

Home Environments and Preschooler's Bullying Behaviour

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Abstract. A child who exhibits aggressive behaviour that affects his or her relationship with other children around him or her is termed having behavioural problems. The study examined the influence of home environments on bullying behaviour among preschool pupils in Ijebu-ode local government area of Ogun State. Three research questions were raised and answered in this study. This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The target population for this study consists of all parents, caregivers and pupils in the forty three (43) government owned preschools in Ijebu-Ode Local Government area of Ogun State. Three research instruments tagged "Home Environment and Children Bullying Behaviour" (HECBB), "Class Bullying Assessment Scale" (CBAS) and the self-observation report from the researcher" were developed and used for this study. The data collected were analyzed using ANOVA and Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. The result revealed that bullying incidence is not significant or related to home location. The result shows that there is no significant influence of neighbourhood characteristics on bullying incidence among preschoolers. The result shows that parents' occupation has a significant influence on bullying incidence among preschoolers. Based on the findings, it was recommended that:

- Schools should organize training for parents on what bullying is, what the school's policies and rules are, and how the enforcement of the rules may affect the child and the parents.

- Caregivers should make provision of measures to control bullying incidence among preschoolers and help them to engross healthy behaviour in their pupils.

Keywords: Preschooler, Home Environments, Bullying Behaviour

1. Introduction

Early childhood educators need to understand bullying within the context of their early childhood settings. The term bullying refers to a specific form of aggressive and violent behaviour among preschoolers. Bullying is characterized by acts of intentional harm, repeated over- time, in a relationship where an imbalance of power exists. It includes physical bullying (punching, kicking, biting), verbal bullying (yelling at, name calling,.) and sign bullying (abusive sign language through hands, tongues, eyes, or nose). Family is the principal unit in the socialization process of a child. It is the starting point for children to learn and internalize the norms and ideologies of the larger society.

Behavioural problem is a term used to describe a child who exhibit aggressive behaviour that affects his or her relationship with other children around him or her. This study identifies bullying as a behavioural problem which is prevalent among pre-school children. It is observed that parents do not believe the reports of their children who engage in bullying either as victims or perpetrators (Holt, Kantor, and

Finkelhor, 2009). This is considered a rising threat to social order among pre-school children and therefore justifies the need to investigate the extent to which home environment influences bullying behaviour among preschool children.

Preschoolers are regarded as children between the ages of 3 and 5 years who receive early childhood education prior to entering the formal compulsory primary school (Maduewesi, 2005). According to Osokoya (2011), the education given to pre-school children is meant to increase the child's social, emotional and cognitive development. Generally, preschool children learn through play activities such as dancing, sitting, crawling, standing, walking, jumping and controlling of their postures (referred to as gross motor skills). They also learn to engage in touching, grasping, cutting, pasting, working with mold, picking up objects (referred to as fine motor skills), In some cases, they learn to identify alphabets, numbers, read phonics, hold pencils, write on notebooks and fill colours under the instruction of the caregiver (referred to as cognitive skills). They however learn most of these in a preschool learning centre designated as creche, kindergarten or nursery school.

Home is the primary social unit where preschool children learn first. Home environment refers to the child's physical dwelling place where he or she receives parental or guardian support (Sara, et al, 2016). It is also regarded as family environment where the child learns certain habits, cultural norms, language pattern and skills. In most cases, the child inherits behavioural traits that are prevalent in the family. These behavioural traits shape the home experiences of the child and subsequently influence his/her behavioural patterns. In this dissertation, home environment covers the home location and the socio-economic status (occupation and parenting style). This study is interested in establishing the link between home environment variables and bullying behavior among preschool children.

It is generally accepted that the structure of the Nigerian family has changed and will continue to change. Such phenomena as the increased divorce rate, two-employed-parent families, a

growing number of teenage pregnancies and the decreasing influence of extended families have substantially changed the kind of preschool experiences that children have (Sara, et al, 2016). Meanwhile, research has indicated that variables including family income, family structure, parents' educational level, amount of children's television viewing, availability of learning tools, and home literacy activities may be related to bullying among preschoolers. A comprehensive literature review in this area is difficult, not only because of the number and variety of studies but also of the intricate relationships that have been hypothesized or found to exist among the variables used in these studies.

Beginning with Coleman's seminal study in the middle 1960s, research has indicated that children's behavior is strongly influenced by home background. During this early research, home background was typically defined in terms of global social status variables including parental income, education, and occupation in addition to family structural characteristics such as family size and birth order. Early landmark studies by Bloom (1964) longitudinally investigated stability, change and the effect of environment on school children. In addition to examining the effects of environment on physical characteristics, he also studied intelligence, attitudes, personality and achievement.

Social behavior of preschoolers is likely to be greatly affected by the home, peer group and school environment in which the children live, play and learn. There are clearly some environments, which encourage positive social behavior, while there are other environments which encourage and reinforce negative social behavior. The place of residence or a child's home has greater influence in students' behavioural development. In connection to this Oriye, (2008) emphasized that home location near market places and garage tends to make children develop aggression towards others. Vanfossen, Kellam, Sokoloff, and Doering, (2010) are of the view that neighbourhood characteristics contain a local opportunity structure that channels and constrains child

behaviours, engender a prevailing normative climate delimiting the boundaries of acceptable and desirable conducts, and may predispose individuals to respond differently to social institutions.

Bullying can happen in a number of different places including preschool classrooms or playgrounds. Among preschoolers, bullying is used for a purpose (e.g., to gain another's friendship, to exclude another, to hurt another). Young children have been observed to pick on peers, exclude them from a peer group, hit or bite their peers in order to get what they want (Salmivalli, Karna, A., & Poskiparta, 2010). Specifically, pre-school bullying, according to Evans, (2014) refers to: A set of actions that happen when a child who is, or who wants to feel, more powerful targets a weaker and/or smaller person by hurting or frightening that person, and does so repeatedly. Bullying therefore is intentional and if repeated by the preschooler against other children, it becomes an aggressive behaviour which is directed at inflicting physical or emotional damage to the victim. This study considers bullying from three angles, namely (i) physical bullying which involves hitting and pushing of other children (ii) verbal bullying where other children are name-called or yelled at (iii) sign bullying where other children are hurt as a result of using abusive sign language through hands, tongues, eyes, or nose.

Bullying has negative effects for everyone involved. Children who are victims of bullying are more likely to have depression, anxiety, increased sadness and loneliness, sleep problems, decreased academics, and health complaints. Children who bully are more likely to abuse substances, engage later in life in earlier sexual activity, get into fights, drop out of school, and become abusive adults towards family, spouses, and children than children who are not considered bullies. Bystanders are more likely to abuse substances, have increased mental health problems, and miss or skip school. (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2014).

Splete (2005) conducted a study based on mothers' reports of their four-year-old children. The study looked for common characteristics in children who became bullies. She found that cognitive stimulation and emotional support from parents showed a decrease in the likelihood of children becoming bullies. She also found that children who watched more television were more likely to become bullies and attributed this to a decrease in cognitive stimulation.

Perren and Alsaker (2005) found other common characteristics of bullies in their study with early elementary students. They found that bullies tended to be more aggressive and lacked prosocial skills. They also found that children who became bullies tended to have more friends and more leadership skills. Bansel, Davies, Laws, and Linnell (2009) had another theory on what caused bullying. They attributed bullying behavior to a striving for power. They found that bullying is not due to a weak character flaw, as previous research had suggested, but instead is due to a child trying to gain and maintain power in a school setting. This study suggests that it is not home life or parenting styles that produce, or do not produce a bully, but rather it is the power struggle.

Perren and Alsaker (2005) found common characteristics in victims of bullying as early as kindergarten. They concluded that victims tended to be more aggressive than non-victims were. The research showed that victims tend also to be isolated, more withdrawn, submissive, and frequently had no playmates; this may or may not come from home life or internal factors. The research concluded that work should be done with children in kindergarten settings. They suggest working with children already bullying, who are victims of bullying, and those who are at risk for falling into one of these groups (bully, victim, or bystander). Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, and Bates (1997) also found common characteristics of victims of bullies, but the characteristics came from home life and affected the type of victim the child may become. In their study, it was suggested that home life directly affected how a child responded to bullying. This included whether he or she became an aggressive victim or a passive

one. The study showed that children who live with harsh maternal experiences, specifically those that witnessed many acts of violence in the homes, created a more aggressive victim. It should be noted that parenting styles did not differ between passive victims and normative boys.

There is currently a vast knowledge of research on bullying and topics surrounding bullying in older children (kindergarten and older) (Laura-Humphrey, B. S., 2013). School social workers are frequently asked to work with students who need to develop prosocial skills. These groups may be small pull-out groups with a specific goal such as anger management or social skills groups. These interventions may include classroom/school interventions in reducing bullying, creating a less hostile environment, and teaching friendship skills. Social workers in early childhood programs are also asked to be a resource in teaching these same skills, but little is known about bullying in the preschool classroom (children between 33 months and 5 years old). It would benefit social workers to know what works in these early childhood programs, enabling them to help children before they enter kindergarten.

Also, a number of factors can be responsible for the development of bullying in preschoolers. According to Neto (2005), the world outside the school is reproduced within the school. Hence, family factors such as harsh parenting style, disorganized attachment, and poor parent-child relationship could trigger bullying behaviours among pre-school pupils. Furthermore, Cook (2010) believes that other salient factors such as the school climate, teacher characteristics and peer influence could predict bullying behaviour. Fielder (2008) is also of the view that the development of bullying can be viewed as part of a large process of interaction, with the home at its root. Thus, he opined that bullying behaviour is to a great extent believed to be a byproduct of family dynamics.

Farrell (1999) found that there is a need in early childhood education for bullying prevention programming in preschool. The author also stated that this need might not be widely

acknowledged in education settings potentially due to bullying being called by other names in the early childhood field. She speculated that in these early childhood settings, teachers may call bullying behaviors something different, although examples of terms were not given. This use of multiple names may cause the problem of bullying to be minimized. She concluded that there are many causes of bullying in preschoolers and more intervention work needs to be done. Ferrell stated one intervention could include creating a nationwide lexicon surrounding bullying in early childhood. Another intervention she stated was that more training for early education teachers; specifically, how to create a respectful atmosphere and work on prosocial skills in the classroom.

Other programs have been created to work on specific aspects of preschool behavior that is considered maladaptive while not specifically working on "bullying." Such programs include the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, which has a series of briefs on promoting positive developmental skills including language, social interactions, and managing behaviors.

Kaiser Family Foundation, (2011) also created a comparison guide about different evidence-based programs. In their publication, they compare many different programs geared at early childhood and show which skills are directly targeted at which populations of children. These programs focus on a wide range of topics including emotional regulation, decreasing aggression, promoting social skills, and family interventions. Again, these programs are aimed at certain behaviors and not necessarily bullying in context. Therefore, home is the primary and social unit where preschool children learn first. It is on this basis that the study examined the influence of home environment on bullying behavior among preschool pupils.

2. Statement of the Problem

Bullying is a nationwide problem happening in our schools, homes, and workplaces. There is

very limited knowledge of what bullying looks like in a preschool classroom. One thing that can be stated at the current time is that there is no consensus as to what causes bullying in general. There are also no studies that looked at causes of preschool bullying. Very few studies have looked at bullying in the preschool classroom and how the children involved are affected. There is also a lack of research on what is being done in the preschool classroom to prevent and stop bullying. The focus of this research work was to examine the influence of home environments (home location and socio-economic status of parents) on bullying behaviour (physical, verbal and sign bullying) among preschool pupils.

3. Purpose of the Study

The broad aim of this study was to assess the relationship between home environment and bullying behaviour among preschoolers (children from 3 to 5 years). Specifically, the study investigated the following objectives:

- Influence of place of residence on bullying incidence among preschoolers;
- Influence of neighbourhood characteristics on bullying incidence among preschoolers;
- Influence of parents' occupation on bullying incidence among preschoolers;

4. Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in this study.

- What is the influence of place of residence on bullying incidence among preschoolers?
- What is the influence of neighbourhood characteristics on bullying incidence among preschoolers?
- What is the influence of parents' occupation on bullying incidence among preschoolers?

5. Methodology

6. Results and Discussion of Findings

5.1 Research Design

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The target population for this study consisted of all parents, caregivers and pupils in the forty three (43) government owned preschools in Ijebu-Ode Local Government area of Ogun State. Data from the Education Board in Ijebu-Ode indicates that only 41 of the preschools are functioning with a total population of 82 caregivers with 2400 preschoolers. Simple random sampling technique was used to select twenty (20) schools out of the forty-one (41) functioning preschools in Ijebu-Ode Local Government. Also, five (5) parents were randomly selected as respondents from each preschool which gives a total sample of one hundred (100) parents as respondents. Purposive sampling technique was used to select forty (20) caregivers out of a total population of eighty-two (82) in government owned preschools in Ijebu-Ode Local Government area of Ogun State..

Three research instruments were developed and used for this study. The first instrument tagged, "Home Environment and Children Bullying Behaviour" (HECBB) was designed to collect information on home location of parents and their socio-economic status. The second instrument tagged, "Class Bullying Assessment Scale" (CBAS) was meant for caregivers in assessing the behavior of children in their group rooms. The third instrument was the self- observation report from the researcher. The researcher personally visited the selected schools to meet with the head teachers for acceptance. Caregivers were informed about the purpose of the study and how to fill the CBAS questionnaire. Also, they assisted in the selection of five parents whose children are in their group rooms in order to fill the HECBB questionnaire. The researcher visited the selected schools to observe the behaviour of the preschoolers within a short period of ten minutes. The questionnaires were returned a week after the distribution for further analysis. The data collected were analyzed using ANOVA to answer questions one, two and three Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used.

Answer to Research Question One

Q1: What is the influence of place of residence on bullying behaviour among preschoolers?

Table 1: Analysis of Variance results indicating influence of place of residence on bullying among preschoolers.

	SS	df.	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	459.592	3	153.197	.745	.528
within Groups	19734.408	96	205.567		
Total	20194.000	99			

Given the results of test of ANOVA ($F_{3, 96} = .745, p (.528) > .05$) on table 1, place of residence have no significant influence on bullying incidence among preschoolers. In other words, bullying incidence is not a function of place of residence. The two variables are therefore not related.

Answer to Research Question Two

Q2: What is the influence of neighbourhood characteristics on bullying incidence among preschoolers?

Table 2: Analysis of Variance results indicating influence of neighbourhood characteristics on bullying incidence among preschoolers

	SS	df.	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	96.315	3	32.105	.153	.927
within Groups	20097.685	96	209.351		
Total	20194.000	99			

Looking at the results of test of ANOVA ($F_{3, 96} = .153, p (.927) > .05$) on Table 2, there is no significant influence of neighbourhood characteristics on bullying incidence among preschoolers. In other words, bullying incidence is not related to neighbourhood characteristics.

Answer to Research Question Three

Q3: What is the influence of parents' occupation on bullying incidence among preschoolers?

Table 3: Analysis of Variance results indicating influence of parents' occupation on bullying incidence among preschoolers?

	SS	df.	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3072.667	4	768.167	4.262	0.003
within Groups	17121.333	95	180.225		
Total	20194.000	99			

According to results of test of ANOVA ($F_{4, 95} = 4.262, p (0.003) < .05$), parents' occupation has a significant influence on bullying incidence among preschoolers. The implication is that bullying incidence is a function of parents' occupation. The direction of change is indicated on table 3 below:

The result shows that bullying incidence is not significant or related to home location. This implies that the environment which the child belong does not necessary influence the child negatively. The result also shows that there is no significant influence of neighbourhood characteristics on bullying incidence among preschoolers. In other words, bullying incidence is not related to neighbourhood characteristics. Furthermore, the result shows that parents'

7. Discussion of Findings

occupation has a significant influence on bullying incidence among preschoolers. The implication is that bullying incidence is a function of parents' occupation. Studies conducted by Karnani, and Pomm, (2006) found that bully are also more likely to come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, including low maternal education and maternal unemployment. However, Grennan, & Woodhams, (2007) found little or no association between SES and bully victims. However, the results of the study showed that the only socio-economic status that has a significant relationship with bullying incident is the parents 'occupation. It can be concluded from this results that private employees do not create time for their children and are left alone with the daily challenges. The implication is that bullying incidence is a function of the parent's occupation.

8. Conclusion

Having examined the influence of home environment on bullying incidence among preschooler in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area of Ogun State, the following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study:

- The place of residence and neighbourhood characteristics of children do not necessarily influence bullying incidence except in exceptional cases.
- While parent's occupation has a significant influence on bullying incidence among preschoolers.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Schools should organize training for parents on what bullying is, what the school's policies and rules are, and how the enforcement of the rules may affect the child and the parents. Training may take many forms: PTA meetings, one- day training sessions, and teaching through modeling preferred behavior. It is expected

that parents will create a well-balanced home environment for the children to enable them develop positive relationship with others.

- Caregivers should make provision of measures to control bullying incidence among preschoolers and help them to engross healthy behaviour in their pupils. They can do this by allowing children to engage in creative writing, such as drawing images that discourage bullying among children in school.
- Furthermore, government and educational planners should organize seminars and provide counseling for parents, caregivers and school owners to become responsive in dealing with the holistic needs of their children.

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