



# Peer Pressure and Bullying Behaviour among Adolescents in Secondary Schools in Ado Ekiti, Nigeria

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## Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between bullying behavior and peer group influence among teenagers in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. Descriptive research of the survey type was used for the study due to its appropriateness for observing the students. The population for the study consisted of all the adolescents, both male and female, in secondary schools in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The ages of adolescents that participated in the study were between 12 and 17 years (mean 13.70). The sample for this study consisted of 46 boys (mean 14.25) and 74 girls (mean 14.64). A total of 120 students were randomly selected for the study. A self-designed questionnaire titled "Peer Pressure and Bullying Behavior Questionnaire" (PPBBQ) was used to elicit information from respondents. The PPBBQ consisted of three sections: A, B, and C. Section A contained information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as sex, age, and location. Section B contained fifteen (15) items that elicited information on peer pressure among the adolescents. All the items were rated on a modified 4-point Likert scale of 1–4 (1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 agree, 4 strongly agree), with the respondents picking the option that best describes them. The instrument was subjected to face, content and construct validity. The reliability of the instrument was established using test re-test method and the reliability coefficient of 0.72 was found to be significant at the 0.05 level of significance. A total of 120 copies of the questionnaire were collated and statistically analyzed. The data generated was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics, which include frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation and percentile, were used to answer the questions raised, while the hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and the students' t-test. The hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed that bullying is a prevalent issue in secondary schools, affecting both male and female adolescents in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State. The students also show signs of peer pressure. More importantly, there is significant relationship between peer pressure and bullying behaviour among the adolescents in secondary schools in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State. It thereby concluded that peer pressure is a significant factor influencing bullying behavior among adolescents in secondary schools in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that recommended that school counselors should develop efficient, all-encompassing anti-bullying intervention programs that will address the impact of peer pressure and encourage empathy and pro-social behaviors among adolescents in secondary schools.

**Keywords:** Bullying Behaviour, Peer Pressure, Anti-Social Behaviour, Adolescents, Secondary School Students.

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## INTRODUCTION

During adolescence, when peer interactions begin to have a greater impact on the lives of the adolescents, they are vital. Peer groups may have a significant influence on the attitudes, values, and behaviours of adolescents, including their propensity to bully other people since adolescents spend a lot of time with their peers at this stage of their development. According to the findings of the researcher, the incidence of bullying among adolescents attending secondary schools in Ado Ekiti is on the rise, just as it is in many other parts of the world. This might be the consequence of a number of factors, including evolving cultural expectations, increased use of technology and social media, and the intricacy of the social dynamics that exist among teenagers. Nevertheless, the purpose of this study was to evaluate, among teenagers in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria, the relationship that exists between bullying behaviour and peer groups.

Bullying is an antisocial act that may have a harmful influence on adolescent students' capacity to focus in a learning environment and hinder them from obtaining the essential functional skills for success in school and in their social life. Bullying is an antisocial act that can have a deleterious impact on adolescent students' capacity to focus in a learning environment. It's possible that this will have a substantial influence on the developing path of both the victims and the offenders. Studies have shown a connection between bullying and a number of negative outcomes, including scholastic problems, depression, and anxiety (Craig & Peplar, 1995; Estévez et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2009).

Research has shown that adolescents who participate in bullying are at an increased risk of developing behavioural issues such as aggressiveness, difficulties with their physical health, and even suicidal thinking. The fact that bullying, with its attendant adverse consequences on the teaching and learning process as well as the social development of the prospective leaders of tomorrow, may be responsible for the rising worry that teachers, parents, counsellors, and society have over the occurrence of bullying (Stewart et al., 2015; Sabramani et al., 2021).

Bullying is often defined as a specific sort of hostility that is intentional, takes place on several occasions, and involves an imbalance of power between the people who are doing the bullying and the people who are being bullied. Both physical and verbal harassment are by far the most common types of bullying (Olweus, 1993; Smith & Thompson, 1991). According to Wang et al. (2009), there is also a form of bullying known as relational bullying. This form of bullying mostly comprises spreading rumours and isolating oneself from other people. It would appear that this is a common practise among adolescents in Ado Ekiti. To Smith and Sharp (1994) and Wang et al. (2009), the usage of cell phones to transmit mean-spirited notes or messages and the internet for the purpose of cyberbullying is also on the rise.

The effect, whether direct or indirect, of other individuals within the same social group who share similar beliefs, interests, or circumstances is what is referred to as peer pressure. It is more probable that a person's ideas, values, and behaviour will be influenced by members of their peer group than by any other factor (Sebald, 1992; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Research has shown that adolescents seek independence from their parents and turn to their friends to talk about difficulties, feelings, fears, and doubts. This elevates the value of buddy time for adolescents. However, there is also a growing desire among adolescents to gain social status (Corsaro & Eder, 1990; Eder, 1985). Because of this growing desire, adolescents, particularly in secondary schools, are becoming more dependent on their peers for social support.

Research has indicated that adolescents who belong to peer group that condone or promote bullying behaviour are more likely to participate in such behaviour themselves. Peer

groups may serve as a significant impact on adolescent behaviour. Peer groups can also serve as a powerful effect on adult behaviour. This might be out of a desire to be accepted by the group, to raise one's social position, or to adhere to the values and conventions that are held by the group.

Previous research (Olweus, 1993; Robin & Johnson, 1996; Selikov et al., 2009) indicated that individuals who are socially similar to one another can have both a positive and a negative impact on one another. According to research conducted by Dissanayake et al. (2012), adolescents who are subjected to unfavourable forms of peer pressure are more likely to participate in antisocial behaviours such as smoking, drinking, using illegal substances, engaging in sexual harassment, and engaging in acts of violence.

Could there be a connection between being influenced by your peers and engaging in bullying behaviour? According to the findings of Hamed et al. (2013), there was a substantial association between the impact of peers and the perception of bullying behaviour among adolescents who were still in school. In a similar vein, there was a strong association between self-efficacy and reported bullying behaviour among adolescents who were currently enrolled in an educational setting. In a similar vein, there was a strong association between parental supervision and the perception of bullying behaviour among adolescents when they were attending school. In addition, there was a substantial connection between the types of families that people come from and the bullying behaviour of adolescents when they were in school.

According to the findings of a study that was carried out by Sabramani et al. (2021), there were significant levels of bullying as well as widespread engagement in the behaviour on the part of students in Malaysia. They came to the conclusion that prompt bullying prevention and intervention is vital, particularly in terms of improving the mental health ability of adolescents, which has a significant effect on the reduction in the prevalence rates of bullying involvement.

A study conducted by Adeniyi and Jinadu (2021) found that social pressure had a substantial impact on gang behaviour. The researchers came to the conclusion that peer pressure might predispose secondary students in Osun State to engage in gang behaviour.

Based on the foregoing, two research questions were asked:

- What is the level of peer pressure among adolescents in secondary schools in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State?
- What is the level of bullying among adolescents in secondary schools in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State?

Also, three null hypotheses was generated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and bullying behaviour among the adolescents in secondary schools in Ekiti State.
- There is no significant difference in peer pressure between male and female adolescents in secondary schools.
- There is no significant difference in bullying between male and female adolescents in secondary schools

## METHODS

Descriptive research of the survey type was used for the study due to its appropriateness for observing the students. The population for the study consisted of all the adolescents, both male and female, in secondary schools in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The secondary schools used included all the government-owned schools as well as coeducational schools in Ado Ekiti. The ages of adolescents that participated in the study were between 12 and 17 years (mean 13.70). The sample for this study consisted of 46 boys (mean 14.25) and 74 girls (mean 14.64). A total of 120 students were randomly selected for the study.

A self-designed questionnaire titled "Peer Pressure and Bullying Behavior Questionnaire" (PPBBQ) was used to elicit information from respondents. The PPBBQ consisted of three sections: A, B, and C. Section A contained information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as sex, age, and location. Section B contained fifteen (15) items that elicited information on peer pressure among the adolescents. All the items were rated on a modified 4-point Likert scale of 1–4 (1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 agree, 4 strongly agree), with the respondents picking the option that best describes them. The items were summed up to form a total score of 60. Respondents were categorized as having "low," "moderate," and "high" levels of peer pressure based on the percentile formula: "low" (15.00–19.28), "moderate" (19.29–39.28), and "high" (39.29–60.00). Section C consisted of 20 items on bullying behavior among adolescents. All the items were rated on a modified 4-point Likert Scale 1 – 4 (1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Agree, 4 Strongly Agree) with the respondents picking the option that best describes them. The items were summed up to form a total score of 80. Respondents were categorized as experiencing "low," "moderate," and "high" levels of bullying based on the percentile formula. Low (20.00–25.70), moderate (25.71–52.37), and high (52.38–80.00). The instrument was subjected to Face, Content and Construct validity. The reliability of the instrument was established using test re-test method and the reliability coefficient of 0.72 was found to be significant at the 0.05 level of significance. A total of 120 copies of the questionnaire were collated and statistically analyzed. The data generated was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics, which include frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation and percentile, were used to answer the questions raised, while the hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and the students' t-test. The hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

### Demographic Analysis

Table 1: Gender of the respondents

Gender	Age (min.)	Age (max.)	Percentage	Mean	SD
Male ( <i>n</i> = 46)	12	17	38.3	14.25	8.46
Female ( <i>n</i> = 74)	12	17	61.7	14.64	9.55
Total ( <i>n</i> = 120)	12	17	100	14.35	10.24

Table 1 above shows the gender distribution of the respondents used for this study. The table shows that 46 (38.3%) of the respondents are males with a mean age of 14.25 while 74 (61.7%) of the respondents are females with a mean age of 14.65.

**Research Question 1:** What is the level of peer pressure among the adolescents in secondary schools in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State?

In answering the question, scores on peer pressure among adolescents were computed using items 1–15 in Section B of the "Peer Pressure and Bullying Behavior Questionnaire (PPBBQ)". The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Peer pressure among adolescents

Peer Pressure	Frequency	Percentage
Low (15.00 – 19.28)	51	42.5
Moderate (19.29 – 39.28)	66	55
High (39.29 – 60.00)	3	2.5
	120	100

Table 2 shows that 51 respondents, representing 42.5% of the total sample, show signs of peer pressure; 66 (55.0%) show a moderate level of peer pressure; and only 3 (2.5%) show a high level of peer pressure. This implies that a random sample of adolescents in secondary schools in Ado Ekiti show signs of peer pressure.

**Research Question 2:** What is the level of bullying among adolescents in secondary schools in Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State?

In answering the question, scores on bullying behavior among adolescents were computed using items 1–20 in Section C of the "Peer Pressure and Bullying Behavior Questionnaire (PPBBQ)". The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Bullying behaviour among adolescents

Bullying Behaviour	Frequency	Percentage
Low (20.00 – 25.70)	30	25
Moderate (25.71 – 52.37)	63	52.5
High (52.38 – 80.00)	27	22.5
	120	100

Table 2 shows that 30 respondents, representing 25% of the total sample, show low signs of bullying behavior, 63 (52.5%) show a moderate level of bullying behavior, and 27 (22.5%) show a high level of bullying behavior. This implies that a random sample of adolescents in secondary schools in Ado Ekiti show signs of bullying behavior.

### Test of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and bullying behaviour among adolescents in secondary schools

In order to test the hypothesis, scores relating peer pressure and bullying behaviour among adolescents in secondary schools were computed using items 1-15 in Section B and 1-20 in

Section C of the "Peer Pressure and Bullying Behavior Questionnaire (PPBBQ)" respectively. These scores were subsequently subjected to statistical analysis involving Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level. The result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation analysis between peer pressure and bullying behaviour among adolescents in secondary schools

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>r<sub>cal</sub></i>	<i>P</i>
Peer Pressure	120	21.62	5.748	0.337*	0.00
Bullying Behaviour	120	21.98	6.862		

P < 0.05 (Significant)

Table 4 showed that  $r_{cal} = 0.333$ ;  $p < 0.05$ . Since the P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, therefore is hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between peer pressure and bullying behaviour among adolescents in secondary schools.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in peer pressure between male and female adolescents in secondary schools.

In order to test the hypothesis, scores relating peer pressure and bullying behaviour among adolescents in secondary schools were computed using items 1-15 in Section B and 1-20 in Section C of the "Peer Pressure and Bullying Behavior Questionnaire (PPBBQ)" respectively. These scores were subsequently subjected to statistical analysis involving students' t-test at 0.05 level. The result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: t-test analysis of peer pressure between male and female adolescents in secondary schools

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t<sub>cal</sub></i>	<i>Sig</i>
Male	46	21.96	6.603	118	0.509	0.06
Female	74	21.41	5.184			

P > 0.05 (Not Significant Result)

The result in table 5 shows that  $t_{cal} = 0.509$ ;  $P = 0.06 > 0.05$ . Since the P value is greater than 0.05, therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in peer pressure between male and female adolescents in secondary schools.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in bullying between male and female adolescents in secondary schools

In order to test the hypothesis, scores relating peer pressure and bullying behaviour among adolescents in secondary schools were computed using items 1-15 in Section B and 1-20 in Section C of the "Peer Pressure and Bullying Behavior Questionnaire (PPBBQ)" respectively. These scores were subsequently subjected to statistical analysis involving students' t-test at 0.05 level. The result is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: t-test analysis of bullying behaviour between male and female adolescents in secondary schools

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t<sub>cal</sub></i>	<i>Sig</i>
Male	46	22.85	7.039	118	1.100	0.234
Female	74	21.43	6.740			

P > 0.05 (Not Significant Result)

The result in table 6 shows that  $t_{cal} = 1.100$ ;  $P = 0.234 > 0.05$ . Since the P value is greater than 0.05, therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in bullying between male and female adolescents in secondary schools.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicated that there is a significant impact of peer pressure among secondary school students in the state of Ekiti. This is consistent with the idea that peers have a significant role in the social and emotional developments of adolescents by influencing the normative views and perception of information surrounding risk behaviours (Brown, 2004; Umashankari, Kiran Babu, & Moutusi, 2020). This impact starts early on and only grows stronger as the child gets older and into adolescence. The bulk of dangerous behaviours that adolescents participate in, such as delinquency, substance use, and reckless driving, are frequently related to peer pressure as a common contributing factor. All of these, along with a great number of other examples of risk-taking behaviours shown by adolescents, take place in the presence of peers (Chassin et al., 2004; Simons-Morton, Lerner, & Singer, 2005).

In addition, the results of this study indicate that certain adolescents in the state of Ekiti participate in behaviour that might be categorised as bullying. Even though the degree is not severe, a few of them engage in extremely aggressive behaviour towards others. The aberrant behaviour may have a poor influence on their learning results and may have adverse repercussions on their health (Popoola, 2005), which may be the reason of the worries expressed by a large number of stakeholders. It's possible that the desire of the adolescents to appear normal to their peers and be accepted by them was another factor that led to the occurrence of this behaviour. Because of this, some adolescents may engage in bullying behaviour towards other adolescents in an effort to improve their own social standing or to avoid being the target of bullying themselves. It's also possible that images of bullying behaviour on social media platforms are to blame. It has been demonstrated in previous research (Alex-Hart, Okagua, & Opara, 2015; Ismail, et al., 2021; Sabramani, et al., 2021; Mokaya, et al., 2022) that there is a significant occurrence of bullying behaviour among adolescents. The findings of this study accord with those previous studies. According to Alex-Hart, Okagua, and Opara (2015), bullying was shown to be much more prevalent in schools with all boys (90.8%) and all girls (82.9%) than in schools with a mixture of both genders (73.5%). Physical bullying was found to be the most prevalent form of bullying.

The study also found that there is a significant association between peer pressure and bullying behaviours among adolescents in secondary schools. These adolescents were involved in the study. According to Cassin et al. (2004) and Simons-Morton, Lerner, and Singer (2005), many instances of antisocial conduct in adolescents take place while the adolescents are under the influence of their peers. This may not be unrelated to the fact that many of these instances

take place. The findings of this study concur with those of Hammed et al. (2013) as well as those of Adeniyi and Jinadu (2021), who found that there is a significant impact of peer pressure on gang conduct, which is a kind of bullying behaviour, and that peer pressure might predispose secondary students to engaging in bullying behaviour.

In addition, the results of the study demonstrated that there is no discernible difference between male and female adolescent peer pressure in secondary schools. This could be because both men and women are going through comparable stages of development at the same time, which might result in analogous encounters with the effects of peer pressure. Adolescence is a stage in a person's life when they are discovering their identity, looking for acceptance from their peers, and attempting to fit in with different social groups. This study runs counter to the conclusions reached by Kiran and Moutusi (2020), who claimed that males experience higher amounts of peer pressure compared to girls. There might be disparities in the socialisation of the parties involved, as well as variances in the particular scenarios or conditions that led to this conflict. It's also possible that this is the product of certain cultural norms and gender roles, both of which might have an effect on the kinds of behaviours that are expected from men and women.

This study provided more evidence that male and female students in secondary schools do not significantly behave differently when it comes to bullying one another. There are a number of personal factors that have the potential to have a significant influence on bullying behaviour. Some examples of these factors include features of personality, social talents, levels of self-esteem, and personal experiences. In the meanwhile, these factors can have a significant impact on individuals regardless of their gender, leading to a range of behaviours and decreasing the likelihood of a discernible gender gap in bullying. In addition, the behaviours that constitute bullying can take many forms, including physical assault, verbal abuse, relational animosity, and cyberbullying, among others. Despite the fact that men may be more prone to physical aggression, women are more likely to participate in relational violence such as gossiping or social exclusion. This is true even if men are more likely to engage in physical aggression. As a consequence of these several types of bullying, there may not have been an obvious gender difference, which may have balanced out the majority overall. These contradict the findings of Silva, Pereira, Mendonca, Nunes, and de Oliveira (2013), which demonstrated that both boys and girls are bullies and victims of bullying, but that there are significant discrepancies between the sexes in terms of bullying activity and the roles performed by each gender. In a comparison of the many manifestations of bullying, they claim that boys are more commonly the targets, but they found significant differences in just one of these manifestations, namely physical aggression. In addition, Hanani and Piskin (2020) discovered that both male and female students are vulnerable to being bullied, but that the incidence of bullying among male students is significantly greater than that among female students. However, it appears that guys are more likely to be the target of bullying than girls are.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of the study indicate that bullying is a widespread problem in secondary schools, and it affects both male and female adolescents in the state of Ekiti. This highlights the significance of addressing and gaining knowledge of bullying behaviour in order to develop a school environment that is both supportive and safe for students. The study did not uncover a significant difference in the overall prevalence of bullying behaviour between male and female



adolescents. This was one of the hypotheses that the researchers tested. This provides evidence that individuals of both sexes may engage in bullying behaviours to a comparable degree. The findings of the study also imply that males and females may participate in distinct types of bullying behaviour against one another. Females may display higher degrees of relational violence, such as social exclusion or spreading rumours, whilst males may be more prone to physical aggressiveness. These distinctions show how critical it is to identify and respond appropriately to the many expressions of bullying.

According to the findings of the study, another significant factor that influences bullying behaviour among adolescents in secondary schools in Ekiti State is the presence of peer pressure. It's possible that both male and female adolescents will feel pressure from their classmates to adhere to specific behaviours, which can either lead to involvement in bullying or to bystander behaviour. The researcher made the observation that, in addition to peer pressure, there are some additional contextual factors, such as the atmosphere of the school and cultural norms, that might have an effect on bullying behaviour among secondary school students.

## **Recommendation**

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

- School counselors should develop efficient, all-encompassing anti-bullying intervention programs that will address the impact of peer pressure and encourage empathy behavior among adolescents in secondary schools.
- School management should also assist the school counsellors to promote pro-social behaviour among the adolescents.
- The school counselors should implement specific preventative and intervention measures to deal with the special difficulties that both male and female adolescents experience as a result of bullying behavior in secondary schools.
- To stop the surge in bullying behavior, counselors should also create some focused interventions that are suited to the unique context of each school environment.

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