



## Research Article

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# Peer Group Influence and Mass Media as Predictors of Bullying Among Students: Evidence from Delta and Edo States, Nigeria

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## Abstract

Peer group influence and media exposure were explored as predictors of bullying behaviour among students. Two research questions were posed and responded to, as well as two null hypotheses that were developed and tested. The study had a sample size of 1000 students chosen using the Multi-Stage Sampling Technique. A questionnaire was employed in the study as a tool. Expert opinion was used to validate the instrument. The Peer Group Influence Scale had an 82.50 per cent factor matrix, whereas the Mass Media Scale had a 73.3 per cent factor matrix and the Bullying Behaviour Scale had a 71.50 per cent factor matrix. Peer Group Influence Scale had internal consistency reliability of .87, the Mass Media Scale had internal consistency reliability of .81, and Bullying Behaviour had internal consistency reliability of .85. Multiple Regression was employed to analyse the data at a 0.05 level of significance. The finding revealed a significant relationship between peer group influence, mass media, and bullying behaviour among the students. Principals and teachers in secondary schools were advised, among other things, to limit the influence of domestic violence and to foster positive and encouraging interaction among students.

**Keywords:** Bullying Behaviour; Students; Peer group Influence; Mass Media; Delta State; Edo State

## 1. Introduction

The formal education system aims to produce graduates with skills to make them self-sufficient for national growth and development. In modern times, there appeared serious concern about the possibility of the school system delivering sound education to the students since the education system appears to be crisis-ridden. People in the study area are complaining of falling standard of the product at every given task. A lot of prominent citizens, as well as politicians, lawyers, educationists, traditional rulers, the clergy, teachers, principals and media commentators in Delta and Edo States, have cried out over the worrying rate of violence and antisocial behaviours among students.

Bullying has been widely defined as any type of physical or psychological behaviour frequently imposed by a more powerful and stronger student or group of students towards another student considered as weaker (Syiasha, 2013). Students or groups tend to use steady aggression or unreasonable behaviour. It is one of the early behaviours that contribute to the development of antisocial behaviour patterns (Cunningham, Taylor, Whitten, Hardesty, Eder & DeLaney, 2010). Bullying is a problem that is hard to be eradicated in schools. It is a major aspect of antisocial behaviour among students. It is a common act of disorder exhibited by students. It happens among students on a day-to-day basis.

Delta and Edo state governments are worried about the increasing rate of violence and violence among the students. Espelage et al (2013) noted that a higher rate of violence directed towards school authority, teachers and students were associated with disorganised school structure, negative school climates, lack of administrative and collegial social supports and high residential crowding. Schools are requested to deal with new problems brought to them by new facts of family life.

Evidence abounds in the literature on different manifestations of behaviour problems in homes such as domestic bullying on students' attitudes and actions (Kelly & Goodwin, 2013). School bullying can cause post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Olweus, 2013; Nielsen, Tangen, Idsoe, Matthiesen & Magerøy 2015), low self-esteem (Tsaousis, 2016), psychosocial problems such as depression, loneliness, anxiety, emotional issues (Due, Holstein, Lynch, Diderichsen, Gabhain, Scheidt & Currie, 2005; Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie & Telch 2010), somatic signs (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013), poor academic achievement, psychosocial adjustments (Kim, Leventhal, Koh, Hubbard, & Boyce, 2006), deviant behaviours (Guo, Hong, Gao, Zhou, Lu & Zhang, 2016), long-term mental health problems and even violent (Ttofi, Farrington & Lösel, 2012) or suicidal behaviours (Serafini, Muzio, Piccinini, Flouri, Ferrigno, Pompili, Girardi, & Amore, 2015; Holt, Vivolo-Kantor, Polanin, Holland, DeGue, Matjasko, Wolfe & Reid, 2015). Both victims and perpetrators of school bullying can experience these consequences, with the potential of reciprocal influences (Hong & Espelage, 2012).

It was observed that some of the causes of violence and delinquent behaviours among students are peer group influence and mass media. The peer groups which function inside and outside the schools are significant socialising groups. The peer group appears to be a major concern in the determination of the personality of the students. The peer group has a set behaviour of life of the students that makes them run into a disagreement with parents and teachers. The peers are vital to the students in issues concerning hairstyle, dressing, swapping of information about sex and other matters. Peer cultures and other characteristics of high-risk students may deteriorate parental efforts by negatively influencing students' behaviour directly (Catsambis & Beveridge, 2001).

One of the most important goals of childhood is for students to learn how to get along with their peers. No aspect of schooling has more influence on students' social and emotional behaviour than their interactions with peers in and outside the schools. The way students interact with their peers forecast extremely well many significant cognitive and emotional features of future student behaviour, including attitudes toward school, academic performance, self-concept, disruptive, aggressive, domestic violence and the probability of dropping out of school (Crowl, Kamisky & Podell, 2002).

Peer group is a major socialising agent for the students. Peers seem so important to the students in matters relating to hairstyle, dressing, exchange of information on sex and other issues. Peers play a vital role in bullying. Interventions must gear towards a change of attitudes, behaviours and norms around bullying for every student in the school (National Crime Prevention Council, 1997). Peer Group is not based only on related manner, for in some instances openness to those we disagree with can lead to Peer Group forged by alternative viewpoints. Indeed, peers more often than not shape students' behaviour to an extent that bullying can often develop in middle childhood as a result of peer expectations.

The esteem of some students is often determined by this age group and has consequences for how others respond within the peer group. Popular students are dependable, intelligent, and caring. Society has created for adolescence a separate institution of their own. Home is merely a dormitory,

whereas “real living” consists of activities unique to the peer group. The behaviour of peer groups referred to as uneducational and deviant behaviour includes bullying, violence, taking hard drugs, drunkenness, stealing, sexual immorality and cultism (Udofot, 2003). Peer groups and cliques may try to differentiate themselves from other groups by adopting subtle and not so understated differences in clothes, postures, and behaviours. In a large school, for example, a teenager would probably be able to point out the “preppies,” the “jocks,” the “brains,” the “stoners,” the “nerds,” and so on. And probably everyone in those groups would agree.

In secondary schools, students tend to form groups of equals and like to move together and perform their activities in such groups. Peer group are often defined by sex, interest and common habit. These groups often make decisions and carry out common activities which are peculiar to their lifestyles. Peer groups behaviour pattern is usually of immense influence on all the members. Peer group characterisation also has enormous positive or negative influences on the individual member’s academic achievement and behaviour patterns. The cumulative influence of home, classroom, peer groups may be considerable and all play a positive role to influence the good academic performance and behaviour of students (Duze, 2004). Relationship of approach is only one basis for companionship; other similarities leading to peer groups are age, academic and non-academic skills, race, sex, and religion.

Mass media is a factor influencing the life of students negatively in this 21st century. The mass media spread unsafe information that influences students’ behaviour. The mass media comprises radio, television, print media and other types of electronic devices that spread unwanted and offensive sexual and pornographic materials, which attract the students. Students often copy what they see in media as well as acts of violence. They agree that violence is appropriate and suitable behaviour. The rate of crime and violence increased after mass media was introduced in Delta and Edo state.

Mass media are devices for transmitting information mainly to distant places. They include the newspaper, radio, television, films, comics and periodicals (Odor, 1997). Mass media are social institutions in society that could be used to teach basic manners, attitudes and social values. They could be used to learn the theory of behaviours by the students. Some mass media exert some sort of short-term influence on students through advertisement. Very important information is provided on activities of government, corporate institutions, industries, groups and individuals. Mass media are used for misinformation to instil certain attitudes. Some information provided through the mass media could be misinformation.

In the past, Information and Communication Technology has been a tool employed in spreading our ways of life, training principles and maintenance of morals in civilisation. Information and Communication Technology preserved and taught morals to virtually everyone in the society irrespective of sex and age. The media represented our society the way it is without any iota of ugly that would be degrading to the Nigerian culture. The media is used in informing, educating and entertaining its heterogeneous audience, imbibed in its audience morals basically in their programmes and its entertainment shows.

Olayeye (2012) noted that presently, it is easy to get lost in the plethora of mass and social media. A lot of times, these media meant to aid the students in learning can also hinder their ability to focus. Hours are on media but very little time is spent in learning activities to excel. Today the schools are competing with other learning environments provided by mass media such as television, records, movies, radio, video, audio cassettes, mobile phones etc. Growing up on mass media is a new human condition. On no account before has an entire generation been weaned by electronic media. The students spent much of their time watching, hearing and operating one form of mass media or the other. The power of the mass media is that it allows a worldwide population including millions of people to communicate, access, and publish information. Adolescence students today are raised with television, high production movies and high stimulating annoying production. It is one of the factors responsible for teaching student’s violence, bullying and lowering their self-esteem.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted in the study is Bandura (1977) social learning theory. Social learning theory observed that actions can be clarified based on a constant mutual contact among cognitive, behavioural and natural factors. The person and the environmental situation do not function as independent units but in combination with the behaviour equally, act together to determine behaviour. Bandura clarified that it is mainly through their actions that people create the environmental conditions that mutually influence their behaviour. The experience created by behaviour partially determines what a person becomes and can do, which in turn influences successive behaviour. Education takes place with watching. Offspring who frequently observe aggressive movies will be influenced by such aggression. On the other hand, humanistic theory noted that persons also have the aptitude to decide on how to act. If they decide not to perform approximately toward others, they are able of performing thus, the two assumptions give the persons the responsibility of deciding to perform as a bully.

From the above review, it is evident that various studies have been carried out on the role of peer group influence and mass media on the incidence of bullying among secondary school students. Also evident is the fact that no study has been carried out in the study area. There is, therefore, a need to carry out such a study to ascertain if the hypothesis that peer groups and mass media have a probable influence on bullying behaviour can be applied to the study area. This is the gap that the current study will fill. Hence, the study is aimed to examine the relationship among peer group influence, mass media and incidence of bullying behaviour among students.

### 2.1 Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between peer group influence and bullying among students?
2. What is the relationship between mass media and bullying among students?

### 2.2 Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between peer group influence and bullying among students.
2. There is no significant relationship between mass media and bullying among students.

## 3. Method and Procedure

### 3.1 Design of the Study

The correlational method of ex-post facto research design was used in this investigation. It attempted to prove the existence of a link among peer group influence, mass media and bullying behaviour, the design was deemed the most acceptable.

### 3.2 Sample Selection

The study used a sample of 1000 students, chosen using the Multi-Stage Sampling method. First, schools were divided into two groups based on their location in the Delta and Edo states. Following that, the schools were clustered based on the local government areas. Five hundred students were selected from each state based on local government areas and location, with 250 students attending urban secondary schools and 250 students attending rural secondary schools. The students were divided into two groups based on their gender: male and female.

### 3.3 Development of Research Instrument

A questionnaire was employed in the study as a tool. A, B, C, and D were the four sections of the instrument. Part A of the questionnaire was designed to collect demographic information such as sex, age, school location and student class. Part B contains 20 items on peer group influence that were aimed to elicit student opinions on peer group influence. Part C comprised 20 questions about mass media aimed at eliciting students' opinions on their media exposure. Part D contains 20 items on bullying behaviour that were aimed to elicit student opinions on bullying behaviour.

The researcher pilot-tested the questionnaire on 60 people who were not part of the study area to determine its validity. The instrument's face validity was determined by professionals while its content and construct validity were estimated through factor analysis. A number of the items were changed to reflect the respondents' views on Peer group influence, mass media and bullying behaviour. The experts' opinions and suggestions were used to improve the instruments and ensure that they were appropriate for the study's goals. The expert's comments directed the researcher in the production of the instrument's final draft.

Factor Analysis was used to determine the content and construct validity. The overall Cumulative Variance of the instrument exhibited the following total variance, indicating that the instrument was content valid. The Peer Group Scale had an 82.50 per cent factor matrix, whereas the Mass Media Scale had a 73.30 per cent factor matrix and the Bullying Behaviour Scale had a 71.50 per cent factor matrix. This means that the content is good and that the structures are valid.

The rotated factor loading matrixes were used to estimate construct validity. A factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1 was chosen to measure a similar construct. The construct validity was indicated by the factor loadings matrixes for each of the factors. The Peer Group Scale is 0.41 to 0.52; the Mass Media Scale is 0.54 to 0.78, and the Bullying Behaviour Scale is 0.55 to 0.90. Following the examination, the majority of the items that were regarded as weak in comparison to other items were deleted. Out of the original 20 items on the Peer Group Scale, 18 were kept. The Mass Media Scale had 20 items at first and was later decreased to 15, while the Bullying Behaviour Scale had 30 total items and was later reduced to 25.

The Cronbach Alpha Statistics were used to calculate the reliability of the instrument. The Peer Group Scale had internal consistency reliability of .87, the Mass Media Scale had internal consistency reliability of .81, and Bullying Behaviour had internal consistency reliability of .85.

### 3.4 Data Collection and Ethical Consideration

The researcher personally administered the test on the students with the help of five research assistants. The researcher sought permission from the principal of the schools before the administration after describing the aim of the visit. No student was forced to participate. It was a completely voluntary activity. The data were collected from the students on the spot. The goal is to ensure that respondents complete the instruments correctly and that the instrument is returned in a high percentage of the time. Data was collected and administered in schools during recess periods to avoid disrupting normal classroom activity. The researcher made certain that the students completed the instrument on their own. The instrument was administered using direct delivery and recovery approaches.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Multiple Regression Analysis was used to analyse the data. The hypotheses were tested at a 95% confidence interval.

4. Results

**Research Question 1:** What is the relationship between peer group influence and bullying among students?

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between peer group influence and bullying among students.

**Table 1:** Regression Analysis of the Relationship between peer group influence and bullying among students in Delta and Edo State

State	Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	P
Delta State	Regression	1096.740	2	1096.740	12.492	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	43985.164	501	87.795		
	Total	45081.905	503			
Edo State	Regression	647.794	2	647.794	6.634	.010 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	40229.262	412	97.644		
	Total	40877.056	414			

  

Variables in Equation						
State	Model	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	p
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Delta State	Constant	74.542	1.917		38.880	.000
	Peer Group Influence	.105	.030	.156	3.534	.000
Edo State	Constant	76.431	2.321		32.923	.000
	Peer Group Influence	.091	.035	.126	2.576	.010

Dependent Variable: Bullying Behaviour; Predictors (Constant): Peer Group Influence

Table 1 revealed a significant relationship between peer group influence and bullying behaviour among students in the study area. Delta State's F calculated value was 12.492, whereas Edo State's F calculated value was 6.634. Delta State had a df value of 503, whereas Edo State had a df value of 414. Delta State's mean square value was Regression = 1096.740, Residual = 87.795; Edo State's mean square value was Regression = 647.794, Residual = 97.644. Delta State's sum of square value was Regression = 1096.740, Residual = 43985.164, total = 45081.905, whereas Edo State's sum of square value was Regression = 647.794, Residual = 40229.262, total = 40877.056. Delta State had a P-value of .000, whereas Edo State had a P-value of .010.

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between mass media and bullying among students?

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between mass media and bullying among students.

**Table 2:** Regression Analysis of the Relationship between Mass Media and bullying among students in Delta and Edo State

State	Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	P
Delta State	Regression	389.858	2	389.858	4.370	.037 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	44692.047	501	89.206		
	Total	45081.905	503			
Edo State	Regression	741.049	2	741.049	7.607	.006 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	40136.007	412	97.417		
	Total	40877.056	414			

  

Variables in Equation						
State	Model	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	P
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Delta State	Constant	79.700	.814		97.961	.000
	Mass Media	.034	.016	.093	2.091	.037
Edo State	Constant	80.074	.935		85.658	.000
	Mass Media	.054	.019	.135	2.758	.006

Dependent Variable: Bullying Behaviour; Predictors (Constant): Mass Media

Table 2 revealed a significant relationship between mass media and bullying behaviour among students in the study area. Delta State's F calculated value was 4.370, whereas Edo State's F calculated value was 7.607. Delta State had a df value of 503, whereas Edo State had a df value of 414. Delta State's mean square value was Regression =389.858, Residual = 89.206, whereas Edo State's mean square value was Regression = 741.049, Residual = 97.417. The sum of square values for Delta and Edo states were Regression =389.858, Residual = 44692.047, total = 45081.905 and Regression =741.049, Residual = 40136.007, total = 40877.056, respectively. Delta State had a P-value of .037, whereas Edo State had a P-value of .006.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Peer Group Influence and bullying among students

The finding revealed a positive significant relationship between peer group influence and bullying behaviour among students in the study area. According to Woolfolk (2012), humanistic theory highlighted how external factors influence the behaviour of individuals in society. Such external factors can be manifested in form of peer pressure and violent movies. The finding also agrees with Bandura (1986), who postulated learning by observation. This means that students who watch violent movies are more prone to bullying behaviour than their counterparts who do not watch violent movies.

O'Connel, Pepler and Craig (1999) stated that peer pressure is a significant factor in bullying behaviour. This means that students whose friends exhibit violent behaviour are likely to engage in violent behaviour because their friends do. This is especially so when the friends are never punished for their actions. On the other hand, if their friends who exhibit violent behaviour are punished for their actions, modelling such behaviour may not be possible. Hence, modelling the behaviour of peers follows the consequences of such actions.

The above finding agrees with Higgins (2013) that a significant relationship exists between peer group influence and bullying among students. Students are motivated to meet either their standards or the standards held for them by significant others. It is in school that students have the opportunity to compare themselves with others and to appraise themselves in their differences without seriousness. Parents should check the peer groups that their children keep because the peer groups fill a great and growing need for the young individual who learns to develop new feelings of adequacy and acceptance. The peer groups should help provide the students with emotional security, especially where the students are experiencing difficulties in adjusting to parental demands and restrictions.

### 5.2 Mass Media and Bullying among Students

The result of the analysis revealed a positive significant relationship between mass media and bullying behaviour of students. This means that the kinds of content that students are exposed to on the mass media is likely to influence their behaviour. Those who are exposed to violent content on mass media are more likely to exhibit violent behaviour than those who are not exposed to violent content. Bullying in schools can have an unconstructive penalty on school climate and the rights of students to learn in a secured setting devoid of fear. It is prevalent, and possibly the most underreported security harm in schools. The occurrences of bullying in secondary school are as persistent as has been exposed by media in most cases. Schools in Delta and Edo states are deeply worried about the occurrence of bullying behaviour (Arseneault, Milne, Taylor, Adams, Delgado, Caspi & Moffitt, 2009).

According to Dogini (2014), media content can influence the behaviour of students. Hence, the researcher advocate for the use of mass media programmes to effect change in behaviour by creating awareness through such programmes on the negative effect of bullying behaviour in schools. According to him, principals and other education stakeholders should monitor programmes aired on

different media platforms to ensure that such programmes are used to effect positive change in behaviour among the students rather than negative behaviour such as bullying.

The above finding agrees with Bauman (2008) that due to anger experienced by students in the mass media, they bully other students in the schools. This finding agrees with Brooks Schiraldi and Zidenberg (2000), who stated that most of the bullying behaviour exhibited by students in school have their origin in the contents viewed on various media platforms. This finding agreed with the finding of Dogini (2014) that bullying actions has attained epidemic magnitude and is increasing anxiety in schools. Although school bullying is not as severe as described by the media, basic schools are extremely concerned about the occurrence of bullying behaviour.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that peer groups can influence bullying behaviour among students. Hence, the more susceptible an individual is to peer group influence, the more likely he or she will indulge in bullying behaviour, especially if the peers are bullies. The study also concluded that mass media can influence bullying behaviour among students and that too much exposure to violent scenes on the media could inspire an individual into indulging in bullying behaviour. In line with this conclusion, the study recommended as follows:

1. The principals should ensure that they discourage students from emulating the behaviour patterns of their peer group to reduce bullying behaviour through counselling services.
2. The principals should advise parents to censor media programmes their children watch at home to reduce bullying behaviour among students.

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