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PARENTAL MONITORING, TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON BULLYING AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN IBADAN

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ABSTRACT

Bullying remains a critical psychosocial issue affecting adolescents globally, with contextual and individual factors playing significant roles in its manifestation. This study investigated the influence of school location, parental monitoring, traumatic experiences, and demographic variables on bullying experiences among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design with an ex-post facto approach was employed. Data were collected from 1,733 adolescents aged 12–19 across eight public secondary schools selected from four local government areas in Ibadan. Instruments included the Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (MPVS), Parental Monitoring Short Scale (PMSS), and a researcher-developed Trauma Experience Short Scale. Data were analyzed using one-way ANOVA, post hoc LSD tests, and multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed a statistically significant difference in bullying levels based on school location ($F(3, 1686) = 66.52, p < .001$), with Egbeda recording the lowest bullying rates and Ibadan North the highest. Multiple regression showed that traumatic experiences significantly predicted bullying ($\beta = 0.124, p < .001$), while parental monitoring did not ($\beta = -0.033, p = .170$). Furthermore, age, gender, and location jointly and significantly predicted bullying ($R^2 = .018, p < .001$), with age negatively predicting bullying, and gender and location having positive predictive effects. The study highlights the multifaceted nature of bullying, demonstrating the impact of environmental factors, past trauma, and demographic variables on adolescents' experiences. The non-significant role of parental monitoring suggests that contextual and interpersonal dynamics may moderate its protective influence. Targeted, location-specific, trauma-informed, and demographically sensitive interventions are essential to effectively address bullying among adolescents in Nigerian schools.

Keywords: Bullying, Adolescents, Parental Monitoring, Traumatic Experience, School Location, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Bullying among adolescents has become a deeply troubling social and psychological issue in Nigeria, especially within public school systems in major urban areas like Ibadan. Studies have revealed a widespread prevalence, with estimates ranging from 70% to 85% across various educational settings (Alabi & Lami, 2015; Adefunke, 2010). This reflects more than isolated incidents; it signals a systemic crisis in adolescent development and school safety. Bullying, as documented in Nigerian and global studies, results in far-reaching consequences; emotional distress, academic disengagement, social withdrawal, and in some tragic cases, suicidal ideation (Omoniyi, 2013; Gruber & Fineran, 2008). These consequences extend beyond individual students, affecting overall school climate, reducing teacher morale, and placing emotional and economic strain on families and communities (Brown, 2008).

Defined broadly as repeated and intentional harm targeted at individuals perceived as less powerful (Adegoke et al., 2023), bullying in Nigerian schools often manifests through verbal abuse, physical aggression, object-throwing, social exclusion, and increasingly, cyberbullying among tech-savvy urban adolescents. Hinduja and Patchin (2010) highlight how bullying undermines academic performance, self-esteem, and classroom engagement, often pushing

students to absenteeism and dropout. In Nigeria's public schools; where teacher-to-student ratios are often skewed and monitoring mechanisms weak; many adolescents suffer in silence. Despite the prevalence of anti-bullying campaigns globally, there is limited localized understanding of the key psychological and familial factors contributing to this persistent problem. One such factor is **parental monitoring**, which refers to parenting behaviors that involve consistent supervision, open communication, and emotional availability. This element of parenting is crucial in shaping adolescent behavior. Poor parental monitoring, as highlighted in studies by Patrick et al. (2020) and Patterson et al. (2019), correlates strongly with increased antisocial behavior, substance abuse, truancy, and aggressive conduct, including bullying. In a Nigerian context, where economic hardship forces many caregivers into long working hours or migration for income, adolescents are often left unsupervised or under the care of siblings or neighbors; creating a void in emotional guidance and behavioral regulation.

Findings from longitudinal studies further indicate that the absence of effective parental monitoring is associated with increased peer pressure and engagement in risky social networks (Ary et al., 2019; Dishion et al., 2021). In many Nigerian households, traditional authoritarian parenting styles may be mistaken for monitoring, but without emotional presence or communication, such approaches may do little to prevent deviant behaviors. Adolescents who are neglected or emotionally disconnected from their parents are more likely to engage in bullying either as a coping mechanism or a means of asserting control over others.

Another vital but often overlooked dimension is the impact of **traumatic life experiences**. Trauma; whether from abuse, family conflict, loss, or witnessing violence; can lead to long-term psychological distress. Adolescents exposed to such conditions may internalize fear and helplessness, while others externalize these emotions through aggression and dominance (Levine, 1997; Spiegel, 2008). In Nigerian urban settings like Ibadan, many adolescents experience or witness traumatic events, such as parental separation, street violence, domestic abuse, or even displacement due to housing demolitions and community unrest. These unresolved psychological wounds can influence not only vulnerability to bullying but also increase the likelihood of becoming a perpetrator, as adolescents seek to reassert power or cope with emotional turmoil. Additionally, demographic factors such as **age, gender, and geographic location** further complicate the dynamics of bullying. Younger adolescents, particularly in junior secondary schools, are more vulnerable to overt physical aggression, while older students often encounter cyber-bullying, rumor-spreading, or social ostracization due to increased access to digital platforms (World Health Organization, 2023). Gender plays a significant role, with boys more likely to engage in direct physical confrontations, while girls tend to use relational tactics like exclusion and gossip (Zych et al., 2020). In the Nigerian context, cultural expectations around masculinity and femininity often reinforce these patterns. Boys may be encouraged to "stand up for themselves" through aggression, while girls may be socialized to maintain peer hierarchies through indirect hostility.

Location is a critical variable in understanding bullying among adolescents in Ibadan due to the city's socio-spatial diversity. Ibadan comprises a mix of urban, semi-urban, and peri-urban areas, each with distinct social, economic, and infrastructural characteristics that influence adolescent behavior and school climate. Schools located in densely populated, low-income areas may experience higher rates of bullying due to overcrowding, resource constraints, and weaker administrative oversight. In contrast, schools in more affluent or centrally located areas may have better supervision, access to counseling services, and stronger anti-bullying policies. Additionally, cultural norms, community violence, and varying parental involvement levels differ by locality, all of which shape adolescents' coping strategies and peer interactions. Therefore, analyzing bullying through the lens of location allows for a more nuanced

understanding of the environmental and contextual factors that contribute to its prevalence and forms in Ibadan.

This study specifically targets in-school adolescents because schools are the primary context where peer interactions and thus bullying are most observable and measurable. Unlike out-of-school youth, in-school adolescents operate within structured environments where adult supervision, peer group dynamics, and institutional responses directly shape bullying behavior. In Ibadan, where many schools face overcrowding and limited resources, understanding bullying within the school setting is critical for designing practical, school-based interventions.

The following are the objectives of the study:

- 1) Assess the prevalence of bullying among in-school adolescents in Ibadan based on their location.
- 2) Determine the impact of parental monitoring on bullying behaviours among in-school adolescents in Ibadan.
- 3) Explore how traumatic experiences serve as predictors of bullying among in-school adolescents in Ibadan.
- 4) Investigate the role of socio-demographic factors (age, gender, and location) in influencing bullying among in-school adolescents in Ibadan.

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. There will be a significant difference in the level of bullying among in-school adolescents based on location in Ibadan.
2. Parental monitoring and traumatic experience will significantly predict bullying among in-school adolescents in Ibadan.
3. Demographic variables (age, gender, and location) will significantly, independently, and jointly predict bullying among in-school adolescents in Ibadan.

METHODS

Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design with an ex-post facto approach. This design was deemed appropriate given the varied socio-demographic profiles of the target population and the need to analyze pre-existing variables such as bullying without any manipulation of the participants. Bullying behaviour served as the dependent variable, while parental monitoring and traumatic experiences were the independent variables. Additional demographic factors considered included age, gender, and location.

Study Setting

The study was conducted across eight public secondary schools located in four Local Government Areas (LGAs) within Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The selected LGAs—**Akinyele, Egbeda, Ibadan North, and Ibadan North East**—were purposively chosen to reflect the diverse socio-demographic and infrastructural landscape of the Ibadan metropolis. According to the **Oyo State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2024)**, the combined student population across public secondary schools in these LGAs was **111,841**.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size (Essay Format)

To ensure fair representation and systematic participant selection, a multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for this study, conducted across selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Ibadan, Oyo State. The first stage involved purposive selection of four LGAs—Akinyele, Egbeda, Ibadan North, and Ibadan North East. These were chosen out of the eleven

LGAs in Ibadan to reflect a balanced representation of both peri-urban and metropolitan communities, based on their geographical spread, student population, and socio-economic diversity.

In the second stage, two public secondary schools were randomly selected from each of the four LGAs using a simple random sampling method. The list of government-approved schools was obtained from the Oyo State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to ensure authenticity and inclusiveness. This yielded a total of eight schools, allowing for equitable institutional representation across the selected locations. The third stage focused on participant selection within the schools. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select students across class levels (JSS1 to SS3) and gender, ensuring inclusivity of all key subgroups in the target population. This approach minimized selection bias and enhanced the representativeness of the sample.

The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula, considering the total student population of 111,841 in public secondary schools across the selected LGAs (Oyo State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2024). At a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, the minimum required sample size was estimated at 1,575 students. To accommodate potential attrition or non-response, an additional 10% (158 students) was added, bringing the total sample size to 1,733. The sample was distributed proportionally across the four LGAs based on their respective student populations: Akinyele (26,667 students) contributed 434 participants; Egbeda (26,478 students) also contributed 434; Ibadan North (33,629 students) contributed 435; and Ibadan North East (25,067 students) contributed 433. This proportional allocation ensured that each LGA was adequately represented in line with its student population. Eligibility criteria for participants included being an in-school adolescent currently enrolled in one of the selected public secondary schools, aged between 12 and 19 years, and enrolled in JSS1 to SS3. All participants were required to provide informed assent and have parental or guardian consent prior to participation in the study.

INSTRUMENT

Section A: Socio-Demographic Information This section collected data on participants' age, gender, class level, family type, religious affiliation, and location. Among the 1,690 valid respondents, 54.2% were male and 45.8% female. Most (58.6%) were younger adolescents. A majority came from monogamous families (74.3%), and the predominant religions were Christianity (56.3%) and Islam (43.3%). Students were evenly distributed across class levels and geographic locations.

Section B: Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (MPVS) Developed by Mynard and Joseph (2000), this 16-item scale assessed physical, verbal, and social victimization using a three-point Likert scale. The internal consistency ranged from 0.73 to 0.85. Its validity in Nigeria was affirmed by a correlation of $r = 0.54$ with the Aggression Scale (Balogun & Olapegba, 2007).

Section C: Parental Monitoring Short Scale (PMSS) This 12-item instrument by Swaim and Stanley (2022) measured parental monitoring in various settings. It used a five-point Likert scale and had a total score range from 5 to 60. The scale demonstrated strong reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$) and validity (0.60).

Section D: Trauma Experience Short Scale Developed by the researchers, this two-item scale assessed bullying-related trauma at home. Responses were binary and severity was rated from 1 to 10. It showed a reliability coefficient of 0.71 and a mean score of 8.49 (SD = 1.44). Scores ≤ 5 denoted no trauma, while ≥ 6 indicated trauma.

Procedure

The data collection process was executed in a structured and ethically guided manner to ensure the validity, reliability, and integrity of the study. Ethical approval was first obtained from a recognized institutional review board, and formal permissions were sought from the Oyo State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, as well as the principals of the selected schools. Parental consent and student assent were also secured prior to participation. School visits were strategically scheduled in collaboration with management to avoid academic disruptions. Research assistants were available during administration to provide clarifications, and each session lasted approximately 8-12 minutes. Completed questionnaires were immediately reviewed for completeness, sorted, and securely transported for safekeeping. Subsequently, responses were manually entered into SPSS software for analysis, with a thorough data cleaning process undertaken to eliminate incomplete or inconsistent entries, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the dataset.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS version 25.0 IBM. Descriptive statistics and reliability analyses were conducted. Hypotheses one and two were tested using independent sample t-tests, while hypotheses three and four were examined through ANOVA.

RESULTS

The section presents the results gathered from 1733 students among in-school adolescents based on location in Ibadan.

Hypothesis One

There will be a significant difference in the level of bullying among in-school adolescents based on location in Ibadan.

Table 1a: One-Way ANOVA Summary – Effect of Location on Bullying

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	(p-value)
Between Groups	11,749.44	3	3,916.48	66.515	.000
Within Groups	99,274.00	1,686	58.88		
Total	111,023.36	1,689			

Table 1a, the ANOVA result shows a statistically significant difference in bullying experiences among students across different locations in Ibadan ($F = 66.515$, $p < .001$). This confirms that location significantly affects how adolescents experience bullying. Thus, the hypothesis is supported.

Table 1b: LSD Post Hoc Test – Pairwise Comparisons of Bullying Across Locations

Location (I)	Location (J)	Mean Diff (I-J)	p-value (Sig.)	Remarks
Akinyele	Egbeda	5.39125	.000	Significant
Akinyele	Ibadan North	-1.67710	.001	Significant

Akinyele	Ibadan North-East	-0.01104	.983	Not Significant
Egbeda	Ibadan North	-7.06835	.000	Significant
Egbeda	Ibadan North-East	-5.40229	.000	Significant
Ibadan North	Ibadan North-East	1.66606	.001	Significant

Table 1b shows that Egbeda recorded the lowest bullying experiences, significantly lower than other locations. Ibadan North had relatively higher bullying experiences. No significant difference was found between Akinyele and Ibadan North-East. These findings support the claim that bullying prevalence varies meaningfully by geographic location, reinforcing the need for location-specific interventions.

Hypothesis Two

Parental monitoring and traumatic experience will significantly predict bullying among in-school adolescents in Ibadan.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Summary – Parental Monitoring and Trauma Predicting Bullying

Independent Variable(s)	Beta (β)	T	Sig.	R	R ²	F	P (Sig.)
Parental Monitoring	-0.033	-1.373	0.170	0.128	0.016	13.976	0.000
Traumatic Experience	0.124	5.133	0.000				

Table 2 shows that parental monitoring had a non-significant predictive effect ($p = .170$), though the negative beta suggests a potential protective role. Traumatic experience had a significant positive effect ($p < .001$), meaning students exposed to trauma are more likely to be bullied. The combined model is significant ($F = 13.976$, $p < .001$), but only accounts for 1.6% of the variance in bullying. Thus, the hypothesis is partially supported – trauma predicts bullying, but parental monitoring does not significantly in this model.

Hypothesis Three

Demographic variables (age, gender, and location) will significantly, independently, and jointly predict bullying among in-school adolescents in Ibadan.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Summary – Effect of Demographic Variables on Bullying

Independent Variable(s)	Beta (β)	T	Sig.	R	R ²	F	P (Sig.)
Age	-0.057	-2.369	0.018	0.133	0.018	10.053	0.000
Gender	0.068	2.801	0.005				
Location	0.102	4.229	0.000				

Table 3 indicates that the model is statistically significant ($F = 10.053$, $p < .001$) and explains 1.8% of the variance in bullying. Age had a negative effect ($p = .018$), meaning older adolescents experienced less bullying. Gender had a positive effect ($p = .005$), suggesting bullying experiences differ by gender. Location also had a significant positive effect ($p < .001$), affirming that geographical location matters. Thus, the hypothesis is fully supported – demographic variables significantly and independently predict bullying experiences.

DISCUSSION

This study tested three hypotheses to explore the predictors of bullying experiences among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, with findings discussed in alignment with existing empirical literature. The first hypothesis examined the influence of school location on the prevalence of bullying. The findings revealed significant differences in bullying levels across the four locations, highlighting the critical role of environmental and contextual factors. Notably, adolescents in Egbeda reported the lowest levels of bullying, which may reflect stronger community support systems or more effective school-based anti-bullying initiatives. These findings are consistent with Craig et al. (2009), who emphasized that a supportive school climate can reduce the prevalence of bullying.

The findings of this study underscore the complex interplay between psychological, socio-demographic, and environmental factors in shaping bullying experiences among in-school adolescents in Ibadan. Notably, Ibadan North recorded the highest levels of bullying, a trend plausibly linked to contextual stressors such as overcrowded classrooms, socio-economic hardship, and reduced adult supervision. These conditions reflect the ecological stress model, which posits that densely populated, resource-strained environments contribute to heightened antisocial behaviour due to increased peer conflict and diminished adult oversight (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Supporting this, Alabi and Lami (2015) reported elevated bullying rates in urban Nigerian areas characterized by infrastructural strain and lax disciplinary enforcement. Similarly, Hinduja and Patchin (2010) emphasized that structural inequalities and school climate play a critical role in facilitating bullying dynamics, particularly where institutional responses are weak or inconsistent.

The second hypothesis explored the role of parental monitoring and traumatic experiences in predicting bullying involvement. Results revealed that traumatic experiences significantly predicted bullying, which aligns with psychological theories on trauma-related behavioral dysregulation. According to Corsini (2002) and Spiegel (2008), adolescents exposed to trauma—such as domestic violence or abuse—often externalize their distress through aggressive or controlling behaviours, including bullying. This pattern reflects aspects of the trauma-response framework, which highlights how early adverse experiences can distort emotional regulation and interpersonal functioning in adolescence.

Conversely, while parental monitoring showed a negative association with bullying, this relationship was not statistically significant. This suggests that although increased parental oversight might offer some protection, its efficacy may be mediated by other psychological and contextual variables. Dishion et al. (2021) argue that the effectiveness of parental monitoring is contingent on adolescents' willingness to disclose, which itself is shaped by relational warmth, trust, and communication quality. Without a secure parent-child relationship, attempts at monitoring may be perceived as intrusive rather than supportive. Patterson et al. (2019) further contend that monitoring strategies divorced from emotional engagement often fail to yield positive behavioural outcomes, particularly during adolescence, a developmental phase marked by increased autonomy-seeking and peer alignment.

The third hypothesis examined the predictive roles of age, gender, and location. Regression results confirmed that these variables significantly influenced bullying experiences. Age was negatively associated with bullying, implying that older adolescents are less involved—likely due to greater emotional regulation, identity consolidation, and improved problem-solving abilities (WHO, 2023). This finding aligns with developmental psychology perspectives that emphasize age-related improvements in empathy and impulse control, which reduce reliance on aggression in social interactions.

Gender also emerged as a significant factor, with males more frequently reporting involvement in bullying. This supports Zych et al.'s (2020) conclusion that boys are more prone to overt, physical, or verbal aggression, making them more visible as both perpetrators and victims. In contrast, girls are more likely to engage in covert or relational bullying, which is less likely to be identified or reported due to its subtlety. These gendered patterns reflect social learning

theory, which posits that aggressive behaviour is shaped by gender-specific reinforcement and modelling from both peers and adults (Bandura, 1977).

Finally, location remained a significant predictor of bullying experiences, reinforcing the relevance of environmental psychology and social context. The physical and institutional environment—including factors like school safety, teacher presence, peer norms, and neighbourhood stability—plays a crucial role in either exacerbating or buffering bullying behaviours. This confirms the ecological systems theory's assertion that adolescent behaviour cannot be fully understood without accounting for the layered influences of immediate and broader environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Thus, interventions must consider not only individual or family-level factors but also school-wide and community-level dynamics to effectively reduce bullying among adolescents.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the predictors of bullying among in-school adolescents in Ibadan and based on the observations and inferential analysis makes the following conclusions: Statistically significant differences were observed in bullying levels across locations. Egbeda consistently reported the lowest levels, while Ibadan North had higher prevalence. These disparities underscore the influence of environmental and structural contexts on adolescent behaviour. Meanwhile, traumatic experiences emerged as a significant predictor of bullying, parental monitoring did not. This suggests that exposure to trauma increases vulnerability to bullying, but the protective effects of monitoring may depend on other moderating factors such as communication quality and adolescent trust.

In addition, age, gender, and location were all significant predictors. Older adolescents reported fewer bullying experiences, while gender-based and location-based differences further highlighted the complexity of bullying dynamics. Collectively, the findings confirm that bullying among adolescents is a multifactorial phenomenon, shaped by both individual experiences (e.g., trauma, age) and contextual conditions (e.g., location, gender roles, school climate).

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the findings of this study, the following evidence-based recommendations are proposed:

Anti-bullying programs should be tailored to address the unique challenges of each geographic area. For example, schools in high-bullying areas like Ibadan North should implement intensified monitoring, conflict-resolution training, and awareness campaigns.

Schools should adopt trauma-sensitive practices by integrating psychological support services and providing safe spaces for students with adverse experiences, thereby reducing their vulnerability to bullying.

Parents should be educated on the importance of effective monitoring that prioritizes open communication and trust-building rather than surveillance alone. Workshops and school-parent collaboration models can support this aim.

Interventions should be tailored to the specific developmental and gender-related needs of students. For instance, younger students may benefit more from social-emotional learning modules, while programs for boys and girls should address gendered bullying patterns.

Schools should promote inclusive and empathetic cultures by incorporating anti-bullying policies, peer support systems, and staff training focused on bullying detection and intervention. Age-appropriate and gender-responsive strategies should also be prioritized.

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