



## Typologies of School Bullying as Predictors of School Maladjustment among Secondary School Students in Rivers State

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### Abstract

The study investigated the typologies of school bullying as predictors of school maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State. Three research questions were answered while three hypotheses were tested in the study. The study adopted a correlation research design with a population of 61,049 (29,292 male and 31,757 female) Senior Secondary II students in the 286 schools in the 23 Local Government Area of Rivers State. The researcher simple randomly sampled five LGAs from 23 LGAs. Furthermore, two schools were sampled from each of the five LGAs making a total of ten schools. Stratified random sampling using 10% gave the sample size of 652 students (boys = 248 and girls= 404). Two measures, Typologies of School Bullying Scale (TSBS) and School Maladjustment Scale (SMS) were used for data collection. The face validity of the instruments was ascertained by three experts. The internal consistency of 0.88 and 0.91 were computed for TSBS and SMS through Cronbach alpha. Linear regression was used to answer the research questions while t-test associated with linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that physical, verbal and sexual bullying are significant predictors of students' maladjustment in the school. It was recommended that the school principals should institute stringent and drastic measures of dealing the bullies in the school. The researcher recommended that the teachers and the school authorities should make rules and regulations very obvious in strategic places in the school in other to regulate physical bullying among students in the secondary schools in Rivers State. Teachers and the students should not use offensive words in the school system in order to avoid incendiary and abusive words that can cause social withdrawals of the students.

Students who are sexually bullied or molested should report to the schools' disciplinary committee for appropriate actions in order to keep them socially active.

**Keywords:** School Bullying, School Maladjustment and Secondary School Students

## **Introduction**

Personal observation as a teacher has shown that most of the public secondary schools in the area of the study are having issues of improper supervision, lack of monitoring by the school authority, shabby counseling services, poor character molding, lack of commitment their studies and sundry of manifest social vices. This is against the development of positive school climate. It is worthy to note that this unacceptable scenario in the school system can lead to social issues such as school maladjustment in the school.

Adjustment can be seen as the adherence and acclimatization to the prevailing environmental requirements. In the school system, adjustment can be seen as the conformity to the schools' academic, emotional, physical and social environment. On the other hand, maladjustment is the inability of an individual to cope with the prevailing environmental factors and conditions. More so, maladjustment is a negative behavioral display in response to the environment. Therefore, school social adjustment or maladjustment is a function of how the student is able to perceive and relate with the environment. Social adjustment can be seen as the ability of the students to freely associated and relate well with self and others in the school social settings. It entails freedom of association and involvement in the school social contents.

On the other hand, school social maladjustment can be the negative form of school adjustment. Social maladjustment is the inability of an individual to conform to the prevailing environmental condition. This maladjustment could be as a result of so many factors which could be personal or external in nature. Empirically, it was revealed that there is a high rate of school social maladjustment among students occasioned by insecurity, hostile environment, poor instructional method, students' attitude, teachers' attitude, and poor parental engagement (Anyo, 2019). It is worrisome to note that a good population of students is maltreated by the school authority resulting to school social induced phobia (Ekwueme, 2016). Further study showed that factionalism and ego identity have made about 65% of adolescents to be aloof with the school social activities because of their lost interest in school activities (Hemp, 2020). Similarly, the downside of social school adjustment is currently on the increase among students in Nigeria owing to the security and school calendar alterations (Ebong, 2015).

In the same vein, Nzokurum (2021) found that the hostility level and cult activities in the schools have drastically affected the adjustment level of adolescent students in secondary schools in Nigeria. It is disheartening to note that a greater percentage of the students are deeply involved in the abuse of the sex value system through unruly behaviours (Yusuf, 2019). This by implication makes students who are facing social adjustment issues to easily record negative outcomes in their academic, physical, mental health, economic welfare, and family life (Hepburn, 2009). Therefore, social maladjustment entails the inability of an individual to accept and conform in accordance with the school social environmental determinants. It is most likely that social maladjustment may be as a result of bullying in the school system.

Bullying can be seen as the use of coercion, intimidation or threat to undue others. More so, bullying is a form of aggressive behavior in which the bully intentionally and steadily inflicts injury or pain to the bullied. Bullying in the school system can take the types of physical, verbal and sexual bullying. Physical bullying is the type that involves the infliction of physical injury and pains to another. Physical bullying can take the form of pulling, hitting, pushing, kicking, slapping, tripping, punching, pinching and pushing or damaging of property. It was reported that constant physical abuse can affect the adjustment level of college students (Abdul, 2019). More so, physical abuse can influence lack of social participation in the school (Agbo, 2019).

Another type of bullying is the verbal abuse. Verbal bullying includes shouting, accusation, name calling, teasing, homophobic, intimidation, racist remarks, or verbal abuse. Verbal bullying entails the use of words to inflict pains on another person. The calling of names must be intentional and consistent towards another in order to cause pains or harm. It was found that verbal abuse can make someone to feel uncomfortable when it is not controlled (Uzochukwu, 2019). More so, verbal abuse can be associated with school absenteeism (Okwu, 2019).

Another type of bullying is sexual abuse. Sexual abuse is a type of molestation or unwanted sexual advancement towards the same or opposite sex. More so, sexual abuse is unwanted sexual relationship upon a woman, man or child without their approval. Sexual abuse can range from rape, sodomy, sexual assault, incest or fondling (Adamu, 2022). Sexual abuse can make someone to feel deserted, demoralized, and inferior in a social setting. In the school system, a student that is sexually molested by the fellow student or the teachers hardly concentrates in the class, avoids social gathering as well as to avoid coming to school (Ugochukwu, 2019). Bullying whether physical, verbal or sexual may be associated with developmental and behavioural challenges within the school system.

From the background of this study, it is suggestive that lack of school social adjustment may be associated with bullying behaviour among the students. Therefore, the researcher

investigated the typologies of school bullying as predictors of school maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State.

## **Objectives of the Study**

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the prediction of physical bullying on school maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State;
2. Determine the prediction of verbal bullying on school maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State and
3. Find out the prediction of sexual bullying on school maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State.

## **Research Questions**

1. What is the prediction of physical bullying on school maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State?
2. What is the prediction of verbal bullying on school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State?
3. What is the prediction of sexual bullying on school maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State?

## **Hypothesis**

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Physical bullying does not significantly predict school maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State
2. Verbal bullying does not significantly predict school maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State.
3. Sexual bullying does not significantly predict school maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State.

## **Method**

The study adopted a correlation research design with a population of 61,049 (29,292 male and 31,757 female) Senior Secondary II students in the 286 schools in the 23 Local Government Area of Rivers State. Simple random sampling was used to select five LGAs

from 23 LGAs. Furthermore, two schools were respondents from each of the five LGAs making a total of ten schools. Stratified random sampling using 10% gave the sample size of 652 students (boys = 248 and girls= 404).

Two measures, Typologies of School Bullying Scale (TSBS) and School Maladjustment Scale (SMS) were used for data collection. The face validity of the instruments was ascertained by three specialists. The internal consistency of 0.88 and 0.91 were computed for TSBS and SMS through Cronbach alpha. Linear regression was used to answer the research questions while t-test associated with linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the prediction of physical bullying on school maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State?

**Table 1: Linear regression analysis on the prediction of physical bullying on school social maladjustment**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Decision
1	.864a	.746	.746	High Prediction

Table 1 revealed that the regression coefficient (R) is given as 0.864 while the regression square coefficient is given as 0.746 respectively. This implied that an increase in physical bullying leads to an increase school social maladjustment.

**Research Question 2:** What is the prediction of verbal bullying on school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State?

**Table 2: Linear regression analysis on the prediction of verbal bullying on school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Decision
1	.825a	.680	.679	High prediction

Table 2 revealed that the regression coefficient (R) is given as 0.825 while the regression square coefficient is given as 0.680 respectively. This implied that an increase in verbal bullying leads to an increase school social maladjustment.

**Research Question 3:** What is the prediction of sexual bullying on school maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State?

**Table 3: Linear regression analysis on the prediction of sexual bullying on school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Decision
1	.882a	.779	.778	High prediction

Table 3 revealed that the regression coefficient (R) is given as 0.882 while the regression square coefficient is given as 0.779 respectively. This implied that an increase in sexual bullying leads to an increase school social maladjustment.

## Hypotheses Testing

**Hypothesis 1:** Physical bullying does not significantly predict school maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State

**Table 4: t-test associated with simple regression analysis on the prediction of physical bullying school social maladjustment**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	1	Sig.	Decision
	B	Standard Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	6.34	.96		6.65	.00	
Physical Bullying	.83	.03	.864	30.55	.00	Significant

P<0.05

Table 4 revealed that t-test associated with simple regression is given as 30.55. The hypothesis is rejected because the probability value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. This implied that there is a significant prediction of physical bullying school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Hypothesis 2:** Verbal bullying does not significantly predict school maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Table 5: t-test associated with simple regression analysis on the prediction of verbal bullying school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	1	Sig.	Decision
	B	Standard Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	9.05	.102		8.87	.00	
Verbal Bullying	.79	.03	.83	25.97	.00	Significant

P<0.05

Table 5 revealed that t-test associated with simple regression is given as 25.969. The hypothesis is rejected because the probability value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. This implied that there is a significant prediction of verbal school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Hypothesis 3:** Sexual bullying does not significantly predict school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State.

**Table 6: t-test associated with simple regression analysis on the prediction of sexual bullying on school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	1	Sig.	Decision
	B	Standard Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	6.05	.883		6.85	.00	
Sexual Bullying	.84	.03	.822	33.38	.00	Significant

P<0.05

Table 6 revealed that t-test associated with simple regression is given as 33.383. The hypothesis is rejected because the probability value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. This implied that there is a significant prediction of sexual bullying on school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State.

## Summary of Findings

The findings of this study are summarized as shown below:

1. There is a significant high prediction of physical bullying on school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State.
2. There is a significant high prediction of verbal bullying on school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State.
3. There is a significant high prediction of sexual bullying on school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State.

## **Discussion**

The findings showed that there is a significant high prediction of physical bullying on school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State. This finding is consistent with that of Abdul (2019) which revealed that constant physical abuse affects the adjustment level of college students. In the same vain, the finding of Agbo (2019) is in agreement with that of the present study which showed that physical abuse can influence lack of social participation in the school. This result implies that the higher a student is physically abused, the more there will be issues of adjustment with school social activities.

More so, it found that there is a significant high prediction of verbal bullying on school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State. The findings of this study are in agreement with that of Uzochukwu (2019) who found that verbal abuse can make someone to feel uncomfortable when it is not controlled. In the same vain, the study was supported by the finding that verbal abuse is associated with school absenteeism (Okwu, 2019). This is to show that the use of incendiary words and name callings in the school system causes students to have issues of adjustment.

The study further revealed that there is a significant high prediction of sexual abuse on school social maladjustment among secondary school students in Rivers State. Supporting the findings of this study is the submission that sexual abuse such as rape, sodomy, sexual assault, incest or fondling are determinants of students' social challenges in the school system (Adamu, 2022). In the same vain, sexual abuse makes someone to feel deserted, demoralized, and inferior in a social setting. It was further reported in line with the findings of this study that a student that is sexually molested by the fellow student or the teachers hardly concentrates in the class, avoids social gathering as well as to avoid coming to school (Ugochukwu, 2019). Sexual bullying impairs students' active social activities because it is unwanted sexual relationship without their approval.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concluded that bullying is a significant predictor of students' social maladjustment. More so, physical, verbal and sexual bullying are independent significant predictors of students' social maladjustment in secondary schools in Rivers State.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The teachers and the school authorities should make rules and regulations very obvious in strategic places in the school that will regulate physical bullying among students in the secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. Teachers and the students should not use offensive words in the school system in order to avoid incendiary and abusive words that can cause social withdrawals of the students.
3. Students who are sexually bullied or molested should report to the schools' disciplinary committee for appropriate actions in order to keep them socially active.

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