

## SCHOOL BULLIES AND EDUCATION IN BOTSWANA: IMPACT ON OTHER STUDENTS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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### ABSTRACT

*The school is supposed to be peaceful democratic communities where harmony reigns between the learners themselves and educators. However, some antisocial behaviours in schools have turned them into places of torture and torment which ultimately compromises the goals of a school as a learning institution. This study explored the impact of bullies on other students and academic performance. It explored the emotional reactions of both bullies and their victims after bullying incidents. The study revealed that the impact of school bullying on both the victims and their victims is vicious. It results in low self-esteem, withdrawal and poor academic performance. The desire not to come to school is common amongst the victims. The findings reflect a scenario where most of the bully behaviour takes place outside the school. The study revealed that there are no intervention strategies to redress the emotions of both bullies and their victims, neither do they have a deliberate strategy to detect possible trauma suffered by the victims. As such, the study argues that if the oppressive climate is allowed to prevail in schools, learners will be affected drastically and their academic performance may deteriorate massively. This study conscientizes educators about some of the problems affecting the learning process in Botswana schools and it is hoped that the level of consciousness it raises will consequently lead to solution seeking which could benefit the essence of schools as productive educational environments.*

*Keywords: learning institution, bullies, bullying incidents*

### INTRODUCTION

Several factors affect the learning process and one of the most prevalent factors which affect learning in Botswana Secondary Schools is the problem of bullying, which consequently hampers educational pursuits. The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of school bullies on other students as well as bullies themselves. School bullying occurs when someone attempts to inflict, injure or create discomfort upon another (Smith & Sharp 1994). It is a social problem that is characterised by students displaying negative actions toward others such as making faces, mean gestures, or intentional exclusion from the group. Olweus (1999:10) in Smith, Morita, Junger-Tas, Olweus, Catalano & Slee (1999) indicates that school bullying occurs when one is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. In addition, Patterson, Littman & Bricker (1967) in Sanders & Phye (2004) posit that the bullies coerce their victims for anything they want. This could be money, ball, cigarette and others. The contention of the authors here is that bullying takes place when the victim is unable to defend himself or herself and is somewhat helpless against those who harass them. This eventually affects the student's learning process in multiple ways.

The impact of school bullies on other students has numerous effects that need to be accorded due attention. School bullies turn the school into an arena where education is almost impossible to attain. What worries most is that while some teachers may make efforts to find out about bullying in their class, the available evidence suggests that most teachers are only aware of a fraction of the bullying

which may be going on (Smith & Sharp 1994). This social phenomenon has not attracted meaningful intervention by the immediate custodians who in this case are teachers. Whitney & Smith (1993) cited in Smith & Sharp (1994) report a shocking reality that many victims of bullying have not told any teacher and bullies have revealed that no teacher has talked to them about it. Indeed, there is dire need to have intervention strategies in place to redress the effects of this phenomenon before it goes out of proportion. The classroom can only be turned into a learning paradise if it is free on antisocial behaviours such as bullying.

McGrath (2007) has classified bullying into three types namely, physical, emotional and relational. Under the physical type, the bully directs harm to another person, his or her property. Acts under this type include starting a fight, cornering or blocking movement of the victim, hair pulling, kicking, rape, homicide to state just a few. Emotional bullying is characterised by insulting gestures, dirty looks, taunting, name calling, insulting remarks related to disability, gender or sexual orientation and threatening another to secure silence. Lastly, relational bullying involves using negative body language, gossiping, spreading rumors, intentional exclusion, ostracizing and insulting publicly (McGrath 2007). Emotional bullying is meant to harm another person's self-concept while the relational bullying is geared towards damaging another person's feelings of acceptance. It is not only the over powered children who may resort to staying away from school, even adults may become suicidal. As such, this situation compels the school authorities to ensure that the school climate is conducive for learning so that education can positively pursue its social function of producing responsible citizenry.

According to Olweus (1999) in McGrath (2007) the victims develop difficulties in asserting themselves in peer group and it may leave mental scars on them. In sharp contrast, bullies develop more positive attitude toward violence and strong need for power and dominance. It is a time bomb for students with suppressed emotions as victims are always haunted by anxiety and aggression. Fried & Fried (2003) reveal that according to the USA National Education Association, children stay home from school every day because they fear what is going to happen to them on the bus, playground, cafeteria, bathroom, locker room or classroom. They report that "a number of parents have gone public and disclosed the devastating events of bullying that led to their children's suicides" (Fried & Fried 2003:6). On a similar shocking event, a father reported that his son committed suicide because after a summer of dieting, he looked in the mirror and decided that he was not thin enough to please his taunting classmates (Fried & Fried 2003). This is truly troubling.

Olweus (1993) & Coloroso (2003) in McGrath (2007) posit that bullies are aggressive toward peers and sometimes adults. They generally lack empathy for their victims and have positive attitude towards violence. They postulate that bullies are predatory, manipulative and have too much sense of entitlement hence self-absorbed. Furthermore, bullies crave attention such that they easily become intolerant of differences. This desire to dominate others leads them to suppress others. Bullying is perceived as antisocial behaviour that is in most cases presented by perpetrators through aggression. Malete (2006) posits that aggressive youths are prone to aggressive behaviour in adulthood. Youth aggression undermines achievement and the civil liberties of others. It is detrimental to the realization of safety, peace and security which are so crucial for any nation. According to *Daily News*, 18 May 2001, cited in Malete (2006) reveals that through their antisocial behaviour students destroyed school property and coerced others to take part in a riot against the school's administration in one of the senior secondary school in Botswana. Cases of students' riots in Botswana are quite common and should they continue uncurbed, they will affect society negatively.

Sanders & Phye (2004) have registered some discomfort that some educators and researchers consider bullying as just a dyadic process involving one bully and one victim. This limits the nature of this social phenomenon to mere characteristics of the bully and the victim. Bullies tend to score better than the victims. In other words, the educators do not accord this phenomenon the due attention. Olweus (1978) cited in Sander & Phye (2004) expanded the dyadic view and categorized bullies into aggressive bully and anxious bully. The aggressive bully is active, impulsive, assertive, strong and

easily provoked. He or she takes the lead in initiating the aggression and often seeks other bullies to do the same. Most bullies fall within this category. The anxious bully rarely initiates bullying and is characterised by low self-esteem, and lack of confidence. The danger of bully is that whether an individual cheers, laughs, or observes the bullying and does nothing, these actions reinforce bullying behaviour and increase the likelihood that it may occur again (Sander & Phye 2004).

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

School bullying is as old as formal education in Botswana although traditionally, it is common for children to quarrel or fight. As such, in some cases what constitutes bully is underestimated and reduced to kids' play. Farrugia (1996) in Borg (1998) posits that there is a tendency for teachers to underestimate bullying as a problem and dismiss bully incidents as trivial and not worth making much fuss about. The question that follows is how many times would one expect a bullying victim to seek the teachers' support when this is not forthcoming?

Olweus (1999) warns that the emotional reactions of both bullies and their victims need to be addressed with immediate effect in order to avert the repercussions. The exigency of unearthing these emotional reactions is not only to help the bullies and their victims, but rather to properly inform the administrators, parents and stakeholders of the appropriate intervention strategies. Unfortunately, it is common practice in schools to mete out punishment against the offender without proper evaluation of the benefit to the bully and the victim. It is apparently a deadly and critical limitation in the nurturing of our lovely children.

School bullying is prevalent in Botswana schools, Oodima Junior Secondary School included (Malete, 2006). Schools are places where any nations–state socializes young ones to become responsible citizens so as to contribute to economic development meaningfully. Societal values are also instilled at school. McGrath (2007) informs that bullying occurs in stages and there are warning signs. Firstly, the bully trolls, which is characterised by subtle acts targeting different individuals. Those with low self-esteem and low physical strength become victims as they may not resist or fight back. Secondly, the bully escalates the behaviour hence becoming pervasive. McGrath (2007) further posits that the perpetrator often enlists the cooperation of bystanders. In the third stage, the bully consolidates power through inflicting pain on the victim more repeatedly.

The magnitude of emotional reactions of bullies and their victims cannot be ignored in educational institutions. Like in other countries, Botswana should also forge high sensitivity to issues of this nature. Smith et. al (1999) denounce bullying as a subcategory of aggressive behaviour which is vicious. It is repeatedly directed to the victim. It is argued that bullying offers psychological gratification, status as well as monetary gains to the perpetrator. This is the power relationship that exists or happens in any human group. It can also take place at prisons, work place, juvenile offenders institutions to mention just a few. Therefore, manslaughter or murder may occur and further haunt the victims throughout their lives.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This study explored the school bullies and their victims as well as how their interaction impacts on academic performance. Moswela (2005) posits that even in the best-run schools in Botswana, many students experience peer victimization of one form or another. The impact of this social phenomenon is ruthless as evidenced by the death of nine students at a certain secondary school in Botswana (Moswela, 2005). According to Moswela, the victims were coerced to take a poisonous chemical called methanol by the senior boys. The intention was not to kill but to get them intoxicated. He further reveals that at another school boys who were expelled from hostels due to their deviant behaviour came at night and burnt the boys' hostels. Rigby (2000) cited in Moswela (2005) reflects that the glory in hurting is the enjoyment of seeing someone distressed, because the experience of

causing the distress is pleasurable. Moreover, the repetition of this continues to please. Moswela (2005) cautions that peer victimization is not an exclusive problem affecting youth only, but, it can also affect adults.

Covering the issue of school violence and bullying, *The Voice (5/11/10)*, also made a shocking revelation to the effect that some form five boys at Shashe Senior Secondary School were terrorizing others at the hostels. They are alleged to have tripped the boys' hostel main switch and brought the hostel under total darkness during which a targeted prefect was attacked. The suspects were consequently expelled from the hostels.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was guided by the following questions;

1. What makes students to be bullies?
2. What are the effects of bullying on academic performance for both the bullies and their victims?
3. How students feel after being bullied or bullying others?
4. How is the school addressing the emotional reactions from the bullies and victims?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The impact of school bullying has multiple and pervasive effects on both the bullies and their victims such that the Scandinavian countries took the initiative to address the issue in the early 1960s and 1970s (Smith et.al, 1999). The duo further inform that studies in this area were fuelled by tragic events such as suicides of children and young people who have been extensively bullied at school and have been unable to cope. In particular, suicides played a major part in inspiring the Norwegian intervention campaign, and a major part in resurgence of interest in Japan.

Research in this area expanded to Europe in the 1980s and 1990s. Similarly, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have developed interest in bullying in the 1980s and 1990s (Smith et al., 1999). "We hope that this sharing of global knowledge and experience ... helping to tackle what is clearly a global problem ... enhance the safety and rights of school pupils and the well-being and protection of ... victims of bullying" (Smith et al., 1999:4). So to some degree the problem of bullying has been and continues to be a torture some global problem in schools.

There is a concern that there is little literature on bullying in Africa, Botswana included. Maletle (2006) doubts that the developmental challenges facing Africa today especially cyclical violence and civil strife could have prompted research on youth aggression and violence to be widespread. However, he notes that the anecdotal evidence, including media reports, suggests that the problem is of similar magnitude to that reported in other parts of the world. Moreover, in the context of Botswana, media and police reports as well as reported violence and antisocial behaviours from schools are a testimony that violence and aggression are increasing at an alarming rate (Maletle, 2006).

### School Bullies and Victims

Evans (1996) cited in Fried & Fried (2003) posits that a behaviour is clearly bullying when there is an intent to harm, and the perpetrator finds gratification in the taunting and continues even when the victim's distress is obvious. When there is continuous taunting over a long period of time and it damages the self-esteem of the victim is a clear sign of typical bullying. Overwhelming abuse of power by the bully is eminent due to his or her age, strength, size and or gender. The victim is in most cases surely vulnerable. This victim feels isolated and exposed and may not report for fear of further victimization. Eventually, the victim experiences significant consequences as compared to the perpetrator. Bullies want to control everybody else because they cannot control themselves (Fried & Fried, 2003:35). All they want is power and prestige gained through terrorism.

Notwithstanding the pains inflicted by the bullies, Fried & Fried (2003) reflect that our desire to have a sense of control and claim to our space in the world are normal yearnings. They argue that there is nothing wrong with wanting to acquire and maintain power. They are adamant that it is natural for children to seek to be leaders or part of the powerful group in their school though knowing very well that the pyramid of leadership narrows. This means that the mental or physical strength available to the bullies must not be used to suppress others but to harness peaceful co-existence. However, they caution that the victims, bullies and the witnesses should be taught the value of power for the greater good. This should include their role in the design of building a generous and secure school community. The best remedy for the victims is to withhold satisfaction from the bullies. This may not be possible as the victim may not have that choice but to succumb to pressure.

Olweus (1993) & Coloroso (2003) in McGrath (2007) relay that bullies are aggressive towards peers and sometimes adults. Bullies generally lack empathy for their victims and have positive attitude towards violence. Fried & Fried (2003) observe the effort of the guidance counselor, Mary Beth Peterson, at Tomahawk and John Diemer schools in Olathe who took the initiative to explain to students the difference between joking, teasing and bullying. Primarily, joking occurs when both students are on the same level and are comfortable with the jokes. On a different note, teasing occurs when one student is higher and treating the other like they are not on the same level. This results in one student becoming uncomfortable and wishing for the teasing to stop. In bullying one student has power and the other has none. The victim is therefore very uncomfortable and desperately wishes the bullying to stop. Unfortunately he or she does not have power to extinguish that. Pushing and rude language are likely to feature. In his study '*Peer victimization in schools: Response from Botswana*' Moswela (2005) reveals that due to children's natural propensity to engage in mischievous acts, bullying in schools is not unexpected. In other words, students are used and expect bullying acts to feature during their interaction.

### **School Bullying and Education**

Holt (1982) in McGrath (2007:2) observes that the scared fighter may be the best fighter, but the scared learner is always a poor learner. It is apparent that most victims of bullying perform below average. McGrath (2007) informs that bullying occurs in stages and there are warning signs. First, the bully trolls, which is characterised by subtle acts targeting different individuals. The main purpose here is to identify potential victims with low self-esteem and low physical strength. The probable victims are those who do not resist or fight back. Quick comments, threats or taunts are used to test for potential victims. Second, the bullying escalates the behaviour hence becoming pervasive. She further informs that the perpetrator often enlists the cooperation of the bystanders. In the third stage, the bully consolidates his power through inflicting pain on the victim more repeatedly. Apparently, the victim sees no way out. McGrath (2007:12) says what started on the school bus every morning is now occurring in the classroom, in the cafeteria, on the playground... even on the telephone... at home. This is actually the typical relationship between the bully and the victim. Extreme consequences may include suicidal tendencies on the part of the victim

Sanders & Phye (2004) acknowledge that research has clearly demonstrated the relationship between school climate and general school disorder. Ma, Stewin & Mah (2001) in Sanders & Phye (2004) define school climate as the inner workings of the school, such as the social organization of the school and the system of social relations between and among teachers and students. The cultural system of norms and values are significant in determining the school culture. Batsche & Knoff (1994) in Sanders & Phye (2004) charge that the frequency of bullying in schools contributes to a fearful school environment loaded with intimidation where some students feel unhappy and unwelcome. For instance, according to the 1999 School Crime Supplement (US Department of Education, 2002), victims of bullying are far more fearful of being attacked at school, while travelling to and from school than those who are not victims (Sanders et al., 2004).

### **Bullying Versus Academic Performance**

Bullying has been defined as an act of victimization that offers the perpetrator complete power over his or her victim while academic performance is herein seen as the quality of output displayed by the

learner on how much he or she has mastered the learned instructional objectives. It is apparent that a student who happens to be a victim may not do well academically. *Science Daily* (20/08/10) reported that students who are bullied regularly do substantially worse in school. *Science Daily* revealed that in the UCLA psychologists report which was devoted to academic performance and peer relationships a high level of bullying is consistently associated with lower grades, hence the concern of this study. Further, the students who were rated the most-bullied performed substantially worse academically than their peers. For example, the findings on grade-point average across all three years of middle school, a significant 1.5 point decrease in GPA has been recorded among the most bullied.

## METHODOLOGY

In depicting the situation, the descriptive research design has been used in the study. The essence behind the descriptive research design was to enable the researcher to carefully describe and explain factual and detailed information on the impact of school bullies. Both the nominal and categorical data were used in the presentation of the researched data. The descriptive research design was also used to enable the researcher to explain the feelings of the respondents about bullying at Oodima Secondary School. Cho (1997) informs that data with some qualitative trait are called categorical data, however, this data is not limited to public opinion, surveys or census data. For nominal data, Cho (1997) posits that numerical values are just representation of the label without any actual numerical property. For example, 2 is not necessarily greater than 1 nor is double than 1. Likewise, 1 is not lower than 2 nor is half of 2. A question may be asked 'have you been bullied before? The answer could be 'yes' or 'no'. Or participants may be asked to state if they are male or female. In this case numbers could be assigned as 1 (male) and 2 (female), but, none is necessarily greater than the other.

### Selection of Participants

The population for this study consisted of seventy (n=70) respondents who are full time students (n=60) and staff (n=10) respectively. Purposive sampling was used to identify the respondents. There were thirty boys (n=30) and thirty girls (n=30), hence making ten (n=10) per gender and form. One (n=1) Head of Department, One (n=1) Guidance and Counselling teacher and eight (n=8) teachers formed the sample. Dawson (2009) observes that, unlike in probability sampling where generalization could be done, purposive sampling should be used if description is the goal.

The reason for the criterion was to have each form and sex represented so that bias is reduced where one may be a bully or victim because he or she is a girl, boy, form 1, 2, or 3 respectively. The Head of Department is the chief custodian of pastoral care within the school, therefore she was strategically placed to the access of information regarding bullying. The Guidance and Counselling teacher is central to intervention programmes in the school, in particular, calming distress emanating from bullying. The researcher felt that the eight teachers would offer a neutral voice thus ensuring the diversity of voices regarding bullying at Oodima Secondary School.

## FINDINGS

### Encountered Bullying Incidents

Of all the sixty (n=60) participants, thirty-two (n=32) have indicated that they have been bullied while twenty-eight (n=28) which translates to 53% and 47% respectively, have not been bullied. The data also shows that both form twos and threes females have been bullied in most cases. According to the research data, the least bullied are form one boys. The form one females, form two males and form three males were equally bullied at 50% (5 times). When asking the students about bullying 57% of the males indicated that they have never been bullied while the females who did not encounter bullying stood at 37%.

### Incidents Where Respondents Bullied Others

Forty-five (n=45) participants have not bullied others while fifteen (n=15) did. In other words, only 25% of the participants have bullied others and the rest 75% did not bully others. All the form one females did not bully others. In a very insignificant proportion, a form one male was involved in bullying others, together with two form two males and two form three females. Form twos and threes

had 13% and 10% of respondents who bullied others respectively. So generally, the issue of bullying is common among the senior students who are also older than their juniors.

### **The Frequency at Which Individual Respondents have Been Bullied**

On the frequency at which individual respondent was bullied indications were that 56% were not bullied; 10% bullied once; 22%-twice; 8%-thrice; 2%-quad; and lastly 2% having been bullied 5 times and above. The majority of form ones, both males and females have not been bullied at all. Of those who were bullied the most, it is only one form one female respondent who has been bullied four times and one form three male participant who also encountered bullying incidents five times and above. Most of the bullied respondents were bullied twice this term. This data therefore shows that the frequency of bullying is very minimal.

### **The Frequency at Which Individual Respondents Bullied**

Responding to the frequency at which individual respondents bullied others during the course of the term 82% of the respondents reported not having bullied others while 18% confirmed having bullied others during the school term. 7% bullied once; another 7% bullied twice; 2% bullied three times, and lastly, 2% of the participants reported having bullied others five times and above. The form ones have bullied others the least 2 times, followed by form twos and threes with 12 and 11 times respectively. Of all the participants, form two females bullied the most (9 times). According to the findings, form one females are most, therefore they could be avenging for what happened to them the previous year.

### **Places Where Most Bullying Occurs**

Majority, 60% of the respondents indicated that most bullying incidents occur outside the school. It is followed by classroom with 18%; playgrounds with 15%; and lastly at the kitchen with 7%. Most of the bullying outside the school has been observed as the highest among the form one and three females. It is only form one and three males who have witnessed bullying at the kitchen. Form one boys did not encounter any bullying scenes in the classroom. Important to observe also is that both form two female respondents and form three male respondents did not witness any bullying at the playgrounds. Similarly, all the form two participants did not witness any bullying incidents at the kitchen. Six teachers have said most bullying incidents occur at the playgrounds and classroom. The remaining four stated kitchen and on the way home.

### **Common Type of Bullying at Oodima Secondary School**

The majority 60% of the respondents have identified physical bullying as the most common, followed by emotional and relational with 21% and 18% respectively. Both form one and three males did not identify relational bullying as the most common, but, eight out of ten (8/10) for both forms identified the physical type. It is only 50% of form two girls who have identified emotional bullying as frequent while the rest of forms and gender are saturated at the physical type. Amongst the ten (n=10) members of staff, 70% identified physical type of bullying as the most common while the remaining 30% settled for the emotional type.

### **Reporting Bullying Incidents**

The respondents identified eight mediating authorities where complaints on bullying are reported. Teachers are the ones who receive most 30% of the reports pertaining to school bullying, followed by Head of Department with 22% of participants. The third in receiving students (victims) reports is the Student Representative Council with 17% of respondents. Of the sixty respondents, 12% said they report to the School Head. About 8% of participants said they report at the Staffroom. Guidance and Counseling Department; Home; and Deputy School Head were identified as follows: 7%; 3%; and 2% respectively. This data reflects that students view teachers as the most helping people in the school.

### **Effects of Bullying on Academic Performance of the Bullies**

Majority 62% of the respondents posited that bullies do not pay attention to school work, instead they are always thinking about bullying. Further, this results in dropping of their performance. 18% said bullies do not care about school. 2% said "They are always thinking about whom to go and bully after

the lesson and do not listen to the teacher". On a different note, 7% said bullies are aggressive to others while 3% said the bullied person starts to be afraid of going to school. 5% of the respondents observed that bullies feel happy when they bully others and are not affected while the other 2% said teachers may be concerned about bullies and fail to teach. Ten members of staff also gave their opinion pertaining to this theme. 80% of them said performance drops as they spend more time at offices for disciplinary actions; they lack concentration as they are always into abusing others; they are academically challenged and bullying elevates their self-esteem. The remaining 20% noted that bullies are academically average and are just seeking recognition. So the reason why they like bullying is that they are not meaningfully engaged at school.

### **Effects of Bullying on Academic Performance**

A significant 78% of respondents said victims of bullying do not concentrate in class. They also develop fear when thinking about coming to school. The victims also limit their participation in class. This leads to fear and anger. Eventually, victims' marks drop. Low self-esteem, loss of confidence and loneliness have been confirmed by 13% of the participants. 5% of the participants said victims feel hurt while 3% said much time is spent on bullies. A female form one student said, "Their academic performance drops because they never focus on their academic work". Another voice had it that "you will always be thinking about what they will do next, have low self-confidence, as a result you will fail because you never listen and concentrate". Of the ten members of staff, 70% said that it leads to unsatisfactory academic performance. Performance drops due to insecurity. The other 30% posited that lack of concentration and reduced participation in class is evident amongst the victims.

### **Possible Remedies for Bullies**

The respondents suggested that some remedies on bullying could include suspension and expulsion; corporal punishment; counseling and taking bullies to the *kgotla* (a traditional meeting place where the village Chief operates from) to face discipline from the traditional authority through corporal punishment. Amongst these respondents, 42% were of the feeling that bullies should be given corporal punishment in school as a corrective measure while 35% suggested suspension and expulsion. 18% have recommended counseling or rehabilitation. The remaining 5% of the participants have said that they need to be taken to the *kgotla*. A form two female said "They should be punished and be guided and should be programmes about bullying at school". An emotionally touched form two female respondent said, "They should be punished seriously" while a form one male said "They should be given hard punishment". The reason why the *kgotla* is preferred by some is because it is treated as the last resort in addressing indiscipline.

### **Strategies for Helping The Victims of Bullying**

A significant proportion, 42% of respondents indicated that the victims should be counseled. They must be informed that being victims of bullying is not the end of life. Reporting immediately to the relevant authorities was recommended by 27% of participants while 23% were of the opinion that school rules and regulations should be effectively enforced. 3% of the respondents were of the view that the victims of bullying should ignore and learn how to treat bullies. The remaining 5% Of the participants were of the view that bullying should be reported to parents; the school should find security to protect the victims after school; and inviting the police to talk to the students respectively.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the impact of bullying at Oodima Secondary School and determine the degree to which it affects the academic performance of both bullies and their victims. The study revealed that indeed school bullying adversely affects the academic performance of both bullies and their victims. Students' academic focus is seriously blurred such that it results in dropping performance. Both students and members of staff have indicated that bullying creates an environment which is not conducive for learning. Some respondents have indicated that class instructional material suffers when attending to cases of indiscipline. In this case the whole class suffers due to untaught instructional objectives, though planned for.



Low self-esteem has been consistently attributed to bully behaviour. Bullies tend to display this deviant behaviour in order to attract recognition which they crave for so much. Further, the bullies find themselves misplaced in an environment where their being is almost meaningless. They seem not to know the importance of being at school hence finding themselves involved in deviant behaviour. Members of staff, in particular, the Head of Department and Senior Teacher Guidance and Counselling have said problem identification and counseling is their strategy in their quest to redress this pervasive phenomenon. Parents are reported to be important stakeholders in this initiative. However, it is not that much effective as the school relies much on reported incidents. Apparently, there are no specific intervention strategies geared to address the emotional reactions of the students emanating from school bullying. The Senior Teacher Guidance and Counselling said that they do not have any cases of bullying for attention. Surprisingly, this contradicts his earlier version that bullying is common amongst students, where the senior students forcefully solicit intimate love from the junior students.

Some alterations were made on the methodology. According to the initial plan the researcher had wished to interview three heads of department, while on the ground, the school had only one head of department. The intended two teachers were increased to ten, though only eight of them were able to complete their questionnaires. The qualitative type of research has been employed in this research. Descriptions have been used in the presentation of data. The researcher used the questionnaires for both students and members of staff only.

## CONCLUSION

The impact of school bullying can no longer be left to students to handle on their own. Schools must be free of threats. It is now a necessity for schools to put in place intervention strategies to curb bully behaviour. It is imperative that school bullying reverses the essence of learning institutions. Members of staff should identify prevalent problems in their schools and engage in research that may help solve some of the problems that may otherwise require some huge funding from outside.

The majority of the bullies are students who are academically challenged whose main priority is not geared toward school work. This results in low self-esteem which makes them to bully others for recognition. The data gathered from the majority of students that bully is common amongst the Oodima Secondary School students was not congruous with the observation by the members of staff. The reason behind this could be that most victims are afraid for fear of further victimization. However, the findings revealed that most bullying incidents occurred outside the school. Most school bullies find it difficult to bully others at school as the school is against such behaviour. Therefore, one may surmise that the school deters deviant behaviour.

Members of staff have identified playgrounds and classroom as the dominant places where bully occurs contrary to students who have identified outside the school. Much interaction between students and teachers occurs at the playground and classroom, hence the identification. It further informs that teachers are not aware of bullying incidents outside the school. Form ones are the most victims of bully behaviour. This could be due to their young age and small size.

The students have indicated that they feel insecure at school because the school does not protect the victims enough. Socially deviant behaviour thrives better when the school system is flaccid in its endeavour to bring to book the perpetrators. Failure to put in place the measures that address the emotional reactions of the victims and bullies is catastrophic. Most members of staff were of the feeling that students should be taught about the dangers of bullying. However, generally it appears as though enough is not being done to curb the problem of bullying in school.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

Given the findings of this research, the researchers caution the school to establish effective intervention strategies for redressing the impact of bully behaviour. The existing structures or entities like the offices of Head of Department and Guidance and Counseling should put in place measures that would detect the affected school so that their being at school become meaningful. Students should be encouraged to report bully incidents that occur outside the school. Inclusion of other stakeholders

like parents is crucial. Individual student's academic progress record should be closely monitored so that any in performance could be known before it is too late. The supposedly inhuman action of the bullies should not be allowed to flourish in schools since it can promote a continuous culture of trampling upon other students' learning rights.

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