ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Assessment of the Implementation of Anti-Bullying Policies in Universities in Delta State and Implications of Bullying on Health: A Mixed Method Study

Evaluación de la implementación de políticas anti-bullying en universidades del estado de Delta e implicaciones del bullying en la salud: un estudio de métodos mixtos

Lovelyn Obi. Department of Community Medicine, College of Health Sciences, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.
Email: llovelynjasmine1@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0009-0005-2432-7328

Maureen Ntaji. Department of Community Medicine, College of Health Sciences, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.
Email: maureentaji@yahoo.com, https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0665-6524

Mamodesan Okumagba. School of Human Sciences, University of Greenwich, United Kingdom.
Email: okusdent@yahoo.com, https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1818-594X

Chuka Ononye. Centre for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
Email: chukaononye@yahoo.co.uk, https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0606-8631

Linus Obi. Department of Medical Microbiology, Federal University of Technology, Minna, Nigeria.
Email: eugoobi@yahoo.com, https://orcid.org/0009-0000-2980-2397

Abstract

In Nigerian schools, bullying is one form of violence that has put students' health and lives in grave danger. Emerging evidence has shown that anti-bullying laws and policies can be an effective tool in reducing bullying among school-aged youth.[12] **Study Objectives.** This study examined: 1. The existing anti-bullying policies in universities in Delta State. 2. The perception of staff and students towards the implementation and effectiveness of the policies, and 3.The health implications of bullying. The study was conducted in three selected universities in Delta State. This mixed-method study used a self-administered structured questionnaire for the quantitative aspect, a total of 600 questionnaires were distributed, and a total of 571 were satisfactorily answered and returned, i.e., a response rate of 95%. The in-depth interviews consisted of nine responders, using an interview guide for the qualitative aspect. The study populations were staff and students in Delta State universities. The most common health implications of bullying gathered from this study include: depression, self-isolation, academic setbacks, fear and anxiety, and many more. The respondents listed several anti-bullying policies, which may include: Reporting policies and punishments like expulsion, suspension, and so on. The quantitative study revealed a significant difference in the perception of students towards the effectiveness and implementation of these policies, compared to the perception of staff, from the qualitative research. While 23.3% of student participants (n = 133) thought the policies were ineffective, the largest percentage of participants (49.6% n = 286) could not determine the effectiveness of these policies. However, the staff believed that these policies were effective. According to Respondent 8, "The policies are very effective and properly implemented." And respondent 1, "Very effective and well implemented."

Keywords: anti-bullying policies, bullying, delta state, effectiveness, universities.

Resumen

En las escuelas nigerianas, el bullying es una forma de violencia que ha puesto en grave peligro la salud y la vida de los estudiantes. La evidencia emergente ha demostrado que las leyes y políticas anti-bullying pueden ser una herramienta eficaz para reducir el bullying entre los jóvenes en edad escolar.12 Objetivos del estudio. Este estudio examinó: 1. Las políticas anti-bullying existentes en las universidades del estado de Delta. 2. La percepción del personal y los estudiantes hacia la implementación y efectividad de las políticas, y 3. Las implicaciones para la salud del bullying. El estudio se llevó a cabo en tres universidades seleccionadas del estado de Delta. Este estudio de métodos mixtos utilizó un cuestionario estructurado autoadministrado para el aspecto cuantitativo, se distribuyeron un total de 600 cuestionarios y se respondieron y devolvieron satisfactoriamente un total de 571, es decir, una tasa de respuesta del 95%. Las entrevistas en profundidad consistieron en nueve encuestados, utilizando una guía de entrevistas para el aspecto cualitativo. Las poblaciones de estudio fueron el personal y los estudiantes de las universidades de Delta State. Las implicaciones para la salud más comunes del acoso escolar obtenidas de este estudio incluyen: depresión, autoaislamiento, reveses académicos, miedo y ansiedad, y muchas más. Los encuestados enumeraron varias políticas contra el acoso escolar, que pueden incluir: políticas de denuncia y castigos como expulsión, suspensión, etc. El estudio cuantitativo reveló una diferencia significativa en la percepción de los estudiantes hacia la efectividad e implementación de estas políticas, en comparación con la percepción del personal, a partir de la investigación cualitativa. Si bien el 23,3% de los estudiantes participantes (n = 133) pensó que las políticas eran ineficaces, el mayor porcentaje de participantes (49,6% n = 286) no pudo determinar la efectividad de estas políticas. Sin embargo, el personal creía que estas políticas eran efectivas. Según el encuestado 8, "Las políticas son muy efectivas y se implementan correctamente". Y el encuestado 1, "Muy efectivas y bien implementadas".

Palabras clave: políticas anti-bullying, bullying, estado delta, efectividad, universidades.

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Introduction

Bullying and harassment are actions taken by an individual or group that are unwelcome, offensive, discriminatory, or ostracizing, and they damage the emotional health of the victim.[15] Bullying is a global menace that comes in different forms towards individuals of different ages, but is most prevalent in children and young adults. There is a general assumption that a higher percentage of bullying cases are from primary and secondary schools. Nevertheless, the practice exists widely in tertiary institutions. In every school setting, individuals being bullied can go through several unfortunate episodes, which can lead to marginalization and exclusion of the victims.[1,2]

The most important problem associated with bullying revolves around the practice of intervention. This study is therefore not only concerned with the existence of bullying, but also the implementation of laws and policies to address the problem. [3]

Research on bullying in the Nigerian educational system has been limited to the primary and secondary levels of education, its prevalence, causes, and effects, with little or no attention being paid to laws and policies at every level of education. According to Fogg, the decentralized character of higher education has made it an excellent atmosphere for bullying. [13]

A study by Ada et al (2016) on the prevalence, causes, and effects of bullying in Tertiary Institutions in Cross River State in Nigeria, revealed that Bullying in Tertiary School Communities can take many forms, including saying nasty words, harassing others, building cliques, destroying friendships, spreading rumors, isolating members, inciting others, ruining reputations, conducting school pranks, and taunting. The worst of these is cyberbullying. [14]

Bullying in tertiary schools is a global issue that can negatively impact both students' rights to learn in a fear-free atmosphere and the overall school climate. Bullying can also have detrimental effects that last a lifetime on both the bullies and the targets of their bullying. Bullying students also don't fare any better.[14]According to research, these students are more likely to carry a weapon, report receiving low grades, steal and damage property,

drink alcohol, smoke, and get into fights more frequently. Additionally, long-term studies have demonstrated that bullies have a higher chance of developing antisocial personality disorder and committing crimes in the future.[14]

Bullying in tertiary institutions has the potential to transform into serious organized violence, which is currently a global problem that can cause entire nations to collapse. Bullies often don't have an excuse to hurt others, even when asked for one. Bullies might act and respond with loyalty to a group or as a gang.[14]

Ada et al.[14] listed a few typical bullying consequences, both immediate and long-term. These encompass a range of emotions and behaviors, such as victimization, depression, anxiety, anger, suicide (bullycide), a noticeable decline in academic performance, a persistent sense of insecurity, excessive stress, extreme sensitivity, mental illness, vengeance, depression, and low self-esteem.[14]

Hopefully, with proper and adequate training of teachers and school administrators on the consequences of bullying and how to prevent it, bullying can be reduced in schools.[4]Support from teachers and school authorities are essential factors in anti-bullying policy implementation.

The Nigerian National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria (NP-SSVFSN) (August 2021), has given a detailed and comprehensive policy that aims to ensure that government at all levels prioritizes school safety and security.[7]

Objectives of the policies

A. To create a safe learning environment for school users;
B. To highlight specific actions to be taken by different stakeholders within the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) framework toward school safety and security;
C. To build the capacity of learners, teachers, school personnel, and government officials for child protection, school safety, and security;
D. To create awareness among school administrators, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents, PTAs (Parent-Teacher Associations), SBMCs (School Based Management Committees), and community members about

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their responsibility in identifying, discouraging, reporting, and dealing with possible cases of violence or abuse against children.
E. To develop procedures within the school to follow for addressing cases of suspected abuse.
F. To mainstream school safety content in existing government schemes and policies.
G. To design programs and activities to prevent Violence against children in schools.
H. To strengthen coordination among relevant institutions on school safety and security

Materials and Methods

Study Design

A mixed method, which includes a cross-sectional qualitative and quantitative approach was employed in this study. The qualitative approach (with staff) included in-depth interviews for administrative and non-administrative staff, while the quantitative approach was a cross-sectional descriptive study that included only students.

Study Setting and Population

This study was conducted in selected universities in Delta State. The study population covered students (for quantitative) and staff (for qualitative) of Universities in Delta State.

Sample Size Determination and Sampling Technique

Quantitative Method (Students)

The sample size for the quantitative study was determined using Cochrane's formula for determining the sample size of an unknown large population; $n = Z^{2.} p (1-p)/d^2$, Where n = sample size, Z = confidence level, p = approximate proportion of the event in the population (Prevalence of bullying in Universities in Delta State), d = margin of error (Cochran, 2007).

Assuming the maximum variability, which is equal to 50% (p=0.5) and taking a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, the calculation for the required sample size will be as follows:
n =1.962 X 0.50 (1-0.50)/0.52
n = 384.16
Sample size = 384

Considering a 10% attrition rate, a minimum sample size of 384 was obtained. However, 571 students participated in the quantitative study.

Sampling Technique

A multistage sampling method was used. In the first stage, the universities in Delta State were stratified into federal, state, and private universities. The second stage involved selecting one university from each stratum randomly (balloting) and the last stage involved selecting the faculties from each university, randomly. A total of 8 faculties were used for this study.

The selected universities included:
1. Delta State University, Abraka, with the highest number of faculties/departments, and the highest number of student population. 250 students consented and were recruited.
2. Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun. 175 students consented and were recruited.
3. Micheal and Cecilia Ibru University, Ughelli. 175 students consented and were recruited.

These numbers are justified by the fact that Delta State University has the highest number of faculty members (about 11), which translates to the biggest student population (around 22,000). In contrast, Michael and Cecilia Ibru University, and Federal University of Petroleum Resources have only 4 and 2 faculties, respectively.

Qualitative Method (Staff)

The qualitative study employed a purposive sampling technique and also made use of the principle of saturation, which according to Saunders et al.[6] is described as an instance when no new information is discovered, that allows the researcher to develop an empirical conviction that a category is saturated, as he repeatedly observes instances that are identical to one another. Monique and Bonnie,[5] confirmed that 9–17 interviews or 4–8 focus group discussions reached saturation. The purposive Non-probability sampling was utilized in the qualitative part of this research, and 9 university staff were interviewed (3 from each University). The staff targeted were: the dean of students, members of the disciplinary

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committees and legal unit, and Chief Security Officers (CSO).

Inclusion Criteria

Participants must be enrolled as the institution's undergraduate students. Employed staff of the universities were selected.

Exclusion Criteria

Staff and students of selected universities who were not willing to participate were excluded from this study.

Validity of Instrument

Before the data collection for the research, the questionnaire and interview guide were presented to research experts and supervisors for corrections. The process was modified and adjusted twice.

Reliability of Instrument

A pre-test was performed with a non-participating university in Delta State. The data and results were analyzed, and the data obtained was discovered to be reliable and steady.

Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative Method (Students)

The quantitative research data was collected using a self-administered, structured questionnaire comprising 4 sections, namely: Socio-demographic characteristics, Bullying and existing anti-bullying policies, Implementation and effectiveness of the existing anti-bullying policies, and Health implications of bullying.

Qualitative Method (Staff)

Data collection for the qualitative research was elicited using an open-ended interview guide. Participants' responses were recorded with an audio recorder. Each interview session lasted for about 10 minutes.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the quantitative research (Students) was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 22) and was summarized using frequency descriptive statistics.

The data obtained from the qualitative research (Staff) was analyzed thematically using Nvivo14 software. The Nvivo software was used to code the verbatim transcriptions of the interview responses, which were then categorized into themes. The themes were examined and reported. Also, a triangulation was done to compare the qualitative and quantitative methods, in other to validate the methods.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC), at Delta State University Teaching Hospital, with ethical approval number: HREC/PAN/2023/030/0563. Permission was also obtained from the authorities of the selected Universities. On the questionnaires, participants' names were not needed, and all interview records were stored on a password-protected personal computer, ensuring autonomy and confidentiality. Names and other personally identifiable information of interviewees were not recorded, verbal and informed consent was also obtained from all the participants, i.e. staff and students.

Results

The results of the research are introduced in themes, beginning with the quantitative, and then the qualitative study. The themes include sociodemographic characteristics, existing anti-bullying policies, perception of staff and students on the implementation and effectiveness of the existing anti-bullying policies, and health implications of bullying.

Quantitative Result (Students)

Sociodemographic Characteristics

From the quantitative study, out of the 571 students who participated in this study, 55.2% (n = 315) were aged 16 to 20 years, 38.2% (n =218) were aged 21-25 years, 5.3% (n = 30) were aged 26-30 years, and 1.4% (n = 8) were above 30.

Most participants were female students (55% n = 314), compared to male students (45% n = 257).

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The highest proportion of the students were in their first year (37.5% n = 214), compared to the students in their second year (25.6% n = 146), third year (16.6% n = 95), fourth year (17.0% n = 97), fifth year (2.6% n = 15), and sixth year (0.7% n = 4).

The highest proportion of the students (27.5% n = 157) were from the faculty of Science, followed by (24.2% n = 138) faculty of Education, (17.9% n = 102) Faculty of Engineering, (9.8% n = 56) Faculty of Clinical Sciences, (6.1% n = 35) faculty of Law, (5.4% n = 31) faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, (4.9% n = 28) faculty of Agriculture, (3.5% n = 20) faculty of pharmacy, respectively (Table 1)

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents (N = 571)

		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age (Years)	16 – 20	315	55.2
	21 – 25	218	38.2
	26 – 30	30	5.3
	31 and above	8	1.4
	Mean age 20 (3)		
Gender	Male	257	45.0
	Female	314	55.0
Level / Year In School	Year 1	214	37.5
	Year 2	146	25.6
	Year 3	95	16.6
	Year 4	97	17.0
	Year 5	15	2.6
	Year 6	4	0.7
Faculties	Agriculture	28	4.9
	Education	138	24.2
	Clinical Sciences	56	9.8
	Engineering	102	17.9
	Law	35	6.1
	Science	157	27.5
	Basic Medical Sciences	31	5.4
	Pharmacy	20	3.5

Existing anti-bullying policies

The quantitative study revealed that the majority of the students in universities in Delta state, (56.1% n = 320) were not sure if there were anti-bullying policies that govern the students' body in their universities. A good number of them (21% n = 124) did not think their universities had such policies, compared to (22% n =127) who confirmed that their universities had anti-bullying policies.

Table 2. Existing anti-bullying policies

	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Are There Anti-Bullying Policies in Your Institution?		
Yes	127	22.3
No	124	21.7
I don't know	320	56.0

Perception of Students towards the Implementation and Effectiveness of the anti-bullying policies

Out of the 571 students who participated in the quantitative study, (40.1% n = 221) were not sure how to adjudge the level of implementation of the anti-bullying policies, compared to (21.2% n = 121) who believed the implementation was poor, (18.4% n = 105) who believed the implementation was fair, (14.9% n =85) believed the implementation was good, and (5.4% n = 31) believed the implementation was excellent. The highest proportion of the participants (49.6% n= 286) also could not quantify the effectiveness of these policies, while (23.3% n = 133) believed the policies were not effective, (20.7% n = 113) believed they were effective, and (6.5% n= 37) thought they were very effective, respectively.

Health Implications of Bullying

The 571 students who participated in this study were asked questions to determine which had experienced bullying in their institutions. The ones who affirmed to have been bullied were asked how the experience affected them. Of the 571 students, (18.6% n = 106) reported to having been bullied. Self-isolation was the most common side effect

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(55% n = 59), while (21% n = 22) confirmed that the experience reduced their self-esteem, (11.3% n = 12) developed anxiety and fear, (6% n = 6) resorted to self-harm, (8% n = 8) became depressed and had suicidal thoughts, (1% n = 1) fell back to self-defense, (1% n = 1) developed aggression, and (2% n = 2) did not mind.

Table 3. Perception of students towards the implementation and effectiveness of the existing anti-bullying policies

	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Level of Implementation		
Excellent	31	5.4
Good	85	14.9
Fair	105	18.4
Poor	121	21.2
I Don't Know	229	40.1
Levelo of Effectiveness		
Very Effective	37	6.5
Effective	118	20.7
Not Effective	133	23.3
I Don't Know	283	49.6

Table 4. Health implications of bullying

	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Health Implications Of Bullying (N = 106)		
Self-Isolation	59	55
Low self-esteem	22	21
Anxiety and Fear	12	11.3
Self-harm	6	6
Depression and suicidal	8	8
Aggressive behavior	1	1
Self-defense	1	1
Did not care	2	2

Qualitative Result (Staff)

The qualitative study was an in-depth interview with selected key informant staff, from the selected universities sampled for this study. The principle of saturation was applied for this part of the study and a total of 8 in-depth interviews were carried out, the responses were recorded using an audio recording device. They included 2 female and 6 male staff members. They were selected purposively because of the offices they occupy in the universities.

The Interviewed staff included:
a. The Chief Security Officer.
b. Any member of the Legal unit
c. The Dean of Student Affairs
d. Any Disciplinary Committee Member.

Existing anti-bullying policies

The qualitative study, i.e. in-depth interview, revealed that the universities in Delta State have policies that adequately address any form of bullying or violence that occurs amongst students and in the university premises.

"Punishments like expulsion are in place for them, and avenues for reporting bullies are in place." (Respondent Eight, Dean of Student's Affairs).

"What we have is an anti-sexual harassment policy, which is also a form of bullying. This policy encourages victims to report."(Respondent Two, Disciplinary Committee staff).

"There are warning strikes, suspension, and expulsion/rustication." (Respondent Five, Chief Security Officer).

The in-depth interview respondents discussed the protocols and steps the school authority takes in implementing their anti-bullying policies when cases arise. According to them, the punishments to be meted out to the perpetrator depend on the extremity of the bullying case.

Perception of Staff towards the Implementation and Effectiveness of the anti-bullying policies

The in-depth interview revealed that the anti-bullying policies are implemented perfectly and are highly effective in combating cases of bullying in Delta state universities. Below are a few responses from the respondents of the in-depth interviews.

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"The policies are very effective and properly implemented" (Respondent Eight, Dean of Student's Affairs).

"Very well implemented and very effective." (Respondent one, Staff of Legal Unit).

"I'll rate the implementation and effectiveness 80% on a scale of 100%." (Respondent four, Dean of Students' Affairs).

"I think we do the needful in implementing these policies, so it's quite effective." (Respondent Five, Chief Security Officer).

Health implications of bullying

The in-depth interview respondents were questioned on the effects of bullying, based on their experience in addressing cases of bullying. Amongst the health implications reported, academic backslide was the most common. Others included a low general productivity in life, depression, self-isolation, and etc.

Below are a few of their responses:

"Bullying affects the general productivity of an individual, mentally, physically, etc." (Respondent Eight, Dean of Student's Affairs).

"It causes academic backslide, victims start to isolate themselves." (Respondent Five).

"One thing I'm sure bullying can do to a student is lead to a huge academic backslide and depression." (Respondent One, Staff of Legal Unit).

"It affects the student's performance academically, it also makes them withdraw into their shell." (Respondent Four, Dean of Students' Affairs).

"It depreciates a person's productivity, affects the mental and psychological well-being of a person, causes loss of self-esteem." (Respondent Seven, Staff of Legal Unit).

"It affects their academic performance, their mental health, they become timid, start having sleepless nights, even nightmares." (Respondent Five, Chief Security Officer).

Emergent Themes

Communication of the policies

The in-depth interview respondents stated with certainty that these policies are being communicated to the students properly. They all emphasized the day of orientation for new students, at the beginning of every academic calendar year.

"It's well stated in their students' handbook. And they are also informed during orientation for fresh students." (Respondent Eight, Dean of Students' Affairs).

"We have a students' handbook, which contains these policies details." (Respondent Five, Chief security officer).

"They are all there in their students' handbooks, we also spell it out during students' orientation." (Respondent Four, Dean of Students' Affairs).

"At every orientation, we teach them about these policies and more." (Respondent two, Disciplinary Committee staff).

"We have a manual and the policies are being stated during orientation." (Respondent Seven, Staff of Legal Unit).

"During their orientation, students are being told about these policies and offices to report to when they are being bullied. At the point of their registration, they are being given the students' handbook which contains all these policies." (Respondent Six, Disciplinary Committee staff).

Precautions

For improved and more effective policies, the respondents gave their suggestions on how to go about their implementations:

"Anti-bullying units could be instituted in the university, with students and staff participating fully, directly under the vice-chancellor for cover." (Respondent one, Staff of Legal Unit).

"Adequate psychological treatment should be provided from the guidance and counseling unit, for both victims and perpetrators." (Respondent Four, Dean of Students' Affairs).

"We the staff and school authority should encourage students to report cases of bullying." (Respondent Seven, Staff of Legal Unit)."Students should be encouraged to visit the guidance and counseling office, and the office should be well equipped, too, to serve students better." (Respondent Six, Disciplinary Committee Staff).

"More orientation is needed for the students, not just the one for freshers. I'll advise it should be conducted twice in one academic session." (Respondent One, Staff of Legal Unit).

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Table 5. A Summary of The Mixed Study

Objectives	Quantitative (Students)	Qualitative (Staff)	Content Analysis	Observation	Triangulation
Objective 1	A few of the students mentioned the policies they could remember.	All the interviewed staff were able to give several interlinked policies.	The university authority displays approved punishments for bullying perpetrators	There were posters on the walls and doors of some lecture halls, walls of security offices, and staff offices in the universities. She was indicating a zero tolerance of bullying and every form of assault.	yes
Objective 2	Poor implementation and ineffective policies.	Proper implementation and very effective policies.	Not applicable.		No
Objective 3	Low self-esteem, depression, self-isolation, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, fear and anxiety, etc.	Depression, low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, academic backslide, self-isolation, etc.	Not applicable.	Some students isolate themselves from the majority. Others were skeptical about admitting to having been bullied.	Yes

Additional Observation

There were posters and stickers on the walls of some offices of the universities, with diagrams and illustrations on zero tolerance of bullying, intimidation, sexual harassment, and every other form of abuse or harassment within the university premises.

The students' handbooks from the universities did not explicitly outline these policies as separateunits.

Discussion

This study revealed that Universities in Delta State have laid out policies for addressing cases of bullying. The qualitative and quantitative studies were triangulated, and the findings were similar. The interview respondents and quite a number of the students confirmed the existence of these policies. However, on observing the nature of these policies, from the students' handbooks, these policies were not explicit. They were not outlined in detail, following the framework given by the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education [FMOE], on National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria, [NP-SSVFSN] (2021).[7]

This finding is in agreement with Aderibigbe's comparative study (2012), on the existence of anti-bullying policies in schools in Nigeria and the USA. [3]

His study revealed that there were no explicit laws and policies against bullying in Nigerian schools, they only have indirect laws and policies that address child abuse. However, all states in the USA have laws for the educational system and measures to administer these laws, except the state of Montana. Similarly, the policies examined by this study were treated as a unit in the student's code of conduct policies, which covers the conduct in having rowdy school functions (convocations/matriculations), running extra programs in the university, fraud, exam malpractice, etc.[3]

From the quantitative study, the majority of the students who participated believed that the implementation and effectiveness of the policies were poor. The qualitative study revealed that the implementation and effectiveness of the policies were excellent. The studies were triangulated and the findings were not similar.

However, the quantitative study is in agreement with that of Joyce J. Mboya and Daniel Onyango's[8] evaluation of the perception of staff and students towards the effectiveness in combating bullying behaviors amongst public schools in Hai district, which revealed that the majority of students were of the view that their teachers are not properly trained to deal with bullying issues. [8]

The qualitative study agrees with William Hall's[9] systematic review of the effectiveness of bullying interventions in school, which indicated that anti-bullying policies are perceived as beneficial rather than ineffectual by more educators. [9]

The qualitative and quantitative studies revealed that bullying poses a great danger to the health of individuals, as a result of the traumatic aftereffects caused by bullying experience, which includes effects on mental health, physical health, social health, etc.

The interview respondents stated that bullying leads to depression, sleeplessness, anxiety and fear, poor general productivity, academic backslide, self-isolation, low self-esteem, self-harm, weight loss, loss of appetite, and so on. The quantitative study confirmed these health effects, where the bully victims indicated that they have been gravely affected as a result of being bullied. This finding is in sync with Udeme Asibong's *et al*[11] study on Bullying Behavior and its Association with Mental health Symptoms among Senior Secondary School Students in Calabar, where slightly more than half of the respondents (50.7 percent) had increased scores on the signs of conduct disorder. This was followed by heightened levels of mood symptoms, abnormally elevated scores in symptoms of generalized anxiety, distractibility/hyperactivity, and separation anxiety. [11]

B. Mungala and D. Nabuzoka's investigation on whether bullying experience predicts low self-esteem and sadness in secondary school adolescents, in Zambia, also agrees with this present study. [10]

Conclusion

This study examined the existing anti-bullying policies in the universities of Delta State.
The perception of staff and students towards the anti-bullying policies varied, with great differences. However, low self-esteem, isolation, academic backslide, low general output, depression, anxiety, and fear are the basic health implications revealed by this study.

Authors' Recommendations

1. In universities, extra educational awareness seminars are recommended, focused on anti-bullying policies, which could teach and continually remind students how to report and whom to report to when cases of bullying arise.
2. The existing anti-bullying policies should continually be reviewed by policymakers in

universities and all levels of government, at timely intervals, to make changes that can help curb bullying. These policies should be treated as a single unit, with a detailed framework of all aspects, following that of the Federal Ministry of Education.

3. With the advent of technology, universities should have websites where bullying issues can always be reported, while keeping the reporter's identity confidential. This could boost the willingness of victims and witnesses to report bullying without fear of getting into bigger trouble.

Limitations of study

1. The study population did not cover the entire tertiary institutions in Delta State.
2. Due to a dominant population from one university, the number of participating students was not equal throughout the chosen universities. The replies may not fairly represent the total student body as a result of sampling bias.
3. This study did not examine any implementation process of the anti-bullying policies in the universities of Delta State.
4. Difficulty in accessing the intended key staff for interview.

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