

The Relationship between Emerging Forms of Bullying and Self-Esteem among Secondary Schools Students in Bungoma County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between emerging issues of bullying and self-esteem among Secondary School Students in Bungoma County, Kenya. The Social-Ecological Theory and Psychosocial Theory guided the study. The research population was 29,040 Form 3 students, Deputy Principals and Guidance and Counseling teachers from 360 secondary schools participated in the study. A sample size of 399 students was drawn from boys, girls and co-education schools. Form Three Students were randomly selected from the sampled schools. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design using mixed-method approaches and correlational design. Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected concurrently. Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling was used to sample schools and students, respectively. A pilot study was conducted on the 30 Form Three students selected from three categories of secondary schools in Bungoma County. Data was collected using a self-response questionnaire and interview schedule guide. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and percentages were used to analyse and describe data quantitative data. Inferential statistics such as Pearson Correlation statistics, ANOVA was used to test the significance of the stated hypothesis at the alpha level ($\alpha = 0.05$). The qualitative data was thematically analysed based on the objectives and presented through texts. All analysis was done using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. The findings revealed that there was a relationship between emerging forms of bullying and self-esteem $R^2 = .388$ (38.8%).

Key Terms: Bullying, Self-esteem, Secondary Schools

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Introduction

Bullying is an old problem that dates as far as the 1970s and was perceived as “ritual of passage”, in schools. Early researchers such as Olweus (1978) pointed out that there are negative effects of bullying on youth development. The researcher reported that bullying and victimization is a widespread global problem. Rigby and Smith (2011) noted that bullying was a form of aggressive behaviour involving a power imbalance that allows a bully to victimize a less powerful individual (the bullied). The bully sought to harm or intimidate the targeted individual (bullied). Other researchers such as (Menesini, & Salmivalli, 2015; Smith, 2014) noted that bullying is a repeated act of physical, verbal, psychological attack, intimidation that is intended to cause, fear, distress or harm to the victims. The researchers noted that bullying includes not only physical violence and verbal threats but also relational bullying such as; name-calling, spreading rumours and social isolation. Research cited by Espelage et al. (2003) among students suggest that profiles of bullies and victims may be categorized as bullies, aggressive bullies, victims, bully-victims, bystanders, and normal controls. Not many studies have tracked the profiles to establish psychosocial adjustments in Kenya. This study assessed victims on self-esteem.

While research on bullying has received a lot of attention in western countries, it has been under-studied by African scholars who seemingly overlook problems related to bullying in their contexts. Sisiya, Rudatsikifa and Muula (2012) conducted a study among a nationally representative sample of adolescents on bullying among school-attended adolescents in grade 7 and 10 in Zambia; the findings reported that more than 60% of the adolescents affirmed being bullied. A study in Tanzania revealed that bullied school-attending adolescents in Dar es Salaam were more likely to be truant, suffer from mental health problems and have possibly experienced hunger, social isolation and depression (Wilson, Celedonia, &

Kamala, 2013). This study focused on Zimbabwe and Dar es Salaam, which is developing like Kenya. The two studies did not bring out specific forms of bullying experienced by adolescents. The current study sought to establish whether similar observations could be generalized to students in Bungoma County, Kenya.

Notably, little has been documented on these forms of bullying in Kenya yet research indicates that approximately one in three young people around the world are now online in one way or another in addition; forms of bullying are universal phenomena, (Livingstone, Stoilova, & Kelly 2016). Arguably, socialization between young people from Kenya and other westernized countries has been made possible through social networking sites such as facebook, twitter, exchange visits and availability of computers and internet connections, have laid a platform for the exchange of information globally hence predisposing them to cyberbully. Cyberbullying, therefore, has been adopted by youths in Kenya from youths in westernized countries. A study done by Maina (2012) indicated that students used the internet quite often, especially for chatting and sending videos and messages to other students. Muinde (2015) agreed that cyberbullying was common among youths, and if this issue was not handled in time, it could result into profound outcomes such as depression, anxiety, severe isolation, and suicide. However, bullying has been studied mostly in the context of indiscipline behaviour in Kenya. Ngesu, Gunga, Wachira, Muriithi, Kili and Adhiambo (2013) carried out a study in selected secondary schools in Kenya. The study found out that, bullying manifested in the form of absenteeism, violence, high school dropouts, low self-esteem and poor academic performance. This study showed that adolescents were affected by bullying, and this was bound to jeopardize their future development.

Problem Statement

Bullying has been in existence in Kenyan schools for many years and has had both physical and psychological effects

on the learners. Forms of bullying have also shifted from physical violence, stealing, and washing clothes of senior students to social exclusion, threats, sexual and ethnic harassment, public humiliation, destruction of the targeted students' property, stalking and to most sophisticated such as cyberbullying texting through social media, emails and social exclusion. Despite the growing recognition and entrenchment of the vice in schools, its influence on the adolescents' development has not received adequate attention. However, there has not been much documentation on the relationship between emerging forms of bullying and self-esteem. Current studies indicate that Kenya is among countries with the highest level of bullying with a prevalence of 43-74 % among adolescents aged 13 to 17 years. Despite the government's efforts to eradicate the vice, the presidential committee on the discipline of students recommended that the Kamunge recommendation on Guidance and counselling had not been implemented in most schools. Basic Education act 2013 also spells out clearly that administrators should provide a secure physical and psychological social setting for the learners, yet bullying is still reported. In particular, Bungoma County has experienced several incidences of indiscipline cases associated with bullying among students in secondary schools. Between 2017 and July 2018, there were twelve cases of violent acts of behaviour related to bullying. The County Education office had sufficient evidence of bullying in schools and other violent behaviours such as fighting, rioting and sexual violence. The fact that there is a dearth of documented studies on the relationship between bullying and psychosocial adjustment implies that the issue of bullying has not been adequately addressed in empirical research in Bungoma County. If this situation continues, the effects may culminate into suicide, dropout or have psychological and physical, which affects both bullies and the bullied. This presents a knowledge gap concerning the dynamics and consequences of the phenomena. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the

relationship between emerging forms of bullying and self-esteem among students in secondary schools in Bungoma County.

Literature Review

Bullying is one of the forms of aggression whose harm is intentional and often occurs in society (Alana, 2010). Specifically, school bullying has been an area of concern as far as the 1970s (Poipoi, 2011; Arthur, 2012). According to Espelage, Basile and Hamburger (2012), bullying can include relational aggression such as hitting, name-calling or social exclusion (Dragowski et al., 2011). In a 2012 study by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, it was found that bullying occurred in schools due to wrangles over personal properties.

Adolescence is a period of identity development (Braet, Wante & Vervoort, 2016) this depends on the cues from the immediate environment. The adolescents, however, tend to imitate behaviours and situation that help them value selves either positively or negatively. Existing Studies provide evidence that demonstrates a consistent correlation between bullying and self-esteem, with those exposed to greater frequencies of bullying showing lower levels of self-esteem (Barzilay, Brunstein, Apter, Carli, Wasserman, Hadaczky, 2017). Low self-esteem function as an indicator of various forms of internalizing psychopathology in adolescents (Isomaa, Vaananen, Froid, Kaltiala-Heino & Marttunen, 2013). However, high levels of self-esteem before bullying is also likely to influence the way a victim adjusts, suggesting that self-esteem may be vital in the relationship between bullying and adverse outcomes (Tetzner, Becker, & Baument, 2016).

The Ecological System Theory developed by Uric Bronfenrenners in 1979 guided this study. The Theory postulates that individual, peer and school level interactions influence the development and understanding of young people's behaviour (Hemphil, Tolt & Herrenkoh,

2014). According to the theory, the individual interacts with forming a socio-ecological framework within five ecological levels. This study was based on the *micro, meso and exo* systems.

In this study, bullying is an ecological phenomenon, which is established and sustained through a complex interaction between individual attributes, peer relation and school levels factors, and it influences individual's psychosocial development. The Social-Ecological Theory proposes that individual characteristics, which in this study were age, gender and psychological support, interact with group-level factors (Espelage, Holt & Henkel, 2003).

Methodology

This study applied a cross-sectional research design using mixed method research methodologies to collect information. The target population comprised of 106,559 students from all public schools in Bungoma County. The population consisted of 54,798 females and 51,761 male students. The accessible population under study was 29,040 Form Three students. Purposive sampling was applied used in this study, as it is effective in studying subjects that possess specific characteristics that are required in the study hence Form Threes. To select a specific sample from the population of Form 3 students who took part in the study, simple random sampling was used to select the student respondents. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula 399 students in Form 3 were obtained and was assumed to be a representative of the total population of 29,040 Form three students. Simple random sampling was employed to get 11 students per school involved in the study. One Guidance and counselling teachers were purposively selected to the sampled schools. Data for this study was obtained using items on a scale; thus, Students' questionnaire, Deputy Principal and Teacher Counselor Interview schedule guide was used. A pilot study was conducted to assess the reliability of the instruments. This was done in 3 secondary schools, 3

Guidance and counselling teachers, and 3 Deputy Principals were involved. Data was coded scored accurately and transcribed into the computer for analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21. Items for the students' questionnaires on emerging forms of bullying and psychosocial adjustment were scored on a scale of 5-point Likert Scale.

Research Hypothesis

To achieve the research objectives, the following null hypothesis was posited and was tested at the 0.05 significance level:

H_0 1: There is no significant relationship between emerging forms of bullying and self-esteem among students of secondary schools in Bungoma County.

Findings and Data Analysis

Prevalence of the various forms of emerging bullying considered in the study was computed using a 5-point Likert scale. The ratings for each respondent on the various indicators of the emerging form of bullying were summed up to obtain an index, which measured the level of the particular forms of bullying amongst students. For Cyberbullying had, the index ranged from 12 to 60 hence an index of more than 36 implied higher levels of cyberbullying while an index of less than 36 could imply a low level of cyberbullying; stalking index ranged from 18 to 90. The descriptive statistics for the various forms of emerging bullying are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Emerging Forms of Bullying

Index	Min	Max	Mean	Std Error	Std. Dev.	Ske wnes s
Cyber	12.00	39.00	20.62	.37	7.44	.87
Stalki	16.00	69.	49.75	.61	12.21	.07

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The descriptive statistics results displayed in Table 1 indicate that cyberbullying had a mean index of 20.62 with the scores deviating from the mean to the extent of 7.44. Since the mean (20.62) was less than the average score of 36, the result suggests that the level of cyberbullying was low among students of public secondary schools in Bungoma County. The skewness index of 0.87 shows that the distribution of levels of cyberbullying indices was positively skewed with more observation above the mean than below the mean. This implies that majority of the students considered their levels of cyberbullying to be high.

Stalking, as a form of emerging bullying, had a mean index of 49.75 with the scores deviating from the mean to the extent of 12.21. Since the mean (49.75) was more than the average score of 45, the result suggests that the level of stalking among students of public secondary schools in Bungoma County was high. The skewness index of 0.07 shows that the distribution of levels of stalking indices was positively skewed with more observation above the mean than below the mean. This implies that majority of the students considered the levels of stalking as a form of bullying to be high.

Multiple regression analyses were computed to establish whether the forms of bullying were significant predictors of self-esteem. A strategy proposed by Field (2005) was adopted. According to Field, all the predictors are entered in the model to examine the predictors that contribute substantially to the model ability to predict the outcome by examining the standardized beta (β) values. These values are not dependent on units of measurements of the variables they tell us the number of standard deviations the outcome will change because of one standard deviation change in the predictor. They are measured in standard

deviations, are directly comparable, and provide insight into the importance of predictor in the model.

To establish the relationship between the emerging forms of bullying and self-esteem of students in secondary schools in Bungoma County, a multiple regression analysis was used. The regression model was of the form:

$$y = a_0 + a_1X_1 + a_2X_2 + \epsilon, \quad \epsilon \sim N(0,1)$$

Where, Y is the level of self-esteem; X_1 is the level of cyberbullying, X_2 is the level of stalking and a_0 is the constant of the regression equation, a_1 and a_2 are the regression coefficients while ϵ is the error component.

In interpreting the findings of multiple regression analysis, the major elements considered were the coefficient of multiple determination (R-square), the F-statistic in the ANOVA Table, the regression coefficients and beta values. To assess the level of variation in the levels of self-esteem that can be explained by emerging forms of bullying, the coefficient of multiple correlations and the coefficient of determination were used. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Model Summary of variation in Self Esteem explained by Forms of Bullying

(N=399)

Mode l	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.62	.39	.35	7.99

Predictors: (Constant), Cyberbullying, Stalking

The results show that the coefficient of multiple correlations was 0.623, which indicates a strong correlation between the emerging forms of bullying and the level of self-esteem amongst secondary school students in Bungoma County. The coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.38.8$ indicates that 38.8% of the variation in levels of self-

esteem for the sample of 399 secondary school students in Bungoma County can be explained by the emerging forms of bullying while 61.2% remains unexplained.

In assessing whether the model can significantly predict the levels of self-esteem among the secondary school students in Bungoma County, the *F*-statistic from the ANOVA was used, and the results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of ANOVA tests for Self Esteem (N=399)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1320.137	4	330.034	15.157	.000
	Residual	8579.099	394	21.774		
	Total	9899.236	398			

Predictors: (Constant), Cyberbullying, Stalking

In the findings presented in Table 3, *F*-statistics results reveal that the independent variables; Cyberbullying and Stalking significantly predict the levels of self-esteem secondary school students in Bungoma County ($F_{(4,394)}=15.157, p < 0.05$). This indicates that the results of the regression are indeed true and not the consequence of chance.

In assessing the significance of the multiple regression coefficients in the model, the *t*-test for regression coefficients and the standardized beta values were used. The unstandardized regression coefficients, the standardized beta coefficients and *t*-test values are presented in Table 4

Table 4. Coefficients of the relationship between Emerging Forms of Bullying and Self Esteem

(N=399)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	58.903	1.578		37.338	.000
Cyber	-.161	.076	-.056	-1.981	.02
Stalking	-.047	.050	-.071	-1.953	.04

Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem

Based on the unstandardized coefficients, the regression model is, therefore;

$$Y = 58.903 - 0.161X_1 - 0.47X_2$$

The results illustrated in Table 4 indicates that the *t*-test value for the cyberbullying coefficient is significant at 0.05 level of significance ($|t| = 1.981, p < 0.05$) and that of stalking is significant at 0.05 level of significance ($|t| = 1.953, p < 0.05$). Based on these results, the study rejects the null hypothesis (H_{01}) which stated that 'there is no significant relationship between emerging forms of bullying and self-esteem among students of secondary schools in Bungoma County.' The study, therefore, concludes that the emerging forms of bullying have a statistically significant negative effect on the self-esteem of secondary schools' students in Bungoma County at 0.05 level of significance.

The standardized beta coefficients indicate that social exclusion as a form of bullying had the greatest effect size as shown by its largest beta value of 0.191, which indicates that for each unit increase in the level of social exclusion holding the other forms of bullying constant will result to a

19.1 decrease in the students' level of self-esteem. Sexual bullying had the second greatest effect size of 0.108, which indicates that a unit increase in the level of sexual bullying holding the other forms of bullying constant will result to a 10.8 decline in the students' level of self-esteem. Stalking had a beta value of 0.071, which indicates that a unit increase in the level of stalking holding the other forms of bullying constant will result to a 7.1 decline in the students' level of self-esteem. Cyberbullying had the least but significant effect size of 0.056, indicating a 5.6% decline in self-esteem for a unit increase in the levels of cyberbullying.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The Correlation analysis findings showed that there was a significant negative correlation between social exclusion and self-esteem was ($r = -.24, p = .00$), the study also observed that cyberbullying and self-esteem had a negative correlation ($r = -.22, p = .00$). Further, there was a negative correlation ($r = -.42, p = .01$) between stalking and self-esteem. The relation between sexual bullying and self-esteem was also negative ($r = -.51, p = .00$). The hypothesis of this study 'there is no significant relationship between emerging forms of bullying and self-esteem' was therefore rejected. The study established an R^2 of 0.388, which indicated that 38.8% of the variation in the levels of self-esteem for the sample of 399 secondary school students in Bungoma County could be explained by the emerging forms of bullying.

Multiple Regression analysis was later computed to examine whether the emerging forms of bullying predicted self-esteem. It was found that only social exclusion was a significant predictor of low self-esteem $\beta = -0.191, p = 0.00$ when effects of other predictors (cyberbullying, stalking and social exclusion) were held constant. The standardized beta coefficients indicated that social exclusion as a form of bullying had the greatest effect size with a unit increase

in the level of social exclusion holding the other forms of bullying constant resulting to a 19.1% decrease in the students' level of self-esteem. Sexual bullying had the second greatest effect size with a unit increase in the level of sexual bullying holding the other forms of bullying constant will resulting to a 10.8% decline in the students' level of self-esteem. Cyberbullying had the least but significant effect size with a 5.6% decline in self-esteem for a unit increase in the levels of cyberbullying.

This suggested that one standard deviation increase in social exclusion contributed to .21 standard deviation decreases in students' self-esteem and was, therefore, a most substantial predictor of low self-esteem in secondary school students. From these findings, it was evident that there was a relationship between emerging forms of bullying and self-esteem. Regardless of the form of bullying, it had a consequential lowering of the students, self-esteem. The ANOVA results showed that the emerging forms of bullying had a significant effect on the self-esteem of secondary schools' students at 0.05 level of significance. Teachers confirmed the presence of the forms of bullying and their association with low self-esteem among the students who experienced bullying. The students showed behaviours such as fear, embarrassment, helpless and frustrated. This study, therefore, rejected the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between emerging forms of bullying and self-esteem. Based on these findings, there is a strong need for comprehensive school-based programs directed at the prevention and intervention of the emerging forms of bullying. Education about emerging forms of bullying could be integrated into the school curriculum, for example, engaging students in scholarly debates and life skills, as well as coverage of sexual bullying in formal sex education curricula.

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