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SUSTAINABILITY EFFECT OF COGNITIVE SELF-INSTRUCTION ON BULLYING BEHAVIOUR OF BASIC SCHOOLS' PUPILS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Bullying phenomenon in primary schools has emerged as a worldwide problem and thus constitutes a significant threat to the mental, social, emotional and physical wellbeing of pupils in school environment. It is a common destructive form of behaviour among the pupils that has been given serious concern to educational researchers and stakeholders. Despite several efforts to curb the menace of bullying among pupils in schools, it growing awareness become devastating and inhibits learning. Consequently, this study therefore investigated "sustainability effect of cognitive self-instruction on bullying behaviour of pupils in primary schools, Kwara state, Nigeria. This study adopted a non-randomized pretest, post-test experimental and control group design. The population for this study comprised of all basic-schools' pupils in the study area and the target population comprised of pupils in primary Five. The researchers used NICHQ-Vanderbilt Assessment Scale-Teacher Informant (NICHQ-VAS-TI), Bullying Identification Questionnaire (BIQC), Pupil's Peer Relation Instrument (PPRI) and Cognitive Self-instructional Training (CSIT). Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to test the only hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The finding of this study revealed that, there was significant sustainability effect of cognitive self-instruction on bullying behaviour of basic schools' pupils in Kwara State after cessation of treatment variable for four weeks, this is evident in the P value .000 which is less than 0.05 alpha level (.000 < 0.05). It is therefore recommended among other things that CSI should be brought to the forefront among other therapies and used to reduce bullying and sustain desired behaviour among basic schools pupils. Also, educational psychologists, teachers and counselors should be made available in basic schools to modify the cognitive thoughts of pupils towards bullying behaviour through Cognitive self-instructional training to avert the re-occurrence of bullying.

Keywords: Bullying, Cognitive self-instruction, Sustainability Effect, Pupils, Deficient empathy

Introduction

Bullying seems to be widespread and often neglected behavioural problem in primary schools around the globe, and it has been noted as having serious implications for pupils' academic achievement. A rapidly growing body of research over the past 10 years has shown that both bullies and victims are at risk of short and long term academic problems (Adeoye, et al., 2023). Therefore, understanding how these behaviours affect the academic achievement of pupils and its long term effect is of principal interest to educational stalk holders, since children behaviours perhaps, in no other place more pronounced as in educational settings like classroom where behaviours have been shown to have significant relationship with educational achievement of pupils.

Bullying phenomenon in schools has emerged as a worldwide problem (Omoteso, 2010). Olweus (1978) started his first work on prevention and intervention of bullying problems in the late 70's. A lot of researches have been conducted in this area that led to a growing understanding about bullying behaviour. However, several studies on bullying have been carried out in Nigeria but up till now, very few are known about the magnitude phenomenology and predictors of bullying behaviours. Thus, most commonly used definition of bullying has being the one pioneered by Olweus (1993). Olweus defined bullying to mean a repeated behaviour that is intended to harm or disturb another person. Accordingly, bullying is when a student is repeatedly exposed to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. These physical actions can take the forms of physical contact, verbal abuse or making faces and rude gestures.

Bullying has emerged as primary concern for psychologists, educational researchers, teachers and parents around the globe, particularly in Nigeria. Basic schools in Nigeria have become a fertile ground for the bullies but unpleasant place for the victims of bullying. Many children experience bullying at their primary school level and thereby makes school environment unbearable for them (Nuhu, 2013). Olasehinde (2015) opines that children need a combination of intellectual skills, motivational qualities and socio emotional skills to succeed in school. They must be able to understand the feelings of others, control their own feelings and behaviours, and get along with their peers and teachers. Unfortunately, many school age children's experiences do not fully support their social and emotional development. The reality is that significant numbers of pupils are bullies and thus constitutes significant threat to their academic achievement, mental health, social and physical

wellbeing (Adeleke, 2022). Existing research clearly indicated that verbal bullying and physical bullying accounted for 55% and 45% respectively of the magnitude of bullying against children in schools (Federal Ministry of Education, 2007). Bullying therefore interferes with pupils' ability to perform better in their academic pursuit.

The most common forms of bullying in basic schools in Nigeria according to Al-Nasara (2024) are teasing, isolation, kicking, hitting, pushing, name calling, ostracizes, threat and intimidation. This submission corroborate with the findings of studies conducted on students in Norway (Due, et al., 2023) and in England (Due, et al., 2023). Also, In Nigeria, the works of Omoteso (2010) identified forms of bullying in Nigerian basic schools as kicking, hitting, name calling threat and intimidation; exclusion from peer group; verbal taunts, extortion of money from victims, locking inside a room, sending of nasty note, isolation, teasing and threat to beat others in the classroom.

Significant amount of empirical study have shown how Cognitive self-instructions (CSI) have been used to modify bullying behaviour in the classroom. Olasehinde (1991) described cognitive as characteristic ways in which individuals attend to information, organize thought, and respond in problem situations. Cognitive style suggests that people behave in a relatively stable and consistently typical way in problem solving situations. Cognitive Self-Instruction (CSI) is a viable approach for teachers to remediate behavioural deficits by providing children with the tools necessary to control their bullying behaviour. Cognitive self-instruction involves teaching the use of inner speech ("self-talk") to modify underlying cognition that affect bullying behaviour (Olasehinde, 2021). The fundamentals assumption of cognitive self-instruction is that overt behaviour like bullying, hitting, pushing and kicking are meditated by cognitive thoughts and that individual can influence their cognitive thoughts to have a change of behaviour. Since psychological theorists consider the internalization of self-statements fundamentals to developing of self-control and maladaptive behavior, therefore, cognitive self-instruction would be helpful to modify cognitive thought of pupils in order to avert their bullying behaviour.

Researchers have categorized individuals affected by bullying to three groups (bullies, victims and bully/victim). Children who bully possess specific characteristics like impulsivity, dominance, deficient empathy and children who learn these patterns in early age set the course for later age violence. Similarly, empirical evidence has shown effect of gender on bullying (Omoteso, 2010). The existing literature clearly reflects the effects of gender on bullying among pupils. Some literature reported that boys are more likely than girls to be involved in direct

physical bullying and that boys and girls are equally likely to become involved in direct verbal bullying (Wals, et al., 2023). Direct bullying seems to increase through the elementary years, peak in middle classes and decline through the high school years. However, while direct physical assault seems to decrease with age, verbal abuse is reported to remain fairly constant. Joseph (2023) submitted that boys engage in bullying behaviour and are victims of bullies more frequently than girls. Those who are bullied show higher levels of insecurity, anxiety, depression, loneliness, physical mental symptoms and low self-esteem. Omoteso (2010) in her own submission argued that girls involve in bullying more frequently than boys although girls commonly engaged in indirect bullying, such as gossiping, excluding of peers backbiting, spreading rumours and manipulation of friendship while boys can be involved in hitting and kicking.

Several studies have investigated effect of CSI on bullying behaviour in Nigeria and many studies conducted in this area reported the effectiveness of cognitive self-instruction in reducing bullying behaviour among pupils in primary schools. Several psychologists and other researchers have used several methods and therapies in modifying bullying behaviour among children in schools. Some of these approaches are Cognitive Self-instruction (Gazali, 2022), Client-Centered and Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapies (Yahaya & Mustapha, 2015), Cognitive Self-Instruction and Contingency Management Techniques (Eweniyi, et al., 2013), Cognitive and Behaviour Therapy (Elizabeth, 2013). However, Psychologists are of the opinion that children learn better if they are allowed to engage in cognitive process to generate solution to interpersonal problem and it helps to sustain desired behaviour. Hence, the use of Cognitive Self-Instruction is recommended in training desirable behaviour.

Gazali (2022) carried out a study on effect of cognitive self-instruction on bullying behaviour of pupils and it was reported that cognitive self-instruction significantly reduced bullying behaviour among pupils. Adeoye, et al., (2023) conducted a study on effectiveness of two psycho-social behavioural interventions on adolescents' bullying behaviour among Nigerian and it was reported that the two psycho-social behavioural interventions (Cognitive self-instruction and Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy) significantly alleviate bullying. Also, Nkrumah (2013) further confirmed the efficacy of CSI. The researcher opined that cognitive training helps to sustain the desired behaviour.

Literatures have revealed that there are few existing studies on sustainability effect of cognitive self-instruction on bullying. Most studies conducted in this area were carried out on the effect of CSI on bullying and very few were conducted on

sustainability effect of CSI on bullying. Robinson et al., (2024) noted that sustainability effect of CSI arises when the desired behaviour is sustained after the cessation of treatment variable in the future. It further explained that the cognitive behavioural interventions continued progressively to reduce bullying behaviour after long period of cessation of the treatment. Wals, et al., (2023) in the meta-analysis explored the sustainability effect of CSI on critical thinking and reflective skills. It emphasized the sustained benefits of such therapy in fostering long-term self-regulation and improved learning outcomes.

However, the efficacy and efficiency of cognitive self-instruction as an important therapy for reducing bullying among basic school pupils and its long term effect in sustaining desired behaviour is of principal concern, hence, its sustainability effect constitutes the vacuum in which this study stands to address. On the basis of the above discussion, it is pertinent to note that a study that investigates the sustainability effect of cognitive self- instruction on bullying behaviour of basic school pupils is amply justified and research worthy.

Statement of the problem

Researchers have claimed the serious physical, psychological and academic consequences of bullying in Nigeria primary schools. Several researchers have carried out studies on bullying using different therapies. Researchers such as (Gazali, 2022) and (Eweniyi, et al., 2013) worked on effect of cognitive self-instruction on bullying behaviour and found out that the therapy significantly reduced bullying among pupils in schools in Ilorin. However, past researchers paid attention on CSI and its effect on bullying behaviour of pupils but few studies were conducted on the sustainability effect of CSI on bullying behaviour. To this ends, there is need to fill this part of neglected area. This study therefore examined the Sustainability effect of Cognitive Self-Instruction on Bullying Behaviour of Pupils in Basic Schools in Ilorin-East, Kwara State.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to examine the sustainability effect of CSI on bullying behaviour of pupils in basic schools in Ilorin-East, Kwara State. Specifically, the study investigated;

1. The sustainability effect of cognitive self-instruction on bullying behaviour of pupils in the future.

Research Questions

To guide the conduct of this study, the study attempted to provide answers to this question:

1. What is the sustainability effect of cognitive self-instruction on bullying behaviour of basic school pupils in the future?

Research Hypothesis

In an attempt to proffer solution to the research question, this research hypothesis was generated to guide the course of this study.

$H0_1$: There is no significant sustainability effect of cognitive self-instruction on bullying behaviour of pupils in primary schools in the future.

Methodology

The study adopted quasi experimental research design (Two group pretest-posttest design). In this study therefore, the treatment and control groups were subjected to pre-test and the former was exposed to the treatment variable and post test. The experimental group was trained using cognitive self-instruction while control group was not exposed to treatment variable. The population consisted of 14,945 pupils in the 81 public primary schools in the local government area while the target population was restricted to all primary five pupils in the randomly selected schools. The sample comprised of 100 bullies randomly selected into treatment and control groups purposively selected after being identified as bullies through NICHQ and BIQC. Hence, 100 out of the total of 203 met the benchmark for being identified as bullies. Multi-stage sampling technique was used at different stages of sampling schools, target population and sample. Inferential statistics was used to analyze the hypothesis. Four (4) instruments were used to elicit data for this study namely; NICHQ-Vanderbilt Questionnaire for Teachers, Bullying Identification Questionnaire for Children (BIQC), Cognitive Self- Instructional Training package (CSITP) for treatment only and eighteen (18) adapted items from Prada's Pupils Peer Relation Instrument.(PPRI) was used for pretest, and post-test only. The four instruments were subjected to both face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument were established, test re-test method was used. The instrument were administered twice at an interval of three weeks on 21 sampled bullies outside the one used for this study. The data obtained was subjected to Pearson's Moment Correlation Coefficient to ascertain its reliability index. The reliability index of NICHQ was found to be 0.72, also, the reliability index of BIQC was found to be 0.69 and PPRI reliability coefficient was found to be 0.73. However, the reliability index of CSIT was not established since it was used for treatment package. As part of research ethics, parents of the participants were consulted to seek their consent and permission for their children's participation in the study. Also, consent of the children themselves was also sought before training commenced.

Procedure:
The treatment was given three days in a week (Wednesday-Friday) for a period of four weeks where participants in the experimental group were exposed to treatment with cognitive self-instruction, whilst those in the control group were given placebo. Each session was projected to last for about thirty-five minutes. The training has a total of twelve contact session. The two groups were subjected to pre-test and post-test. To determine the sustainability effect of the treatment variable, the experimental group was subjected to post-test 2 after four weeks of cessation of the treatment variable. The data generated was analysed using MANOVA at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis Testing

One null hypothesis was formulated in this study and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis.

Research Hypothesis: *There is no significant sustainability effect of cognitive self-instruction on bullying behavior of pupils in primary schools in Ilorin-east, Kwara State.*

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	Post_Test	50575.827[a]	3	16858.609	1014.260	.000	.985
	S_Effect	53675.027[b]	3	17891.676	1076.413	.000	.986
Intercept	Post_Test	186016.226	1	186016.226	11191.249	.000	.996
	S_Effect	180233.770	1	180233.770	10843.360	.000	.996
Group	Post_Test	50100.567	1	50100.567	3014.188	.000	.985
	S_Effect	53170.855	1	53170.855	3198.905	.000	.986
Gender	Post_Test	2.380	1	2.380	.143	.707	.003
	S_Effect	2.380	1	2.380	.143	.707	.003
Group * Gender	Post_Test	.198	1	.198	.012	.914	.000
	S_Effect	.198	1	.198	.012	.914	.000
Error	Post_Test	764.593	46	16.622			
	S_Effect	764.593	46	16.622			
Total	Post_Test	200071.000	50				
	S_Effect	196271.000	50				
Corrected Total	Post_Test	51340.420	49				
	S_Effect	54439.620	49				

a. R Squared = .985 (Adjusted R Squared = .984)
b. R Squared = .986 (Adjusted R Squared = .985)

In order to determine the sustainability effect of the treatment, the respondents post-test and sustainability post-test scores were analysed using Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) and the result are shown above.

Table 1 shows the F value of 3014.188 for posttest and F value of 3198.905 for sustainability posttest with a *P* value .000 which is less than 0.05 alpha level (.000 < 0.05). Hence, the hypothesis is rejected since *P* value .000 is less than 0.05 alpha levels. This implies that there is a significant sustainability effect of cognitive self-instruction on bullying behaviour of pupils in primary schools. The posttest after being exposed to the treatment yielded a value of 0.00 and sustainability effect also yielded a value of 0.00 which shows that the two post tests were significant. The partial eta square for the posttest yielded .985 (98.5%) and the partial eta square for the sustainability posttest yielded .986 (98.6%) which indicated their respective contribution.

Also, there was no gender difference in the sustainability effect of cognitive self-instruction as the sig value yielded .707 which shows that the treatment does not favour a particular gender more than the other. It was also discovered that there was no interaction effect of gender and group as the sig value yielded .914.

Discussion of Findings

The result indicated that there was a significant sustainability effect of cognitive Self-instruction on bullying behaviour of pupils after cessation of the treatment variable. The result of MANOVA showed sustainability effect of cognitive self-instruction. This was evident in the differences in their posttest mean score and their sustainability mean score. This finding therefore, corroborates with findings of Dattilio and Freeman (2021), Robinson; Smith; Miller and Brownell (1999) who after several administration of cognitive self-instruction (treatment) on the subjects submitted that cognitive self-instructional treatment proved effective in reducing bullying behaviour after the cessation of the treatment. In the same vein, Nkrumah (2013) noted that cognitive self-instruction helps sustaining positive response after the cessation of the treatment variable and thus increasing academic performance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from this study, it can be concluded that there was significant sustainability effect of cognitive Self-instruction on bullying behaviour of pupils in basic schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn in this study, the recommendations was: It was found that there was significant sustainability effect of CSI after cessation of the treatment variable, it is therefore recommended that CSI should be adopted as a sole behavioural therapy for reducing bullying and sustaining desired behaviour among pupils in basic schools.

Suggestions for Further Studies:

There is need to replicate a similar study in other subject areas and at different levels in order to reduce and curb the rate of bullying behavior in Schools. Also, there is need to replicate the study using larger sample size.

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