

## TRUANCY RATE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DELTA STATE: IS BULLYING A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR?

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined impact of bullying on Delta State secondary school students' truancy rate. The study was guided with three research questions and two null hypotheses. The study adopted Ex-post-facto research design using descriptive and correlation methods. 106719 senior secondary school students from 477 public secondary schools in Delta State during the 2023/2024 academic year formed the population in this research. 672 Senior Secondary school students were selected as the study's sample from the study's overall population. The main instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The questionnaire which titled "Impact of bullying on the rate of truancy Questionnaire" (IBRTQ) was designed by the researcher. The validity and reliability of the instrument was established with a coefficient of 0.82 and 0.772 for bullying and truancy rate respectively. Three statistical methods were used for the data analysis. They are mean, PPMCC and linear and multiple regression. The findings showed that indicate that bullying have effects on Delta State secondary school students' truancy rates, showed a statistically significant positive correlation between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and verbal bullying, showed a substantial positive correlation between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and physical bullying. Based on the conclusion it was recommended among that in order to prevent absenteeism, parents should continuously monitor and inquire about their children's school activities to find out when they are being bullied, to prevent needless punishment and bullying by instructors and older pupils, the school administration should review its disciplinary policies and procedures.

**Keywords:** Bullying, Students' Truancy Rate, verbal Bullying, physical Bullying.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Bullying, one of the sub-dimension of aggressive behavior that affect negatively the academic, social, emotional and psychological development, is an important problem especially during childhood and adolescence, most especially the secondary school students in Nigeia. Any undesired, aggressive conduct that involves an apparent or perceived power imbalance, is repeated frequently or is very likely to be repeated, and is carried out by a young person or group of young people who are not their siblings or current romantic partners is considered bullying. The targeted kids have experienced harm or suffering as a result of bullying (Gladden et al. 2014). Studies on the effects of bullying revealed that it increased the risk for future problems and had a bad impact on one's social, psychological, and physical well-being. Numerous studies have identified a link between bullying and depressive symptoms, suicidal thoughts, social anxiety, loneliness, peer rejection, poor self-esteem, criminality, psychological stress, substance misuse, academic failure, and school dropout rates (Rigby, 2014; Totura, *et al.*, 2018).

Family dynamics play a significant influence in both the incidence and prevention of bullying behavior. Insufficient family relationships, inconsistent punishment, insecure parent-child bonding, insufficient family activities, and ineffective parental supervision are characteristics of families with children that bully others. Bullying is a common aggressive behavior that occurs among children and teenagers who attend school (Patton et al., 2017). According to published research, victims of bullying are apt to face significant difficulties with their physical and mental health (Nawi et al., 2017).

An association exists between exposure to bullying and both immediate and long-term effects, such as truancy, which impacts an individual's overall well-being (Neupane et al., 2020). There is conflicting evidence regarding the relationship between bullying and truancy, which has been attributed to the social environments of adolescents, the various ways in which students adapt to bullying, the involvement of peers and parents, and the presence of social support networks for students who are bullied. (Havik et al., 2015). Truancy is therefore a result of bullying. One of the biggest issues facing Nigeria's educational system is student truancy. Truancy is the intentional absence of students from school without their parents' or guardians' consent. According to Odoemelan (2014), truancy is the undesired behavior of missing school during school hours without permission from parents or the school administration in an effort to escape being teased, avoid certain tasks, or neglect some required school obligations. Truancy, then, is the act of staying away from school without authorization. Any child, individual, or student that skips school and chooses to go somewhere else and wander around is considered a truant.

Zhang, *et al.*, (2017) have classified acts of truancy into three categories: family factors, school factors, and student factors. Two family characteristics that could contribute to the truancy rate are low household income and inadequate parental monitoring. According to Bojon (2022), single parenting and the lower income class account for between one-third and half of truancy cases. The number of secondary school truants may be rising due to a variety of school-related issues, such as class size, attitudes, the school's truancy policy, and the ability to satisfy the different requirements of every student. Ogbonna et al. (2012) reported that kids who attend big schools may have emotions of alienation or isolation there, leading them to decide not to attend. Oversized classrooms make it difficult to regularly meet the many needs of students, whether they be social, academic, or otherwise. They also make it difficult to build connections between students and teachers, which fosters a culture of independence and a sense that everyone is on their own in the school. Drug usage and health issues, both mental and physical, are student factors that might potentially contribute to the truancy rate. Kolsac (2017) discovered that students who abuse alcohol or other strong substances had a higher likelihood of skipping class compared to their non-alcoholic counterparts.

Ogbonna, et al., (2012) attribute the high rate of truancy to a number of factors, including a decline in educational quality, subpar exam results, a high percentage of school dropouts and half-baked graduates, as well as the impact of these factors on students' post-school and general lifestyle choices. Due to the fact that most adults today engage in truancy because they were in school, truancy is also a role in their idleness, joblessness, unemployment, and underemployment. Kanga and Jagero (2015) state that truancy is an issue in secondary schools, with negative consequences for truants, their schools, and the community at large. They listed a few detrimental effects of being absent from school, including poor academic performance, lost learning opportunities, strained relationships with parents and instructors, and eventually dropping out of school. Negative effects on the school include decreased academic achievement, wasted time by

teachers pursuing truants and providing counseling. Future poverty for the truants' family due to unemployment, unstable families, and insecurity as a result of the truants' involvement in robberies and other crimes, as well as their current and past acts of theft and other delinquent behavior due to their social status. The truancy among students could be attributed to the various forms of bullying such as verbal and physical bullying commonly experience in schools.

Verbal bullying is also a well-known contributor of this scenario. Many students in the Nigeria particularly in Delta State skip school each day, just to evade the wrath of verbal bullies. A verbal bully hurts or degrades another individual with words. Name-calling, insulting, racial slurs, and persistent taunting are examples of verbal bullying. The simplest kind of bullying to perpetrate onto others is this one. It gets right to the point quickly. It may happen at the earliest possible moment, when nobody else is present, and its consequences can sometimes be more severe. Covert or hidden bullying that is often hard to recognize and can be carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Verbal bullying could be covert or overt. A few examples of covert bullying include lying and spreading rumours, using offensive facial or bodily gestures, casting scary or disdainful glances, playing cruel pranks to make someone feel embarrassed, imitating rudely, urging others to reject someone from society, and harming someone's reputation or ability to be accepted by others. Verbal bullying may have a negative impact on a victim's self-image. This kind of bullying may result in depression and other issues, as well as poor self-esteem. A study conducted in 2007 revealed that more than eighty percent of incidences of verbal bullying occurred inside the school premises. But the management of the school did not take any concrete action to resolve the difficulties completely (Thrill, 2015). According to research by Besa et al. (2021), 33% of middle and high school students firmly believe that their instructors are capable of investigating situations of verbal bullying. Additionally, research has shown that truants and bullies are four times more likely to become adults thinking about suicide and to be engaged in a criminal case.

Physical school bullying has been a focus of research by social scientists for decades, and such In recent times, policy officials and the media have paid close attention to bullying and its detrimental effects (Srabstein, 2018). Victims of physical bullying at school often have lower self-esteem than their classmates, worry for their safety there, miss classes, and avoid social interactions. These behaviours may result in depression and poor academic performance (Smith & Sharp in Qiang, 2015). Moreover, physical bullying victimisation may end in fatalities if victims suffer severe injuries or take their own lives due to extreme self-loathing (Olweus 2013). According to the aforementioned perspective, physical bullying at school, like other types of bullying, is linked to a sequence of detrimental behaviours that happen over time and reflect a power disparity between bullies and victims.

Why some studies had established that bullying has impact on the rate of truancy among in-school students (Dunne et al., 2013; Grinshteyn and Tony, 2017), a few studies indicated no significant association (Smith & Toda, 2016; Onyeaka et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2012). Similarly, among adolescents and secondary school pupils enrolled in school in Ghana, Zambia, and Mexico, bullying has been linked to a large increase in truancy. (Muula et al., 2012 Afful-Broni and Sekyi, 2014; Ruiz-Ramirez et al., 2018). Given these findings, it is believed that similar relationships may exist in Nigeria.

In light of the paucity of data regarding the relationship between bullying and truancy rates in Nigeria, particularly in Delta state, the current study investigates this relationship using a nationally representative dataset on adolescents enrolled in school that is accessible to the public.

Similarly research like that of Kolbert et al., (2014), Havik et al., (2015), and Pengpid and Peltzer, (2017) have looked at variables that have been shown to change the relationship between bullying and truancy, including grade in school, food insecurity, substance use, number of friends, colleague support, and parental involvement. They reiterated that bullying would lead to a higher percentage of absenteeism among teenagers attending school. Developing an enhanced comprehension of the connection between bullying and truancy will facilitate the creation of aggressive behavior and truancy reduction strategies that are supported by research. According to Sittichai et al. (2018), these actions are essential for preserving a secure atmosphere, enhancing student health, and reducing obstacles to academic performance.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The rate at which secondary school students are dropping out of school to join the hustling kingdom popularly known as HK is on the increase. The school is a social agent that molds children's habits, interests, attitudes, and feelings, as well as to transfer societal norms, culture, values, and traditions from age to age. Even with this, some students' attitude to schooling is poor and even fail to show up for school. Many of school children are now running away from school, hanging out with friends and peers with the believed that their parents know they are in school. Whereas they are not, engaging in a variety of juvenile delinquent activities such as fighting, drug usage among other deviant behaviour. These nefarious activities could be the bully they faced while in school resulting to traumatic style in not participating in the school's numerous programs. If these steps are not checked, they will get to undesirable level and affecting the students by lowering their academic performance or dropping out of school and affecting the society at large. To avoid the consequence, there is the need to address the impact of bullying on the rate of truancy among secondary school students in Delta State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of bullying on the rate of truancy among secondary school students in Delta State. Specifically, the study:

1. find out the impact of bullying have on Delta State secondary school students' truancy rate;
2. determine the connection that exist between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and verbal bullying?
3. ascertain the connection that exist between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and physical bullying

### **Research Questions**

1. What impact does bullying have on Delta State secondary school students' truancy rate?
2. What connection exists between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and verbal bullying?
3. What connection exists between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and physical bullying?

### **Hypotheses**

The below stated hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 interval level

1. No significant connection exists between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and verbal bullying

2. No significant connection exists between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and physical bullying

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### Design of the study

This study adopted *Ex-post-facto* research design using descriptive and correlation methods. In the *ex-post facto*, the researcher had no control over the variables of interest and therefore cannot be manipulated. Okagbare et al (2023) opined that in *ex-post facto*, the researcher only finds out what have taken place aforementioned to observation on the field. Thus, the researcher considered this design suitable for the study because it enables the researcher to statistically determine the effects between the variables.

### Population

106719 senior secondary school pupils from 477 owned public secondary schools in Delta State during the 2023/2024 academic year formed the population of this research.

### Sample and Sampling Techniques

672 Senior Secondary school students, selected from the study's population, make up the sample in this research. Stratified random sampling techniques was used to draw the sample. The stratification is based areas of the state (Northern Area, Central Area and Southern Area). In other word, 34 public schools from Delta North, 38 public schools from Delta Central and 24 schools from Delta South, making a total of 96 public senior schools across the 25 local government areas of Delta state. Secondly, 7 students was drawn from each sampled school through simple random sampling techniques (SRST) by a balloting method. In the balloting method every students will have equal chance of being selected into the sample.

### Research Instrument

The main instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The questionnaire which titled "Impact of bullying on the rate of truancy Questionnaire" (IBRTQ) was designed by the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into three sections; section A, B, C and D. Section A, B, and C consists of 15 item statement on bullying (verbal and physical bullying), while section D consist of 5 items measure the rate of truancy in secondary school. The respondents were asked to indicate their opinion on four points scale with close ended items as Strongly Agreed (SA) =4, Agree (A) =3, Disagree (D)=3, Strongly Disagree(SD)=1

### Validity of Research Instrument

The validity of the instrument was established by three (3) experts in Guidance and Counselling Department (Measurement and Evaluation Unit). These specialists assessed the instruments for appropriateness and suitability to the study, and their ideas were implemented

### Reliability of Research Instrument

Using the internal consistency method, the questionnaire was administered to 40 groups of senior secondary school students in Anambra State. The result of the test was used to compute the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach Alpha was applied for the computation of the reliability coefficient of the four subscales of the instrument. The internal consistency reliability coefficient for the four subscales was 0.82 and 0.772 for bullying (verbal and physical bullying) and rate of truancy. A general reliability coefficient of 0.89 was also obtained for the entire scales.

**Methods of Data Collection**

With the aid of two research assistants, the researcher employed senior secondary school students as the subjects in order to collect data directly from them. The participants were requested to exhibit confidence in their answers. A questionnaire was sent to 672 pupils, who were given copies to fill out and were picked up right away.

**Method of Data Analysis**

Three statistical methods of data analysis were used for the study. They are mean, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) and linear and multiple regression in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Software version 23. The mean was used to answer research question one. A mean of 2.50 stood for positive impact and a mean below the bench mark mean stood for negative impact while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used for research question two and three and the hypotheses were tested using Linear and Multiple Regression at 0.05 levels of significance to determine the significant relationship between the verbal, physical bullying and the rate of truancy.

**3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**Research Question One**

What impact does bullying have on Delta State secondary school students' truancy rate?

In order to answer this research question 1, impacts of bullying scale questionnaire responses were rated on the rate of truancy covered in the study. The mean rating of responses is presented in table 1

**Table 1: Mean Rating of Responses on the impact of bullying on truancy rate**

	Impacts of bullying on rate of truancy	N	Mean	Std.	Decision
	Questionnaire		(X)	Deviation	
1	In an effort to prevent other students from playing with my classmates, I have spread stories about them.	672	2.88	1.05	Agreed
2	I am occasionally left out of my classmates' games.	672	3.27	.82	Agreed
3	I have fabricated stories about a classmate.	672	3.36	.84	Agreed
4	Others in the school premises have made untrue claims about me.	672	3.53	.62	Agreed
5	I have incited other students to act against a classmate of mine.	672	3.19	.70	Agreed
<b>B</b>	<b>Verbal Bullying</b>				
6	I receive insults from my classmates	672	2.52	.64	Agreed
7	I am ridiculed, called names, and laughed at.	672	2.92	.77	Agreed

8	My classmates gossip about me, speak negatively of me behind my back	672	2.72	.70	Agreed
9	I make jokes about other students in order to make them laugh at.	672	3.26	.81	Agreed
10	I take part in the rumors that are being spread about a different student.	672	2.95	.89	Agreed
<b>C Physical Bullying</b>					
11	When students punch me, I strike back.	672	2.70	1.17	Agreed
12	I like to slap my classmates since I am bigger and tougher than them	672	3.52	.70	Agreed
13	I intentionally ran into another student.	672	3.16	.84	Agreed
14	I stood up for a person who had stuff stolen from them on purpose.	375	3.06	.89	Agreed
15	I hurled things at student	375	2.60	1.12	Agreed
<b>Grand Mean (X)</b>			<b>3.00</b>	<b>0.92</b>	

**2.50**

Table1 clearly highlighted the grand mean of impacts of bullying on Delta State secondary school students' truancy rate. Each variable has grand mean greater than and equal to the bench mark mean of 2.50. This implied that bullying has positive impact on Delta State secondary school students' truancy rate

**Research Question Two**

What connection exists between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and verbal bullying?

**Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Coefficient of Determination of verbal bullying and the rate of truancy among secondary school students in Delta State**

Variable	N	R	r <sup>2</sup>	r <sup>2</sup> %	Decision
truancy rate					
Verbal bullying	672	.077	.006	0.6	positive connection

Table 2 showed the r-value of 0.077 as the amount of connection between verbal bullying and the rate of truancy. The coefficient of determination (r<sup>2</sup>) is .006 and the amount of contribution of verbal bullying to the rate of truancy is 0.6. The result showed a positive connection between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and verbal bullying

**Research Question Three**

What connection exists between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and physical bullying?

**Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Coefficient of Determination of physical bullying and the rate of truancy among secondary school students in Delta State**

Variable	N	R	r <sup>2</sup>	r <sup>2</sup> %	Decision
physical bullying rate of truancy	672	.97	.94	94	positive relationship

Table 3 showed the r-value of 0.97 as the amount of connection between physical bullying and the rate of truancy. The coefficient of determination (r<sup>2</sup>) is .94 and the amount of contribution of physical bullying to the rate of truancy is 94. The result showed a positive connection between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and physical bullying

**Hypothesis One**

No significant connection exists between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and verbal bullying

**Table 4: linear regression analysis of verbal bullying and the rate of truancy**

**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.077 <sup>a</sup>	.006	.004	11.80146

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	550.209	1	550.209	3.951	.047 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	93313.861	670	139.274		
	Total	93864.070	671			

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	45.333	2.740		16.543	.000
	Verbal bullying	.299	.150	.077	1.988	.047

0.05

Table 4 reveals a linear regression output of the connection between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and verbal bullying . The computed F-value of 3.951 and a p-value of .047, testing the null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of .047 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis therefore rejected. This indicates that a significant



connection exists between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and verbal bullying. The R-square ( $r^2$ ) value of .006 showed that 0.6% of variance in students' performance was accounted for by verbal bullying.

**Hypothesis Two**

No significant connection exists between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and physical bullying

**Table 5: linear regression analysis of physical bullying and the rate of truancy ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.123	1	.123	.001	.976 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	93863.947	670	140.095		
	Total	93864.070	671			

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	50.640	2.187		23.151	.000
	Physical bullying	.006	.209	.001	.030	.976

0.05

Table 5 reveals a linear regression output of the connection between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and physical bullying. The computed F-value of .001 and a p-value of .976, testing the null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of .976 is greater than the alpha level of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis therefore accepted. This indicates that no significant connection exists between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and physical bullying.

**4. RESULTS DISCUSSIONS**

**Impacts of Bullying on the Rate of Truancy among Secondary School Students in Delta State**

Data from research question one is used to investigate the effects of bullying on Delta State secondary school pupils' truancy rates. The analysis's conclusions indicate that bullying affects Delta State secondary school pupils' truancy rates. This conclusion may have arisen from teachers' attempts to curb students' immorality, indiscipline, and delinquent behavior, which led to pupils using foul language, whipping, and disparaging their background and loitering around the school grounds instead of attending classes. This study supports the findings of Totura, Green, Karver, and Gesten (2018), who found that bullying among young people in schools was associated with both academic failure and school dropout. The study is also consistent with that of Ogbonna, Chinasa, and Grace (2012), who found that a high percentage of school dropouts, poor academic

performance on exams, and a poor life style for graduates have an impact on students' post-school and future adult lives.

### **Connection between Verbal Bullying and the Rate of Truancy among Secondary School Students in Delta State**

The study's second finding showed a statistically significant positive correlation between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and verbal bullying. There are numerous explanations for the finding that verbal bullying and truancy rates among Delta State secondary school students had a positive, statistically significant association. It is possible that adolescents who are verbally abused may develop detrimental physical and mental health conditions, lose interest in school-related activities, and these problems may continue into adulthood, thereby contributing to truancy. This study supports the findings of Besa et al. (2021), which showed that 33% of middle and high school students firmly believe that their teachers can investigate incidents of verbal bullying. They emphasized once more how bullies and truants are four times more likely to become adults with suicidal thoughts and to be involved in a criminal case.

### **Connection between Physical Bullying and the Rate of Truancy among Secondary School Students in Delta State**

Information gleaned from research question three and its hypothesis looks for a connection between physical bullying and Delta State secondary school pupils' absenteeism rates. The results of this study showed a substantial positive correlation between the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students and physical bullying. There are numerous explanations for the finding that physical bullying and the rate of truancy among Delta State secondary school students had a positive, statistically significant association. One possibility is that physically harassed students may become adult political thugs, assassins, arm robberies, or people traffickers as a result of dropping out of school (truancy). This study supports the findings of Olweus (2013), who claimed that, similar to other types of bullying, physical bullying in schools is linked to a number of detrimental behaviors that take place over time and repeatedly.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The study's conclusions support the idea that bullying has an effect on the absenteeism rate. Additionally, it can be said that there is a strong correlation between the rate of truancy in Delta State and both verbal and physical bullying.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study recommended the following that;

1. In order to prevent absenteeism, parents should continuously monitor and inquire about their children's school activities to find out when they are being bullied.
2. To prevent needless punishment and bullying by instructors and older pupils, the school administration should review its disciplinary policies and procedures.
3. School counseling services should advise pupils about the risks of truancy and other delinquent behaviors that might arise from bullying in any form.

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