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Influence of Peer Victimization on School Attendance among Senior Secondary School Students in Uromi Metropolis

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of peer victimization on school attendance among senior secondary school students in Uromi metropolis. One research question and hypothesis was raised and formulated respectively to guide the study. Descriptive based on survey method was used as the research design of the study. The research participants were 589 public senior secondary school students drawn by simple random sampling from a population of eleven thousand, seven hundred and seventy (11,770) student in Uromi metropolis. The instruments used in this study were school attendance

checklist and an adapted questionnaire titled: “Peer Victimization Questionnaire” with a reliability alpha (α) of 0.86 was completed by participants. Percentages and t-test statistical analysis was used to analyse the research question and test the hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level respectively. The result showed that there is no significant difference between victims and non-victims of drug abuse on their school attendance in the metropolis ($p>0.05$). The study therefore recommended that school anti-bullying rules and regulations must be strengthened and diligently enforced by the school authorities in the area.

Key words: Peer victimization, Bullying, School Attendance, Students, Counselling

Introduction

Peer victimization or bullying is a conscious, deliberate and hostile activity intended to terrorized and harm others. It indicates the image of violence, cruelty and intimidation and infers a deliberate initial desire to hurt someone. The desire is expressed in an action that is directed by a stronger person against a weaker one either on account of ‘size’ or strength or because the victim is outnumbered or less psychologically resilient. To this end, Rana (2012) asserted that scholars in their determination to establish evidence of peer victimization have identified two key components of peer victimization, which are: repeated harmful acts and imbalance of power. These identified components involve repeated physical and verbal attacks directed against a victim who cannot properly defend his or herself. On this note, peer victimization is said to have occurred when a student is harassed in a hurtful manner by a ‘more powerful’ peer in which s[he] has no defences.

Peer victimization is an active label for the violation of one person’s right by another. Previously, it was mistakenly viewed as a narrow range of anti-social behaviour among young and older playmates that is relatively harmless and has the potential of building the character of the young and timid for self-defense. Today, it has become one of the challenges children face at school; as a growing number of students perceive their school as an unsafe environment for learning (Aluede, 2004). Approximately 40% to 80% of school age children experience bullying at some point during their school careers. In other words, most children experience peer victimization at some point in their academic careers regardless of the national, religious, sexual orientation or ethno-cultural group(s) they belong to (American Psychological Association, 2010) cited in Wikipedia (2010).

According to the American Psychological Association, 5% to 15% of students are constantly bullied and 27% of students are bullied because of their refusal to engage in common sexual practices. Peer victimization is therefore a widespread anti-social behaviour occurring among students in most of our schools. It is now known to have long lasting harmful effects on the victims. In addition, peer victimization has been identified as perhaps the most underreported social problem affecting both victims and

by-standers of school age. For instance, a student could become a victim out of fear of retaliation from the bully, feeling of shame at not being able to stand up for himself or even his failure to appeal for help (Rana, 2002). On the other hand, bystanders may be traumatized watching the dehumanizing acts perpetrated by a bully on a victim; and decide not to speak out of fear of not becoming the next victim (Kerbs & Jolly, 2007).

On this note, peer victimization could instill a sense of fear in the victim; making him/her stay away from school (Ehinder, 2010); resulting in poor school attendance.

School attendance according to United Nations (1998) is attendance at any regular accredited educational institution or programme, public or private, for organized learning at any end of the school year during the last school year. Successful schooling begins by ensuring that students come to school regularly. It is a necessary condition every child is expected to fulfill in order to achieve a successful schooling outcome. On this note, parents have a lot to play as well as the community because a child who attends school regularly is less likely to get into trouble with the law and cause problem in the community. Furthermore, such child would take advantage of the inherent personal benefits of schooling. However, some limiting factors in the form of deviant behaviours like peer victimization, have been identified responsible for the act of truancy exhibited by students (Great School, 2011); thus, militating against their interest and motivation to benefit from the laudable aim and objectives on which the school is set up.

According to Ehinder (2010), peer victimization is an aspect of school violence that makes victims to be fearful of school and inhibit their learning potentials. In essence, peer victimization is a kind of harassment a student experiences from his peers which constitutes a pervading pall of insecurity in the school, thereby making the student to perceive the school environment as a hostile one and thereby, attempt to stay away from it. He added that when this kind of problem happens in school, it impedes the productivity of teachers and academic performance of the victim. Liepe-Levinson and Levinson (2005), revealed that one out of four students are bullied by their peer(s), translating to over 160,000 children who choose to stay at home from school due to fear of being bullied. According to Ehinder (2010), this problem of peer victimization is fast becoming a normal part of childhood experience which Nigerian children must tolerate as part of the process of growing up.

In view of this, Liepe-Levinson and Levinson (2005) asserted that victims of peer victimization suffer consequences beyond embarrassment. Some of them experience psychological and or physical distress like depression, loss of confidence, feelings of insecurity etc. which invariably leads them to frequently absent themselves from school. According to National Conference of State Legislators (2002), a report released by U.S secret service concluded that bullying played a significant role in many school shooting and efforts should be made to eliminate bullying behaviour. Similarly,

Department of Education and Skills, Ireland also noted that fear of going to school and poor or deteriorating school work among others are the signs of bullying which victims manifest. Rana (2002) found that five to ten percent of students in Australia stayed at home to avoid being bullied.

The Problem

Peer victimization is an anti-social behaviour plaguing teenagers of school going age. According to the American Psychological Association (2010), 70% of middle and high school students experience bullying in school, out of this prevalent rate, 20% to 40% actually reported being bullied. In Nigeria, Ehindero (2010) indicated that 72.3% of students have been beaten once or more times by their peers at school. To determine the influence of peer victimization on school attendance among senior secondary school students in Uromi metropolis of Edo State, this study is specifically carried out to:

1. describe the school attendance of senior secondary school students in Uromi metropolis;
2. determine the influence of peer victimization on school attendance among secondary school students in Uromi metropolis.

Research Questions

1. What is the school attendance record of senior secondary school students in Uromi metropolis?
2. To what extent does peer victimization have influence on school attendance among secondary school students in Uromi Metropolis?

Research Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference between victims and non-victims of peer victimization on their school attendance record in secondary schools in Uromi metropolis

Methods

Descriptive based on survey method was used as the research design of the study. The study area was Uromi metropolis of Edo State, Nigeria. The metropolis has a total of nine (9) public senior secondary schools with a population of eleven thousand, seven hundred and seventy (11,770) student. The simple random sampling technique was used in selecting five (5) of the nine (9) public secondary schools in the study area. A sample size of five hundred and eighty-nine (589) representing 5% of the total population (11,770) of Senior Secondary School (SSS) students (from SSS 1-3classes) was drawn from the five selected schools.

The instruments that were used in collecting data for this study are Student School Attendance Checklist and an adapted questionnaire. The researcher collected the school attendance data of students from their school attendance register as recorded by their class teachers in each of the selected schools. The data collected on school attendance covered a period of nine (9) weeks in an academic term. On the other hand, the Multi-Dimensional Peer Victimization scale (MPVS) originally developed by Maynard and Joseph (2000) was adapted and used in the study. The scale was adapted by modifying the scales into a four point likert type to rate the responses from strongly disagree -1 to strongly agree – 4. The original scale had a co-efficient alpha of 0.86. Since the scale was a standardized instrument, the validity of the instrument was not carried out since this had been ensured by developers of the instrument.

The questionnaire was administered by the researcher with the assistance of three research assistants. All completed questionnaires were collected while the scores were collated and subjected to statistical analysis. The research question was analyzed using frequency count and percentages while the hypothesis was tested using t-test statistical technique. The test of hypothesis was conducted at 0.05 alpha level.

Research Question: What is the school attendance record of senior school students in Uromi metropolis?

Table 1: Distribution of Students' School Attendance record in Secondary Schools in Uromi Metropolis

Score Range	Grade Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 62	Poor	55	9.3
63-66	Good	115	19.6
67-75	Very good	151	25.7
76 and Above	Excellent	267	45.4
Total		588	100%

Table 1 above indicates that 55 of the student representing 9.3% of the 588 participants in the study scored less than 62 in the score range indicating poor school attendance rate. 115 (19.6%) of the participants scored between 63-66 score range; indicating good school attendance record. 151 (25.7%) of the participants scored between 67-75 in the scored range indicating very good school attendance while the 267 (45.4%) of the total participants scored 76 and above in the score range which indicated excellent school attendance record.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between victims and non-victims of peer victimization on their school attendance record in secondary schools in Uromi Metropolis

Table 2: T-test Analysis on differences in School Attendance record between Victims and Non-Victim of Peer Victimization

Variable	Peer victimization status	N (588)	\bar{X}	S.D	d.f	t-cal.	p-value	Remarks
Peer victimization	Victims	52	79.33	18.02	586	0.473	0.58	Reject null hypothesis (p<0.05)
	Non-victims	536	82.02	14.29				

Table 2 indicates that the t-calculated value of 0.473 is not statistically significant ($p>0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between victims and non-victims of peer victimization on their school attendance record in secondary schools in Uromi Metropolis is retained while the alternate is rejected. This implies that peer victimization has no significant influence on students' school attendance in Uromi metropolis.

Discussion of Results

Result from the test of hypothesis showed that peer victimization has no significant influence on the school attendance records of students in secondary schools in Uromi metropolis. This indicates that victims and non-victims of peer victimization report to school regularly as presented in their school attendance record. This is not in agreement with the findings of Ehindero (2010) who noted that peer victimization is an aspect of school violence that makes victims to be fearful of school and inhibits their learning potentials. In essence, he noted that peer victimization is a kind of harassment a student experiences from his peers which constitutes a pervading pall of insecurity in the school, thereby making the student to perceive the school environment as a hostile one thus staying away from it. He added that when this kind of problem happens in school, it impedes the productivity of teachers and academic performance of the victim.

Similarly, Liepe-Levinson and Levinson (2005) revealed that one out of four students are bullied by their peer(s), translating to over 160,000 children who choose to stay at home from school due to fear of being bullied while Rana (2002) found that five and ten percent of students in Australia stayed at home to avoid being bullied.

Recommendations

Arising from the study are the following recommendations:

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1. School counsellors should try as much as they can to create a counselling platform in their school that will enable victims of peer victimization confide in them and report emotional and psychological traumas they could have been going through alone in the secret. This will help them to determine appropriate mitigating strategies that can be used to obviate peer victimisation challenge in their school.
2. Anti-bullying rules and regulation should be diligently enforced with strict penalties attached for defaulters. This would make bullies realize that their actions are not only injurious to victims, but also punishable by necessary authorities under school laws.

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