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DYNAMICS OF CHILD-TO-CHILD BULLYING AND FAMILY STRUCTURE IN SELECTED NEIGHBOURHOODS OF IBADAN, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Child-to-Child bullying poses a threat to the wellbeing of children and adolescents. The dynamics of bullying among children has received limited attention in Nigerian literature space. Hence, this study examined child-to-child bullying and family structure in selected neighbourhoods in Ibadan Nigeria. The research design was a cross-sectional, with mixed-methods approach. The research sample comprised children aged 8 to 17 years, their parents, community leaders, and religious figures, in selected neighbourhoods. More than half (58%) of respondents were female, (24.3%) enrolled in secondary school, and of Yoruba ethnicity. More males (53.2%) reported bullying than females (43.5%). Verbal bullying was reported as the most common (57.4%). More than half (50.2%) of participants reported family conflict. There was a correlation between the components of family dynamics (such as family characteristics and conflict) and bullying behaviours. ($r = 26.91$, $p < 0.01$). Interpersonal relationships and family characteristics have a significant influence on bullying behaviours among children in the community. Physical and verbal bullying are critical issues in social relations among the study population, understanding these dynamics is essential for effectively addressing child-to-child bullying.

Keywords: *Child-to-child bullying, family structure, neighbourhood bullying and mid-adolescence*

INTRODUCTION TO CHILD-TO-CHILD BULLYING

Bullying is a sociological phenomenon that is rooted in human and social relations (Denny et al. 2014). For bullying to take place, two basic components must intersect: the perpetrator and the victim. Of course, some studies have also posited the presence of bystanders (bullying audience) as a third, but not least significant, player in bullying. Perpetrators of bullying display characteristics of being strong, nasty and angry (Ndebele and Msiza, 2014), with a strong desire to dominate, displaying little empathy (Olweus, 1994), and tend to abuse peers in their social circles who are mostly non-assertive and insecure. For instance, newcomers, young, shy and intelligent learners are easy targets for bullies because of their vulnerability and social sensibility, which often render them unable to reciprocate similar violence to defend themselves. This is particularly the case when the perpetration of bullying verges on an antisocial, selfish and socially insensitive abuse of power to inflict fear and intimidation and create social insecurity.

Child-to-child bullying revolves around repeated and intentional aggressive behaviour manifestation by a child or a group of children against another child, where an imbalance of power exists. This behaviour is not a one-off conflict but a sustained pattern of victimization that can take various forms. These include direct physical acts like hitting or stealing, verbal abuse such as taunting and name-calling, and, increasingly, relational bullying like social exclusion and the spreading of rumours. In the recent years, this phenomenon has been extended to include cyberbullying; where digital platforms are used to harass, threaten, or embarrass a peer. The power imbalance central to this dynamic is not always physical; it can be derived from differences in

social status, popularity, age, or even academic performance, creating a vulnerable victim who finds it difficult to defend themselves.

Generally, children who are perpetrators of bullying mostly bear dominant social identities – for instance, males, older learners, wealthy, tall, confident and outspoken and generally learners who are regarded in a positive light, according to the social constructions of learners' identities in each context. On the contrary, bystanders are usually spectators in bullying incidents because they enjoy or are coerced to watch such violent acts to give the audience and social affirmation to the bullies. Bystanders do not necessarily encourage bullying and are often unspoken victims, given the emotional and psychological distress they experience from watching some horrific acts of bullying, while they stand helpless to stop the acts of bullying (Hong and Espelage, 2012). The likelihood of a child being bullied and perpetrating bullying behavior peaked in the early adolescent years (ages 12-14) before decreasing slightly in later adolescence (Limber, 2014). Although boys and girls experienced relatively similar rates of being bullied, boys were more likely to bully others and be bullied than girls were which indicated that there are gender differences in the frequency with which children and youth are involved in bullying (Cook et al., 2010; Limber, 2014).

A culture of bullying can emerge in any environment where children frequently interact, including schools, families, homes, and neighbourhoods. Approximately 150 million kids between the ages of 13 and 15 worldwide are said to be victims of peer-to-peer violence in and around schools, and one in three of them engage in bullying that ends in physical altercations (Ighaede-Edwards et al., 2023). Bullying in schools is a serious problem in Nigeria, as Physical violence accounted for 85% of the majority of victimization against children in schools, while psychological violence accounted for 50%, according to a nationwide study of school violence carried out by the Federal Ministry of Education in partnership with United Nations Children's Funds (Adeosun, et al 2015).

Bullies can be created by a variety of variables such as social and familial backgrounds. The degree of mistreatment experienced from poor parental's listening skills, parental abuse and marital status poor family supervision are the primary contributors to bullying behaviours (Al- Hussein and Shahba, 2024). Adolescents whose parents are separated or divorced may experience negative emotions and loneliness. Bullies are more likely to be teenagers from homes with parents who are irritable, angry, and violent (Dauvergne and Johnson, 2001; Al-Kaltham, 2016). Some families believe that their primary responsibility is to provide for their children's material requirements, such as shelter, clothes, food, and the money necessary for higher educational possibilities, without paying attention to or assessing how they behave (Al- Hussein and Shahba, 2024). Okoro et al (2007), the neighbourhood's critical role in preparing a Nigerian Child for a better future has been undervalued and ignored in recent years and bullying behaviour is impacted by this neglect. Some aspects of the neighbourhood cause stress for families, which in turn influences the bullying behaviour of the Nigerian Child, therefore, the neighbourhood features of poverty, criminality, and social instability are the basis for this paper's discussion on bullying and Nigerian children (Okoro, 2017).

Bullying has been recorded to be a common phenomenon in Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Malawi, among other sub-Saharan African nations with prevalence as high as 16.3%, 45.5%, 56%, and 44.5% respectively (Aboagye et al, 2021). In Nigeria, physical bullying was found to be higher in the southern region (90%) compared to the

northern region (79%) while psychological bullying was greater in Northern Nigeria (61%) than in Southern Nigeria 38.7% (Umoke, et al, 2020). A significant level of bullying victimization, perpetration and bystander issues was found in a study conducted among primary school pupils (Umoke, et al, 2020). In June 2018, a horrifying video of a girl from a public school in Nigeria physically assaulting and humiliating another girl while their colleagues observed but were powerless to intervene, went viral on social media. There was another headline on bullying behaviours reported by "the nations" in August 13, 2016 issue of magazine"

Several physical health issues have also been linked to bullying in adolescents in the past; for example, teens who have been bullied are more likely to suffer from stomach pain, sleep issues, headaches that aren't specific, strained muscles, extreme exhaustion, and decreased appetite (Sabramani, et al 2021). Children's mental health, well-being, and risky behaviours can all be adversely affected by bullying as bullied children are about twice as likely to experience loneliness and to feel incapable, to have considered suicide and to have difficulty sleeping at night as those who are not harassed. Self-assessed life, health quality and level of enjoyment are lower in kids who experience bullying as a perpetrator, victim, or both compared to those who are not a part of harassment. Additionally, bullying is linked to greater rates of cannabis, alcohol, and other psychoactive substances, as well as earlier sexual encounter (UNICEF, 2020).

Bullying is a prevalent problem in Nigerian schools, impacting children of all ages, but adolescents are at greater risk, with physical violence accounting for 85% of bullying incidence among in- school children, while psychological violence constituting 50% (Ighaede-Edwards et al., 2023). Males are more frequently involved in bullying, while females are often the victims (Oliemen, et al., 2023). There are contributing factors such as inter-parental violence, exposure to domestic violence, and social dynamics that aid bullying behaviour among children in Nigeria (Aboagye et al, 2021).

A research conducted by Omobowale et al, 2019, among adolescents in the Agbowo community in Ibadan, different forms of bullying such as physical, verbal, relational or social bullying were identified, 63% of adolescents reported experiencing bullying and 50% of adolescents admitted to verbally bullying others (Omobowale et al., 2019) revealing the extent of child bullying in Ibadan. A literature review conducted revealed that bullying in schools is a factor that causes adolescents to feel unsafe. It can create a hostile social environment and lead to feelings of isolation, depression, and anxiety for the child, conduct problems, physical injuries, internalising and externalising symptoms and sometimes losses of lives as seen in cases that happened in a college in Lagos, Kano and Abuja in 2021 (Aveseh, 2021).

Bullying has severe consequences on children's mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being (WHO, 2021). One of which is suicide, which is the fourth leading cause of death for those aged 15 to 29 (WHO, 2024). The effects of bullying in adolescents can have long-term effects on an individual's physical and psychological well-being as well as diminished opportunities for a fulfilling adult life. Approximately one in seven individuals aged 10 to 19 worldwide suffer from a mental disorder, making up 13% of the global burden of disease in this age group (WHO, 2021). It is also estimated that 3.6% of 10–14-year-olds and 4.6% of 15–19-year-olds experience anxiety disorder globally while depression is estimated to occur among 1.1% of adolescents aged 10–14 years, and 2.8% of 15–19-year-olds (WHO, 2021). Children who are bullied are around twice as likely to feel lonely, to be unable to sleep at night and to have contemplated suicide than those who are not bullied (UNICEF, 2020).

Researching the dynamic of child-to-child bullying and family structure in local settings such as rural environments with distinct social structures, cultural norms, and community dynamics, where children interact with each other with little or no supervision, is essential, as it addresses a gap in understanding how familial contexts shape bullying behaviours. While previous studies have linked the absence of ethical and moral values to bullying behaviours among children and adolescents (Pornari and Wood, 2010), the specific influence of family structure, including family type, parental union status, and parent/relationship type, parental involvement, and socioeconomic status, remains underexplored in the Nigerian context.

This study examined the dynamics of child-to-child neighbourhood bullying in selected neighbourhoods of Ibadan, Nigeria. The study asked the following salient questions:

1. What is the perception of child-to-child bullying among children in selected neighbourhoods of Ibadan?
2. What patterns of child-to-child bullying exist among children in selected neighbourhoods of Ibadan?
3. Does family structure play any role in child-to-child bullying in selected neighbourhoods of Ibadan?

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The study utilised a cross-sectional mixed methods study design to assess the prevalence of bullying among children, identify patterns of bullying among children aged 8 to 18 in the selected neighbourhood and their family structures.

Study Area

The selected neighbourhoods were all located in Oluyole Local Government Area in Ibadan. Ibadan is the capital of Oyo State, Nigeria and the most populous in Oyo State, Nigeria. Oluyole Local Government is a peri-urban (refers to the areas on the outskirts of cities or towns, where urban and rural environments intersect). These areas are characterized by a mix of urban and rural land uses, such as agriculture, housing, industry, and natural habitats and one of the oldest Local Government Area councils in Oyo State, established in 1976 under Oyo Central Senatorial District and has its headquarters at Idi-Ayunre, with a population of 202,725 based on the 2006 population Census and an area of 629 km². It shares boundaries with four other LGAs in Ibadan Metropolis, also with Ogun State. Residents of Oluyole Local Government are Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa and other ethnic groups who are involved in farming, trading, local food processing, transport business and government and private employment.

There are 10 wards which were divided into two sectors, namely Idi- Ayunre (containing; Ward 2 – Orita/Odo Ona- Elewe, Ward 5 – Odo Ona- Nla/Idi-Ayunre, Ward 8 – Abanla/Olonde, Ward 9 – Onipe/Busogboro, Ward 10 – Orisunbare) and Olode Sector (Ward 1 – Ayegun, Ward 3 – Pegba/Egbeda Tuba, Ward 4 – Muslim/Ifelodun, Ward 6 – Latunde, Ward 7 – Olomi/Olonde).

Study Population

The respondents for this study were Children aged 8 to 17 years. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a child is defined as a person under the age of 18. Children below the age of 8 were automatically excluded from the study because they may struggle to understand the purpose of the research due to their significant cognitive development.

Sample Size

The sample size for this study was determined using the Leslie-Kish formula (Polonia, 2013)

to estimate the sample size at 5% level of confidence.

$$n = Z^2 p q (1 - p) / d^2$$

Where;

n = the desired minimum sample size,

Z = standard normal deviate for desired significance level = 1.96 (for 95% confidence),

In a previous study (Asibong U et al., 2021), P = 54.8%, the proportion of subjects that were

bullied.

$$q = 1 - p = 1 - 0.548 = 0.452$$

$$d = \text{margin of error} = 0.05$$

$$\text{Thus, } n = (1.96)^2 \times 0.548 \times 0.452 / (0.05)^2 =$$

381 (with 10% non-response adjusted).

To account for attrition rate, $N = n / (1 - f)$, where f is 10% (0.1) attrition rate

$$N = 381 / 0.9$$

$$N = 423.33 \text{ approximately } 424.$$

Sample Techniques

This study adopted multi-stage sampling techniques to select 424 respondents in Ward 3 (Pegba/Egbada Tuba Ward) in the Oluyole Local Government Area.

Stage one: Oluyole was purposively selected because of its growing population, which rose from less than 100,000 population in 1995 to 290,800 projected population in 2022, with a 2.3% annual growth rate (National Population Commission of Nigeria, 2006), with diverse livelihood activities and a growing youth demographic.

Stage two: A simple random sampling method by balloting was used to select a ward among the Ten wards in the Oluyole, and ward three (PEGBA/EGBEDA TUBA) were selected.

Stage three: The cluster sampling technique was used to further divide the selected ward into northeastern, northwestern, southwestern, and southeastern regions. This cluster was chosen based on the assumption that respondents within the same cluster are likely to exhibit some similarities.

Stage four: A list of streets within each cluster was compiled, and neighbourhoods were randomly selected from each cluster via balloting. In total, sixteen neighbourhoods were chosen from all clusters in Ward 3, as shown on the next page, and participants were purposively enrolled in the study according to the specified inclusion criteria.

Inclusion Criteria

Participant selection and recruitment for this study was based on the following criteria:

1. Both male and female children between ages 8 and 18 years.
2. Children who were residents of the selected neighbourhoods six months before the time of the study were recruited for the study.
3. Children who gave assent.
4. Children whose parents consented to participating in the study.
5. Parents, Religious leaders and Community leaders who gave consent.

Exclusion Criteria

Participant selection and recruitment for this study did not include the following:

1. Children below the age of 8 years as they may not be very articulate.
2. Participants who did not give assent or whose parents did give consent.
3. Respondents who had underlying physical or were diagnosed with mental illness.
4. Participants for KII who did not give consent

Data Collection

The qualitative study employed both quantitative (administration of semi-structured questionnaire) and qualitative methods of data collection which include in-depth interviews and key informant interviews.

As stated by Mouton and Maris (1990) consideration should be made on the practicality and limitations of a study not only on the purpose of choosing a research design. The qualitative study was employed as a means to gain an in-depth understanding of child-to-child bullying and family structure in neighbourhoods within its real context.

1. In-depth Interview

Twelve in-depth interviews were conducted among the children (aged 8-18 years) and six key informant interviews were conducted among parents, community leaders and religious leaders. Respondents were randomly selected from the list of neighbourhoods that were both included and not included in the quantitative study.

- a. Eight male children.
- b. Four female children.
- c. Six adults; four females and two males.

A total of eighteen participants (8 male children and 4 female children) and 6 adults (4 females and 2 males) were interviewed in the qualitative data collection.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval to carry out this study was obtained from the Oyo State Ethics Review Committee, Ministry of Health, Secretariat, Ibadan. During that data collection phase comprehensive and age-appropriate explanation of the research purpose was provided to the children to ensure their understanding of the study's objectives and significance while promoting transparency and encouraging their engagement. Informed consent and assent were obtained in both hard copy (printed on paper) and verbal forms (for the interviews conducted) in dual languages (Yoruba and English) from participants prior to the start of data collection. To maintain confidentiality, participants filled out the questionnaire themselves. For those who did not understand the questions or could not read, the research assistant read the questions aloud, allowing them to answer independently. The study through policy changes in the community, families support and amendment of anti- bullying policy as recommended by the researcher.

RESULTS

Findings emanating from this study were presented and discussed in this section. Sub-themes were developed to sufficiently capture the dynamics of child-to-child bullying culture and the role of family structure in selected neighbourhoods in Oluyole local government area, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 1 presented below offers a detailed overview of the demographic characteristics of the study's respondents, which includes a total of 400 children who participated in the study.

TABLE 1a: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Variable	Categories	n=400 (%)
Age group (Years)	Children (8-9)	70 (17.5)
	Early adolescent (10-13)	232(58.0)
	Mid adolescent (14-17)	97 (24.3)
Sex	Male	186 (46.5)
	Female	214 (53.5)
Gender	Male	176 (44.5)
	Female	222(55.5)
	Gender Neutral	1 (0.3)
	Non-binary	1 (0.3)
Ethnicity	Yoruba	375 (93.8)
	Igbo	11 (2.8)
	Hausa	13 (3.3)
	Others	1 (0.3)
Educational Level	No formal Education	9 (2.3)

Religion	Primary	133 (33.3)
	Secondary	255 (63.7)
	Tertiary	2 (0.5)
	Christianity	219 (54.8)
	Islam	174 (43.5)
	Traditional	7 (1.8)

Among these participants, 58% of the participants are classified as early adolescents (10-13 years), followed by 24.3% who fall into the mid-adolescent category (14-17 years), and 17.5% are categorized as children (8-9). In terms of gender distribution, females were 53.5%, males were 46.5%. A notable 63.7% of the participants are currently enrolled in secondary school, 33.3% are in primary four and five, 2.3% of the respondents have no formal education, while 0.5% of the participants, aged 17 and 18, attend tertiary institutions. Ethnicity is also a key demographic characteristic, with the overwhelming majority identifying as Yoruba at 93.8%. 3.3% Hausa, 2.8% Igbo, and 0.3% from various other ethnic backgrounds. A total of 43.5% practice Islam, and 1.8% adhere to traditional worship.

Table 2: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents (Interviews).

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=12)
Age group (Years)	Early adolescent (10-13)	7
	Mid adolescent (14-17)	5
Sex	Male	4
	Female	8
Education level	Primary four	1
	Junior Secondary School	3
	Senior Secondary School	2
Ethnicity	Yoruba	12
Religion	Christianity	4
	Islam	6
	Traditional	1
	Non atheism (non-affiliation to any religious body)	1
Who do you live with?	Both Parents and siblings	3
	Mother and siblings	4
	Grandmother	2
	Biological Mother and stepfamily	1
	Biological Father and stepfamily	1

A total of 12 adolescents participated in the in-depth interviews, as outlined in Table.2 above. These adolescents, aged 11 to 16 years, included 8 males and 4 females. One participant in Primary four, three in Junior Secondary School (JSS) 1-3, and two in Senior Secondary School (SSS) 2. In terms of religious affiliation, six identified as Muslim, four as Christian, one as a traditional (Osun) worshipper, and one did not have a religious affiliation. Living arrangements were diverse, with two participants residing with both parents and siblings. Additionally, six key informant interviews were conducted across selected neighbourhoods, featuring perspectives from four females (including two grandmothers, one clergy member, and one mother) and two fathers.

Perception of child-to-child bullying in selected neighbourhoods of Ibadan, Nigeria

This sub-section presents two themes, which are the definitions and perceptions of bullying from children and parents understanding and interpretations based on their experiences and cultural contexts.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is perceived as the manipulation of influence, position, or parental status to dominate another child ("ifi ipa yanije").

... Bullying to my understanding, is like using force to cheat someone ("ifi ipa yanije") (KII/mother resident/Balogun 1/2025)

This definition emphasizes that bullying is not solely about physical strength but also about social power. For instance, a child may bully another by leveraging their family's status or their popularity in a peer group. Another excerpt below reflects on what child to child bullying mean:

... (fowo ola gbaloju, o fagbara hanmi tori o ti mo pe mio le da oun mu" (he used influence to bully me, and he showed me power because he knows that I cannot overpower him). (IDI/adolescent resident/Alaaka 1/2025)

It indicates that bullying often manifests through intimidation, where the bully uses threats or physical dominance to achieve their ends. Many respondents highlight that bullying includes threats that instill fear in the victim.

Another peculiar response of a fifteen-year-old respondent is that;

... Bullying (idunkokomo) is when they threaten a child, and the child gets scared of the threat. It is also "Ebu ara" (verbal abuse), "ki won ma fiya eyan buyan pe ti mob a gba iya e mu, yoo sofo ni" (using one's parent to insult someone and also cursing). (IDI/ adolescent resident/Alaaka 2/2025)

The phrase "using one's parent to insult someone" illustrates how bullies may invoke the use of parental status or circumstances to reinforce their threats, making the victim feel powerless.

To another respondent,

...bullying entails talking with fight (aggressive talk with someone) and abusing people. (IDI/adolescent resident/Ayetoro/2025)

Furthermore, respondent describe that bullying is characterized by aggressive interactions, which can range from verbal confrontations to physical fights.

Even a lion can be bullied by a rat. Everybody is not too big to be bullied. Nobody is above anything. Only God is the supreme one. I just feel like everybody can be bullied, no matter how big or small you are. Everybody can be bullied, but everyone can avoid bullying. Bullying is causing harm to a person, either physically or emotionally to a person, without being guilty. Bullying can also mean lack of emotional intelligence. (IDI/adolescent resident/Alaaka 1/2025)

This perspective democratises the experience of bullying, suggesting that anyone can be a victim regardless of their social status or physical attributes. It also emphasizes the psychological aspect of bullying, where fear and intimidation can affect even those who appear strong or confident.

In addition, a parent stated

... bullying is when they tend to use the age gap to cheat others (re'ra won je), (won ni fe gba funra won) "nothing like dialogue or compromise amidst them". They can do things

like I'm 8 years old and you are 4 years then start sending them on errands. If an adult is not there, fights tend to break out. (IDI/adolescent resident/Inukan/2025)

Unlike the other definitions of bullying above, few adolescents defined bullying as 'a form of training' that prepares them to be tough ahead of life challenges (IDI/adolescent resident/Inukan/2024).

A recurring theme in the data collected is the exploitation of age and size differences in bullying scenarios. Older children often take advantage of their physical and social dominance to control and intimidate younger peers. The absence of adult supervision can exacerbate this power. Phrases that describe aggressive behaviour may reflect cultural norms regarding respect, hierarchy, and conflict resolution. Contrary to other definitions of the respondent, one respondent's definition of bullying as a form of training presents a contrasting view that may reflect a belief in resilience-building through adversity. This perspective suggests that some may see aggressive interactions as a necessary part of growing up, where children learn to navigate social hierarchies and conflicts.

Location and timing of bullying activities among children in selected neighbourhoods of Oluyole Local Government Area, Ibadan

Bullying can occur anywhere, the universal nature of bullying was corroborated by a 45-year-old mother, who emphasized that bullying is not confined to specific locations or demographics, stating that it can occur "everywhere" including homes, and among family members and is a common issue across communities. This perspective reinforces the idea that bullying is a widespread societal problem that transcends age, gender, and geographic boundaries.

...it is everywhere. On the field. They may be playing football and be finding the trouble of the ladies passing-by, stoning people passing by or stopping younger children passing by and beating them, hitting younger children with football and when those children want to talk, they threaten them that they will beat them more.

On the other hand, peer conflict mostly happens on playgrounds. Specifically, in areas like the backyard and playground of the school, as well as outside school premises, a participant recounted being bullied after reporting rough play to a teacher, highlighting the cycle of intimidation where victims face repercussions for seeking help. This incident illustrates the fear that prevents many from reporting bullying.

At an uncompleted building (joint) in this Idi Osan. The one that I saw, I don't know if they eventually carried out their threat. One uncle at the joint ask a girl who was passing by out and the girl rejected him, he then threatened the lady by saying her home address and that he would catch her. (IDI/adolescent resident/ Alaaka 1/2025).

Family characteristics and child-to-child bullying among children in neighbourhoods in Oluyole Local Government Area, Ibadan.

The findings in table 3 below show that a higher ($B=0.973$, $P=0.04$) probability of bullying behaviour is linked to parents being more aware of their children's whereabouts. Similarly, an uneven allocation of family responsibilities can lead to sibling rivalry or frustration, which can impact bullying behaviours ($B=0.612$, $P<0.06$). Bullying between children decreases by ($B=-0.618$, $P=0.05$) for every unit increase in emergency response to bullying. However, child-to-child bullying increases by ($B = 0.928$, $P<0.01$) for every unit increase in family interest only when it is important to them. Additionally, bullying and a lack of tenderness in the family have a positive correlation, indicating that emotional neglect may

encourage aggressive behaviour ($B = 0.721$, $P=0.02$). Children who blame others for breaking the rules may mildly perpetrates bullying behaviour ($B = -0.809$, $P<0.01$), and bullying between children increases by ($B = 0.588$, $P=0.04$) for every unit increase in rule breaking. Additionally, fewer bullying tendencies are linked to the capacity to make decisions about how to handle issues like bullying ($B = -0.691$, $p=0.03$). As family confiding increases by one unit, bullying between children increases by the same amount ($B = 0.726$, $P=0.03$). Bullying behaviour is strongly correlated with witnessing physical altercations between parents ($B=1.1081$, $P<0.01$). Additionally, the position of the child within the family has a significant impact on the prevalence of bullying among children ($B=1.449$, $P<0.01$).

Table 3 Family characteristics and child to child bullying

Variable	B	P_value
Are your parent/guardian aware of your whereabouts?	0.973	0.04
Family task doesn't get spread around enough among my siblings	0.612	0.06
I do not know what to do when an emergency due to bullying comes up	-0.618	0.05
I only get the interest of others in my family when something is important to them	0.928	<0.01
Tenderness takes second place to other things in my family	0.721	0.02
I can cry openly when hurt in my family	0.549	0.10
We avoid discussing our fears and concerns in my family	-0.539	0.10
I can easily get away with breaking the rules because I am smart	0.588	0.04
When I break rules, I blame it on someone else	-0.809	<0.01
Anything goes in my family	-0.270	0.36
We have rules about hitting other children in my family	0.019	0.94
I feel accepted for who I am in my family	0.378	0.33
I can make decision about how to solve problems like bullying	-0.691	0.03
In my family, we confide in each other	0.726	0.03
I have seen my parents/guardians engage in a fierce argument with each Other	0.212	0.51
I have seen my parents/guardian engage in a physical fight with each other or people around	1.081	<0.01
Does a child's position within the family influence bullying behavior in them?	1.449	<0.01

The table above provides insights into the role of family conflict and family characteristics which are components of family structure and the dynamics in which they influence child to child bullying in Oluyole Local Government area, Ibadan.

DISCUSSION

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents of this study were similar to those found in previous studies conducted in Nigeria and Africa (Ada et al., 2016; Owuamanam and Makinwa, 2015). However, unlike most literature that focuses on school-based surveys (Umoke et al., 2020; Ezech, 2024), this study included a mixed population

of children who are in school, out of school, and those without any formal education, contrasting with prior research that primarily addressed in-school and out-of-school adolescents. Omobowale et al., 2019 previously conducted study among children in Neighbourhood also confirm that bullying affects all children and varies across ages and spaces. The ages of the respondents ranged from eight to eighteen, with a mean age of 11.73 ± 2.37 , differing from most studies that concentrate on adolescents aged 10 to 19 (Suriah, Dondo, and Riskiyani, 2024). Additionally, there were more females (53.5%) than males (46.5%), which corroborates a study (Ibimiluyi, 2023), and contrary to a study that reported a higher number of males (Olabiyi, 2021).

The demographic profile of the respondents reflects the study's context in Ibadan, a Yoruba-majority city. Unsurprisingly, most participants belonged to the Yoruba ethnic group, and a significant number were attending primary or secondary schools, aligning with findings from Adeosun et al. (2015). The study neighbourhoods in the Oluyole local government are semi-urban, and a common parental occupation was trading. Living arrangements varied: 35.5% of respondents lived with only their parents, 42.8% lived with parents and siblings, and 7.6% lived with a single parent; the rest resided with other relatives or non-relatives. This contrasts with a study in Agbowo (Omobowale et al., 2019), which found that over two-thirds of respondents lived with their parents.

A nuanced understanding of bullying that extends beyond mere physical aggression to encompass the manipulation of influence, social power, and verbal abuse. This perspective is strongly supported and elaborated in literature. Bullying is fundamentally characterised by an imbalance of power and repeated aggressive behaviour (Andrews et al., 2023; Novikova and Rean, 2018). This power imbalance is not exclusively physical but can stem from various sources, including social status, age, physical strength, or psychological influence (Andrews et al., 2023; Morton et al., 2019; Novikova and Rean, 2018). The concept of "ifi ipa yanije" as using force to cheat someone, or "fowo ola gbaloju, o fagbara hanmi tori o ti mo pe mio le da oun mu" (using influence to bully and showing power because the victim cannot overpower them), directly aligns with scholarly definitions emphasising the abuse of power (Andrews et al., 2023).

Indeed, Dan Olweus, a pioneer in bullying research, underscored the critical role of power imbalance in distinguishing bullying from other forms of aggression (Andrews et al., 2023). The emphasis on intimidation and threats that instill fear in the victim is a significant aspect of bullying. Scholars consistently define aggression as an intentional act to cause harm to another who does not wish to be harmed (Smith et al., 2013). In the context of bullying, this intentional harm can manifest through threats and intimidation, which are potent forms of psychological and emotional aggression (Kanak, 2022). Verbal abuse, described as "Ebu ara" or "talking with fight (aggressive talk with someone) and abusing people," is a common tactic used by bullies to exert dominance and inflict emotional distress (Kanak, 2022). This includes insults, humiliation, and cursing, all of which fall under the umbrella of emotional or verbal abuse (Kanak, 2022; García et al., 2024). The explicit mention of "using one's parent to insult someone" illustrates how bullies can leverage perceived parental status or social circumstances to amplify their threats, thereby making the victim feel even more powerless and reinforcing the power imbalance (Morton et al., 2019).

Emotional bullying, which includes mental cruelty and emotional maltreatment, involves non-physical acts deliberately and repeatedly inflicted to harm a person's behavioral, emotional, and mental functioning (Kanak, 2022). These actions are often more insidious and can have profound long-term psychological consequences than physical aggression (García et al., 2024). Relational aggression, often referred to as "indirect bullying" or "social aggression," involves behaviours aimed at damaging relationships or feelings of acceptance, friendship, or group inclusion (Espelage et al., 2018; Temkin, 2008). The

manipulation of influence and position could lead to or be intertwined with relational aggression. This form of bullying can manifest through social exclusion, rumor-spreading, and hostile body language, impacting a child's social standing and psychological well-being (Temkin, 2008; Espelage et al., 2018). Peer victimization, whether traditional or cyber-based, has been consistently linked to problematic behaviours and negative psychosocial outcomes (Jiang and Shi, 2024; (Forbes et al., 2020; Vucetic et al., 2020). The consequences of bullying are far-reaching, affecting victims, bullies, and even bystanders (Vanderbilt and Augustyn, 2010). Victims are at a heightened risk for psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, and loneliness (Arnout et al., 2020; Forbes et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). The causal chain can involve bullying leading to increased sadness or hopelessness and mental health issues, which in turn can predict substance use behaviors like e-cigarette use, alcohol consumption, and binge drinking among adolescents (Azagba et al., 2024).

Childhood abuse, including emotional and physical abuse, is a significant risk factor for bullying perpetration in adolescence (Wang et al., 2023; Hamstra and Fitzgerald, 2022). Children exposed to various adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, household substance abuse, and exposure to household violence, are more vulnerable to peer abuse and other mental health issues (Bartolomé-Valenzuela et al., 2024). The long-term neurobiological effects of childhood maltreatment can impact brain structure and function, leading to psychopathologies in adulthood (Tomoda et al., 2024).

Furthermore, parental psychological control can moderate the association between aggression and peer victimization, indicating the complex interplay of family dynamics in bullying (McClain et al., 2019). The perception that "Even a lion can be bullied by a rat" underscores the idea that bullying is not always about overt physical strength but rather about the strategic use of power dynamics, influence, and intimidation, even by those who appear physically weaker (Andrews et al., 2023). This resonates with the concept that social power can be more potent than physical power in bullying scenarios. The family background of a child also significantly influences their involvement in bullying, including their position as a bully or a victim (Novikova and Rean, 2018; Itegi, 2019). Parental aggression and parenting styles can contribute to a child's propensity for bullying behaviours (Itegi, 2019; Raihan et al., 2024). Bullying is a multifaceted phenomenon rooted in a power imbalance, utilising not only physical force but also social, psychological, and verbal tactics to dominate and intimidate, leading to significant negative consequences for the victim's emotional, social, and academic well-being (Vanderbilt and Augustyn, 2010; Espelage et al., 2018; Morton et al., 2019; Andrews et al., 2023; Jiang and Shi, 2024; Kanak, 2022).

Occurrence of bullying behaviour mainly more on playgrounds in the neighbourhoods studied can be linked to parental occupational nature, as many parent leave early and come in late allows for children to perpetrate bullying without parental caution (Aboagye et al., 2021). This finding supports prior evidence indicating that bullying occurs within neighbourhoods (Eşkisu, 2014; Omobowale et al., 2019; Dragone et al., 2020). This is because the neighbourhood is a housing unit of families, it consists of various units such as schools, religious places, households, workplaces, recreational centres and many more, with the existence of a hierarchy that permits bullying to occur in these institutions. These hierarchies such as sex, age, socioeconomic status etc. exist in Yoruba culture, between parents to parents, parents to children, neighbours to peers, and children to peers; therefore, aid the perpetration of bullying behaviour.

Furthermore, factors such as the marital status of parents and the type of family can negatively influence bullying behaviour among children which agrees with the findings of research conducted in the Ikwerre local government area, River State (Wokoma and

Udochukwu, 2020). Family characteristics such as favouritism, conflict among parents (Obioha et al., 2024), poor parenting styles etc, were found to be statistically significant and negatively influence bullying behaviour among children who are siblings and children to peers, thus agreeing with previous findings (Sabramani et al., 2021). One of the most convincing findings in the study regarding family structure and child-to-child bullying reported by respondents via interviews among children in the selected neighbourhoods are that parental relationship and family characteristics such as support, care and good interpersonal relationship (Okesina, and Jacob, 2017; Bowes, Maughan, Caspi, Moffitt, and Arseneault, 2010) can mitigate the effect of bullying perpetration (Eşkisü, 2014), at the same time influence victimization, as children who have overprotective and authoritative parents among the respondents are severe victims of bullying behaviour (Shetgiri, Lin, Avila, and Flores, 2012). When parents model hostile communication, children may adopt similar behaviours, perpetuating a cycle of aggression. This highlights the importance of teaching parents about positive communication and conflict resolution strategies to foster healthier interactions within families and communities (Adegboyega et al., 2017). On the dynamics of child-to-child bullying and family structure, bullying behaviour among children and family structure such as conflict among parents, can negatively influence bullying behavior in children, which is similar to previous findings (Westrick- Payne, 2023) .

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The features of neighbourhood and family structure such as union type and family type were not examined in relation to child-to-child bullying to see if there are any possible correlations.

CONCLUSION

Bullying behavior holds different meaning to different individuals/children due to certain factors such as family structure, peer influence and neighbourhood characteristics. Family characteristics and parental conflict have a great impact on children's behavior, particularly regarding bullying, which can be either negative or positive. The interplay between observing violence, learned behaviours and emotional internalization creates a complex environment that can foster aggression and significantly influence children's bullying behavior.

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