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# ASSOCIATION BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND BULLYING ROLES OF IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN ILORIN METROPOLIS

By

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## **Abstract**

*Studies mostly from United States and Europe have looked into the relationship among emotion, emotional intelligence and bullying revealing negative relationship between cognitive intelligence and bullying, empathy and bullying perpetration, ability to understand and manage other people's emotions and victimisation. However, such inquiry is limited for Nigeria, hence, this study investigated whether emotional intelligence of in-school adolescents is related to his/her role in bullying interactions, either as a perpetrator, victim, bully-victim or non-involved. Sample was chosen from six schools using stratified random sampling. Self-report inquiry form was used to determine the level of the respondents' emotional intelligence and the bullying roles. To test the hypotheses, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was employed. Outcomes of study pointed out varying rates of bullying roles, 43.5% (non-involvement) 4.4% (bullying perpetration) 13.33% victimisation and 39.05% (bullying-victimisation). It was also disclosed that emotional intelligence has significant association with victimisation, bullying-victimisation and non-involvement but not with bullying perpetration. These findings have implications for bullying prevention and treatment especially for victims and bully-victims. It is recommended that emotional intelligence treatment should be used in assisting victims as well as bully-victims that formed larger percentage of those involved in bullying interaction.*

**Keywords:** Association, Bullying roles, Emotional intelligence, in-school adolescents

## **Introduction**

Inquiries into the prevalence of bullying behaviour across the globe have indicated it is a common phenomenon Nigeria been no exemption (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Pepler & Craig, 2000; Popoola, 2005; Rigby, 1995; Yusuf, 2010). Studies have also documented the short and long-term devastating consequences of bullying behaviour on individuals involved in such interactions (Peplar, Craig, Connolly, Yuile, McMaster & Jarg, 2006; Cunningham & Whitten, 2008).

Bullying behaviour has been found to predispose perpetrators to sexual harassment, dating aggression, workplace harassment, marital aggression, child abuse and elder abuse (Peplar et al, 2006). Victims of bullying behaviour are prone to subsequent negative psychological reactions such as anxiety, depression, loss of self-esteem and a desire to escape by leaving the peer group or school, with possible thoughts of suicide (Cunningham & Whitten, 2008). Bully-victims have been found to be at the greatest risk for various psychosocial problems. Such problems include: poor social adjustments, (Nansel et.al. 2001); psychological disturbances, (Kumpulainen, Rasanen, Henttonen, Almqvist, Kresanov, Linna, Moilanen, Pina, Purra, & Tamminen, 1998); social isolation, (Juvonen, Graham & Schuster, 2003; Veenstra, Indenberg, Oldehinkel, De-Winter, Verhulst & Ormel, 2005); alcohol use, (Nansel et.al., 2004); depression, (Juvonen et.al., 2003); anxiety, (Kaltiala-hieno et.al., 2000); health problems, (Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Sahya & Ruan, 2004);

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, (ADHD) (Schwartz, 2000); conduct disorder (Kokkinos & Panayiotou, 2004) and disturbed personality (Kaltial-Heino et al, 2000). In a similar note, Kumpulainen and Rasanen, (2000) found that bully-victims are more prone to psychiatric symptoms, relationship difficulties and problem-internalising and externalising behaviour in later years.

Bullying behaviour has been described as an intentional, continual aggressive behaviour towards a person, the victim, who cannot defend himself, and this usually involves an imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim (Mitsopoulou & Giovazolias, 2013). Several studies have been conducted on nature and correlates of bullying behaviour but there seem to be the need to gain more insight into other factors which may have implication for anti-bullying programmes (Olweus, 2000).

Early researches – Lazarus (2000) and Marieke, et al (2017) have revealed significant link between individual's involvement in bullying interaction and their emotions. Lazarus (2000) opined that individuals with internalised fear may develop the feeling of being vulnerable, hence exhibit avoidance and flight. These had being shown to be the upshots of victimisation by Cunningham and Whitten (2008). However, it is not very clear whether victimisation has led to internalised fear or if internalised fear has predisposes adolescents to victimisation. It has also been noted that anger and reactive fear may predispose individuals to stress reaction, thereby leading to confrontation or reactive bullying as exhibited by bully-victims (Lazarus, 2000). Marieke et al (2017) found that increased anger and minimal guilt predicted increased bullying, more bullying predicted increased anger and decreased guilt. Higher levels of anger, fear and shame predicted increased victimisation and vice versa.

The extent to which an individual is able to manage his/her emotions could mediate the consequences of victimisation on him/her. Christle, Jolivet and Nelson (2000) noted that individuals (victims) that are highly flexible competently mitigate the psychological brunt of victimisation; while those who are unable to control their negative feeling due to victimisation compromised their well-being, their relationships with others and the impact which the environment has on them (Graham & Juvonen, 2001).

It has been observed that individuals that play different roles in bullying interaction react to environmental stimuli in varying ways. Wood and White (2005) revealed that adolescent bullies were less thrilled or tensed by impetus in the environment compared to bully-victims who experienced high level of elation and or tension by environmental inducement, the researchers concluded that the ability of pure bullies to maintain minimal level of elation or tension assist bullies to manipulate their emotions and become effective traitor.

The role that an individual plays in bullying interaction has also been viewed in relation to his/her ability to understand and manage his/her own feeling and that of others. Parker, Kloosterman and Summerfeldt (2014) revealed that victims as well as bully-victims scores significantly lower than their peers on interpersonal, adaptability and stress management scales, while bullies scores significantly lower than their peers on the interpersonal and stress management scales. Similarly, Lonigro et al (2013) found that children who engaged in cruel deeds exhibited superior competencies to comprehend other's reflections and beliefs while children with polite behaviour displayed more decent and emotional sensitivity. Studies have also linked bullying

behaviour to empathy (Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2007; Gini, 2006b, Zych, Trofi & Farrington, 2016).

In their findings, Gini et al., (2007); Rigby (1996) disclosed that minimal empathic reaction as well as subtle empathic affect for others predisposes adolescents to perpetrate bullying behaviours. In a separate study, Gini (2006) found that adolescents who are unaware of other people's emotions are vulnerable to victimisation. Such individuals are unable to comprehend the reflections, ideas and goals of others. Such ability is illustrative of the perceptive element of empathy – the competency to see things from other person's viewpoint (Lomas, Stough, Hansen & Downey, 2011). Lopes, Salovey and Straus (2003) had earlier reported that adolescent with high emotional intelligence is probable to relate positively with others and less probable to recount negative relations with close friends. Similarly, Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004) stated that individuals with high emotional intelligence are more approachable and friendly, less probable to involve in delinquent act, refrains self-damaging and undesirable behaviours like smoking and drinking, as well as bullying perpetration.

Ability to understand others and view how they reflect, their ideas and intents demands that one gains insights into the feelings of the other person. Emotional intelligence scales measure these abilities (Mayer, DiPaolo & Salovey, 1990; Lomas, Stough, Hansen & Downey, 2011). Emotional intelligence has been described as definite perceptual abilities that manage emotive information which entails the awareness and recognition of feelings, the application of emotive data to aid reflection, emotional analysis and comprehension, and emotional self-control.

Lomas et al (2014) and Parker et al (2014) had earlier studied the relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying behaviour, the studies are foreign based and findings may have limited generalization to Nigeria setting, hence the need for this study. This is to further provide empirical evidence for the predictive ability of emotional intelligence on bullying behaviour and to provide a baseline data for development of intervention strategies especially for victims and bully-victims who may lack some of the basic emotional competencies as revealed in the literature.

Bullying and empathy studies have linked age, gender, family and school differences to bullying perpetration and victimization (Batanova & Loukas, 2013; Hamilton et. al. 2015; Georgiou, 2008; Perren & Hornung, 2005). Batanova and Lukas (2013) also noted that girls who scored lower in the level of empathic concern and not on perspective taking had significant increase in their subsequent bullying perpetration regardless of whether they experience positive family relations or school connectedness, while positive family relations significantly lower bullying perpetration among boys that also scored low on empathic concern. Hamilton et al (2015) indicated that deficit in emotional clarity predicted greater peer victimisation among adolescent girls but not boys.

Batanova & Loukas (2013) observed that emphatic concern and perspective taking as well as school connectedness contributed significantly to decline in boys' subsequent bullying perpetration.

To determine whether emotional intelligence is significantly associated with bullying role of in-school adolescents, the following research hypotheses were tested, thus:

- H<sub>01</sub>: there is no significant association between emotional intelligence and bullying perpetration among in-school adolescents
- H<sub>02</sub>: there is no significant association between emotional intelligence and victimization among in-school adolescents
- H<sub>03</sub>: there is no significant association between emotional intelligence of in-school adolescents and involvement in bully-victim role
- H<sub>04</sub>: there is no significant association between emotional intelligence of in-school adolescents and their non-involvement in bullying roles

### Method

Descriptive survey was adopted as a research design for this study.

### Population

All secondary school students in the 149 public and private schools in Ilorin Metropolis constitute the population for this study with population size of 45,286 students. All in-school adolescents in the six randomly selected secondary schools were the target population.

### Sample and Sampling Techniques

A total of 420 (226 males and 194 females) in-school adolescents within the age range of 10 to 21 years (174 within 10-15yrs, 208 within 16 and 20 years, 38 are above 21 years) were sampled from private and public schools (136 private and 284 public) for the study.

The instrument used to gather information for this study is titled influence of emotional intelligence on bullying behavior of in-school adolescents. The instrument has three sections A, B and C. sections B and C were adopted. Section A sought information on respondents' personal data, section B is the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) developed by Wong and Law (2002) has 16 items (with four subscales) that measure emotional intelligence of respondents. It is a self-report measure, rated on a 5-points Likert-type rating scale ranging from totally disagree to totally agree. Psychometric properties had earlier been established by the developers and the scale has been utilized in Nigeria by past researchers such as Agokei (2011) and Adegboyega (2016).

Section C is a bullying behavior measure with 16 items (with two subscales) rated on a four points Likert-type scale. The first subscale contains 8 items to gather information on bullying perpetration, while second subscale measures victimization. The two subscales asked respondents on the frequency of perpetrating bullying or of experiencing victimisation in the last 6 weeks. The rate ranges from never (1) to 5 times/more (4). Respondents that ticked 4 or 3 on one or more bullying perpetration item(s) and 1 or 2 on all victimization items were the bullies. Victims were those that ticked 4 or 3 on one or more of victimization scale and 1 or 2 on bullying perpetration items, bully-victims ticked 4 or 3 on both bullying perpetration and victimization scales, while non-involved individuals ticked 1 or 2 on both scales as well. In this study, Bullies had mean score of 28.12 on bullying measure, victims had mean scores of 30.86, bully-victim had mean score of 40.51 while non-involved had mean score of 21.34.

On measure of emotional intelligence, a score below 48 depicts low emotional intelligence while 48 and above depicts high emotional intelligence. Larger percents of the in-school adolescents in Ilorin metropolis across various bullying roles scored high on emotional intelligence

scale. The bully-victims had the least score on emotional intelligence scale with mean of 48.79, followed by the victims (64.79).

## Result

Table 1: Mean and rank order analysis of bullying roles and emotional intelligence of in-school adolescents

Bullying Roles	Frequency	BB Mean	EI Mean
Bullies	17	28.1	65.76
Victims	56	30.86	64.79
Bully-victims	164	40.51	48.79
Non-involved	183	21.34	74.43
Total	420		

Hypothesis 1: *There is no significant association between emotional intelligence and bullying perpetration*

Table 2: Pearson 'r' showing association between emotional intelligence and bullying perpetration

Variables	Mean	N	SD	df	Cal. r-value	P-value	Decision
Emotional Intelligence	65.76	17	7.19	15	-0.37	.074	Accepted
Bullying Perpetration	28.12	17	6.87				

Table 2 indicates that the calculated r-value is 0.37 and 15 degrees of freedom with corresponding p-value of .074 which is greater than 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated p-value is greater than alpha level, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 2: *There is no significant association between emotional intelligence and victimization*

Table 3: Pearson 'r' showing association between emotional intelligence and victimization

Variables	Mean	N	SD	df	Cal. r-value	P-value	Decision
Emotional Intelligence	64.79	56	7.39	54	-0.39*	.001	Rejected
Victimization	30.86	56	9.39				

Table 3 indicates that the calculated r-value is 0.39 and 54 degrees of freedom with corresponding p-value of .001 which is less than 0.05 alpha level. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected since the calculated p-value is greater than alpha level.

Hypothesis 3: *There is no significant association between emotional intelligence and bullying-victimisation*

Table 4: Pearson 'r' showing association between emotional intelligence and bully-victim

Variables	Mean	N	SD	df	Cal. r-value	P-value	Decision
Emotional	48.79	164	1.22				



Intelligence				162	-0.28*	.000	Rejected
Bully-Victim	37.80	164	1.38				

\*  $p < 0.05$ 

Table 4 indicates that the calculated r-value is 0.28 and 162 degrees of freedom with corresponding p-value of .000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected since the calculated p-value is less than alpha level.

**Hypothesis Four:** There is no significant association between emotional intelligence and non-involvement

**Table 5: Pearson 'r' showing association between emotional intelligence and non-involvement**

Variables	Mean	N	SD	df	Cal. r-value	P-value	Decision
Emotional Intelligence	74.43	183	6.39	181	-0.41*	.000	Rejected
Non-involvement	19.72	183	4.38				

\*  $p < 0.05$ 

Table 5 indicates that the calculated r-value is 0.41 and 181 degrees of freedom with corresponding p-value of .000 which is less than 0.05 alpha level. Since the calculated p-value is less than alpha level, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

### Discussion

This study investigates empirically that there is a significant indirect relationship between emotional intelligence and victimisation, bullying-victimisation as well as non-involvement in bullying. This study also found no significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying perpetration. The finding indicates that bullies' engagement in perpetration may not necessarily be due to inability to understand others' emotions or control their own emotion. Lonigro et al (2013) had earlier argued that children who engaged in cruel deeds displayed superior competences to comprehend other's reflections and beliefs while children with polite behaviour displayed more decent and emotional sensitivity. In fact, researchers (Sutton et al, 1999; Sabir, 2015) had linked varying levels of emotional intelligence when viewed as cognitive ability to perpetration of various forms of bullying behaviour. Wood and White (2005) had earlier asserted that adolescent bullies were less thrilled or tensed by impetus in the environment compared to bully-victims who experienced high level of elation and or tension by environmental inducement. Thus, the finding of this research is in line with previous studies who have found that pure bullies are not deficient in social reasoning (Sutton et al. 1999; Gini, 2006b) self-esteem (Kaukianien et al, 2002; Pollastri et al, 2010) self-control (Woods & White, 2005) or social status (Juvonen et al, 2003, Perren & Alsaker, 2006; Sijtsema et al, 2008)

In line with Gini's (2006) assertion, this study also found victimization to be significantly associated with emotional intelligence. Bully-victim role is significantly associated with deficit in emotional intelligence. Parker et al (2014) had earlier found victims and bully-victims performing poorly on measures of interpersonal, adaptability and stress management scales. Lazarus (2000)



had earlier noted that annoyance and reactive fear may predispose individuals to stress reaction, thus resulting into hostility or reactive bullying displayed by bully-victims. The finding revealed significant relationship between emotional intelligence and non-involvement in bullying roles. Lopes et al (2003) had advanced that adolescents with high emotional intelligence are probable to relate positively with others and are less probable to recount negative relations with close friends. In line with previous research findings, this inquiry emphasised the need to gain insight into emotional intelligence which has significant association with various bullying roles that in-school adolescents assumed in the quest to prevent the experience of victimisation and its consequential effects. Comprehending the association between emotional intelligence and various bullying roles such as non-involvement, victimisation and bullying victimisation might assist school counsellors to develop better strategies to prevent and combat the effects of bullying behaviours among in-school adolescents especially in Nigeria.

### Conclusion.

Studies on emotional intelligence and bullying behaviour of in-school adolescents in Nigeria is limited. This inquiry revealed that significant percent of in-school adolescents in Ilorin experience victimisation and most importantly bullying-victimisation role has been found to have devastating consequences. These enormous consequences which did not only impact academic situation of the students but also their social and psychological wellbeing pointed to the need to develop effective preventive strategies. Various strategies have been developed to assist in-school adolescents to cope with victimisation, however, improving the emotional intelligence skill of in-school adolescents could help them minimise victimisation by themselves and prevent bullying victimisation. This strategy could further be enhanced by other antibullying policies in school. This inquiry serves as a spring board for further investigation on how various components of emotional intelligence could help individual cope with various forms of bullying behaviour common among in-school adolescents in Nigeria.

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