The policy formulated should be supportive to the school heads for effective supervision on teachers' effectiveness in managing bullying behaviour in school.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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