

**Self-Control And Bullying Behaviour Among Secondary School Students
In Nekemte Town, Ethiopia**

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Abstract: The present study aimed at investigating the association between self-control and bullying behaviour of secondary school students comprising 140 students from grade 9th and 10th. The sample consisted of 63 female and 77 male students selected randomly from public secondary school in Nekemte town, Ethiopia. Product moment correlation coefficient was used to see the relationship between students' self-control skills and their participation in school bullying. The result showed that there is a negative relationship between self-control and bullying behaviour of students. Simple linear regression was also used to determine the role of self-control on students' bullying behaviour. The result indicates that self-control has a negatively significant contribution for students' participation in bullying incidences. Further, independent samples t-test was employed to look at whether there is gender difference in self-control and the result showed no significant difference between boys and girls. Therefore, effective socialization skills were imperative by parents and guardians to develop high self-control skills for their children to minimize the participation of children in school bullying.

Key words self-control, bullying, gender difference

Introduction

Bullying in school is a serious problem worldwide which was overlooked by researchers. It is a growing concern for children and adolescents who are attacked by others and who perpetrate bullying in schools and this has serious implications for researchers and other scholars. School bullying has been largely researched in Europe, United States, Australia and Canada in last few years (Guo et al., 2010). Bullying can range from simple verbal teasing to violent physical conduct. The concept of bullying can be defined by different scholars in different time and context. Olweus (1993) defined bullying as he termed it as victimization is when an individual is exposed, continuously, and overlong period of time, to a negative action on the part of one or group of students and there is an imbalance of power between the bully and the target. In the same context, Ronald (1989) described bullying as the behaviour is enduring violence, physical or mental, practised by an individual or group targeted on an individual who is less able to protect himself in that particular situation. Similarly, Sharp and Smith (2002) conceptualized bullying as occurring when another student uses nasty and unpleasant things and when a student is hit, kicked, threatened, locked inside the classroom, sent nasty notes, and when no one wants to talk to him. From these definitions there is a general agreement that, bullying involves; bullies and victims, the action was repeated overtime, there is imbalance of power between the bully and the victim and the action is intentional.

Bullying can take different forms and diverse research findings identified several forms of the behaviour; physical, verbal, relational and most recently cyber bullying (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). For instance, Hughes, Middleton, and Marshall, (2009) categorized bullying into physical (pushing, hitting, and taking things), relational (name-calling, putdowns, hurtful teasing) and sexual (making sexual gestures, sexual talk and touching). Verbal bullying involves name calling, teasing threats, humiliation, and abusive language) and cyber bullying (harassment through internet using text messages, emails, Instagram, and posting on Facebook).

Bullying has been identified as a universal problem and is a significant concern for public health (Espelage & Holt, 2013). The problem of this behaviour is also investigated by the pioneer of bullying research Olweus (1978, 1987, 1991 & 1993) and the results reported that, bullying among school children has a long term impact to the extent of adolescents

committing of suicide. Further, the effect of bullying in schools was investigated by different scholars and the result was reported as school bullying is a common practice and affects their academic achievement and in the long run their future life into adulthood (Due et al., 2005; Nansel et al., 2001; Strom, Thoresen, Wentzel-Larsen, & Wang et al., 2009). Similarly, the negative consequences of bullying have been reported specifically by different scholars for victims and bullies. Accordingly, victims of bullying are more likely to experience physical, psychological, school dropout, and learning difficulties (Farrington, Losel, Ttofi, & Theodorakis, 2012; Olweus, 1993 & Rigby & Slee, 1999). On the other hand, bullies are more likely to commit criminal behaviours as young adults (Farrington et al., 2012; Ttofi, Farrington, & Losel, 2012).

Self-control and bullying

Personal and contextual factors were explained by different scholars as explanations for the prevalence of bullying behaviour. As indicated, in the literatures individual factors include age (Espelage & Swearer, 2003), race (Marsh & Cornell, 2001), and gender (Connell et al., 2017; Cook et al., 2010; Popp et al., 2014). Self-control can be classified as an individual related factor that may affect bullying behaviour of students, however the studies on this personality variables relating to bullying behaviour of adolescents were limited.

Few studies explained that self-control is a strong predictor of crime and analogous behaviours like bullying (Pratt & Cullen, 2000; Vazsonyi, et al., 2016). Consistent to these findings, Unnever & Cornell, (2003) reported that, self-control as a strong predictor of bullying. The association between bullying and low self-control has been established in the literature (Unnever & Cornell, 2003; Unnever, 2005; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2011; Moon et al., 2011; Chui & Chan, 2015; Moon & Alarid, 2015). Supporting these reports different studies also indicated the relationship between self-control and crime and related behaviours. Accordingly, self-control is related to self-reported juvenile delinquency (LaGrange & Silverman, 1999), bullying (bullying (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2011), victimization (Flexon, Meldrum & Piquero, 2016), and school misconduct (Smith & Crichlow, 2013).

The association between self-control and bullying has been explored by various studies. For example, in the studies of juveniles; self-control was related to college students bullying (Gibbs & Giever, 1995; Piquero, Gomez-Smith & Langton, 2004) and criminal offenders (Longshore et al., 1996). Low self-control is also a significant predictor of crime of force and

fraud (Grasmick et al., 1993); shoplifting (Piquero&Tibbetts, 1996) and binge drinking (Piquero, et al., 2002). Studies have also shown that low self- control has a significant effect on adolescents' victimization (Stewart et al., 2004; Pratt et al., 2014). Related empirical studies also found that, a wide range of students' problem behaviours are attributable to low self-control (Hay, 2001; Wang et al., 2009; Meece& Robinson, 2014). The association between self-control and school bullying have also got support from different empirical studies. For instance, Unnever and Cornell (2003) examined an association between low self-control and students' experience of bullying and the result indicated that low self-control is a significant cause for bullying. Similarly, Jolliffe and Farrington (2011), using affective empathy as one dimension of self-control, found that, low affective empathy as a significant predictor of male bullying, while high impulsivity was significantly related to various types of bullying for both males and females. Moon et al., (2011), using Korean adolescents examined the association between low self-control and school bullying. The result shows that low self-control is significantly related to bullying which is consistent with prior findings.

Therefore, from the above mentioned findings, self-control has been identified as significant psychological variable associated with different kinds of deviant behaviour including school bullying. Evidence for this is self-control theory of Gottfredson and Hirschi(1990) which is the most influential theory and claims that, low self-control is the most vital psychological variable that was associated with criminal and analogous behaviours. Pratt and Cullen (2000) concluded that low self-control is one of the most significant variables correlated with crime. However, limited numbers of studies were conducted relating self- control and bullying in Africa and particularly in Ethiopian context. Hence, the present study tried to see the association between self-control and bullying with the purpose of adding some knowledge to the existing literature.

Self-control

Gender is among the variables predicting individuals' self-control. Gottfredson and Hirschi(1990) in their self-control theory explained that due to differences in how children socialized by their parents, there is a significant self-control difference based on individual's gender. Most findings support this claim and reported that men have low self-control and these findings are irrespective of whether self-control is measured by attitudinal and behavioural measures (Burton Jr. et al., 1998; Gibbs et al. 1998, 2010; Tittle et al. 2003;

Ward et al. 2010). In the context of this report, Schreck (1999) explained that, gender difference in self-control is known and it is an important reason for explaining why females are at risk of victimization than males. Most research findings consistently associated violent victimization with low self-control and this studies report statistically significant relationship between violent victimization when the influence of self-control is considered (Daigle et al. 2008; Gibson 2012; Schreck 1999 & Tillyer et al. 2011).

From these findings we can conclude that the difference in self-control in male and female would further contribute for gender differences in bullying behaviour among adolescents. The idea is also supported by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) that, an individual possessing low self-control is likely to be impulsive, short-sighted, non-verbal, insensitive and risk taker. The difference in self-control between male and female is also reported by different investigators indicating that, men have lower average levels of self-control compared to women (Burton Jr. et al. 1998; Gibbs et al. 1998, 2010; Tittle et al. 2003; Ward et al. 2010). These results are in agreement with Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) explanation that there is fundamental gender difference in self-control considering general population which is caused by family socialization practices. The difference in self-control is not only across gender but also it happens between same genders as reported by self-control theory. Burton et al., (1998) indicated that, although the existence of between-gender differences in self-control, the generality of self-control theory implies that there are within-gender differences in the levels of self-control. Therefore, we can generalize that while female will tend to have more self-control than male on average, women themselves will differ in their levels of self-control relative to other women, just as men will differ in their levels of self-control relative to other men.

As bullying research is concerned, gender is important variable that should be considered in bullying behaviour. Although several studies support boys are more aggressive than girls more recent research indicated that contextual factors determine gender differences in aggressive behaviour. In this context Brzezinski (2016) tried to investigate gender differences in bullying and perceptions of bullying comprising of 152 female and male students from high schools and found that males were exhibiting more direct/overt aggression when bullying and females were using more indirect/relational aggression.

Although a tremendous amount of research over the last several decades supports boys are more aggressive than girls (Block, 1983; Parke & Slaby, 1983), more recent research would

support that contextual factors determine gender differences in aggressive behaviour (Knight, Guthrie, Page, & Fabes, 2002).

Therefore, based on earlier literatures, the following hypotheses were stated:

1. Self-control would be negatively correlated with bullying behaviour of secondary school students.
2. Self-control would significantly contribute in bullying behaviour of secondary school students.
3. Girls would be high on self-control as compared to boys.
4. Boys would be high on bullying behaviour as compared to girls

METHOD

Participant

The sample of the present study comprised of 140 adolescents boys and girls with age range of 14-17 and mean age was 15.5. The sample includes 77 boys and 63 girls from grade 9th and 10th of public schools in Nekemte town. All the participants were given Illinois Bully Scale and self-control Scale. The participants were made sure that their information will remain confidential and it is only for the research purpose.

Research Design

The present study is a correlational design as it seeks to investigate low self-control as a variable associating with bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Nekemte town. Correlation between the predictor variable and the outcome variable was carried out using Pearson product moment correlation. Furthermore linear regression was employed to determine the contribution of predictor variable on the outcome variable. Finally independent samples t-test was made to see gender differences in self-control and bullying.

Measures

Illinois Bully Scale: Adolescents' bullying behaviour is a dependent variable or a measured variable. It is measured by Illinois Bully Scale which was developed by Espelage & Holt, (2001). The scale has 18 items scored along 5-likert scale in which higher score indicates more fighting and bullying behaviour. The target group for use of scale are adolescents ranging from 8-18 years of age.

Self-Reporting Self-Control Scale: The scale was developed by Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone (2004). It has ten items scored along 5-likert scale in which higher score indicating higher self-control skill and lower score indicates lower self-control skill.

PROCEDURE

For the present research, prior permission from the head of the representative schools and consent from students was taken and they were briefed about the relevance of the study and assured that confidentiality would be maintained. Two scales namely bullying scale and self-control scale was used in this study. The scales were administered for students selected through random sampling. The scales were administered according to the guidelines in the respective manuals.

For bullying scale the instructions were as- "For each of the following questions, choose how many times you did this activity or how many times these things happened to you in the LAST 30 DAYS and circle the box/number that best represents you. Every item has been provided five response categories namely; never, 1 or 2 times, 3 or 4 times, 5 or 6 times, 7 or more times".

For self-control scale the instructions were as- "please read the following 10 statements and for each, circle the box/number that best represents you." This items measure self-reported self-controlling behaviour of students. Respondents are asked to score from 1-5 with 1 indicate not at all like me and 5 very much like me. Any question regarding the meaning of any item was made clear to the participants during administration.

After the administration of the scales, the scoring was done according to the guidelines in the manuals. For bullying scale the higher the score indicating more fighting and bullying behaviour and for self-control scale higher scores indicates higher level of individual self-

control. Finally the data was analysed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, linear regression and independent samples t-test

DATA ANALYSIS

Correlation between the predictor variable and the outcome variable was carried out using product moment correlation. Linear regression was used to see the contribution of self-control on bullying behaviour of in school adolescents. Independent samples t-test was also used to see gender differences in self-control behaviour of students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The objective of the present study was to see the relationship between self-control and bullying behaviour of school children. The study provides critical insights into the potential role of self-control on bullying behaviour. Pearson product moment Correlation was used to see the direction and strength of relationship between self-control and bullying behaviour. Linear regression was conducted to look the potential role of self-control on bullying behaviour of school students. Finally, t-test was implemented to see the difference in self-control of boys and girls and the results were presented below:

Table 1: correlation between self-control and bullying

Variables	Mean	Std.dev.	r	df.	Sig.
Self-control	27.2338	6.97910	-.209	138	.013
Bullying behaviour	28.1111	6.58226			

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis was made regarding the relationship between self-control and bullying behaviour of school students. It was assumed that self-control would be negatively correlated with bullying behaviour of secondary school students. The result of correlation coefficient in the table above depicts bullying was found to be negative and significant relationship with self-control ($r = -.209$, $n = 140$, $p < 0.05$). Result indicates that as self-control skills of adolescents increase the adolescents' bullying behaviour decreases. This result further shows that self-control skill of adolescents' increases or decreases the participation of students in bullying incidents.

Different empirical studies have reported the association between self-control and a variety of problem behaviours supporting the present study. For instance, Unnever & Cornell, (2003)

reported that, self-control is the most important psychological variable predicting bullying behaviour of adolescents. Different empirical literatures reported that, there is a strong association between self-control and bullying supporting the present study (Unnever& Cornell, 2003; Unnever, 2005; Jolliffe& Farrington, 2011; Moon et al., 2011; Chui & Chan, 2015; Moon & Alarid, 2015). Supporting these reports different studies also indicated the relationship between self-control and crime and related behaviours. In the same context, studies reported that, self-control is related to self-reported juvenile delinquency (LaGrange & Silverman, 1999), bullying (Jolliffe& Farrington, 2011), victimization (Flexon, Meldrum & Piquero, 2016), and school misconduct (Smith & Crichlow, 2013). Consistent to this, findings of juvenile delinquencies reported that, self-control was related to college students bullying (Gibbs & Giever, 1995; Piquero, Gomez-Smith & Langton, 2004) and criminal offenders (Longshore et al., 1996).

Simple linear regression was also conducted to see the significant prediction power of self-control on bullying behaviour of students. It was hypothesised that self-control would significantly contribute for bullying behaviour of secondary school students. The result of regression analysis is shown below:

Table 2: Regression analysis of self-control on bullying

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.209 ^a	.044	.037	7.00054	.044	6.307	1	138	.013	1.843

a. Predictors: Self-control

b. Dependent Variable: Bullying

As can be seen from table above, the regression model was found to be significant, $F(1,138) = 6.307$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .044$. The result reveals the total variance explained by self-control was 4.4% indicating that self-control was significantly predicting bullying behaviour in school students.

The present result is supported by studies that, low self-control is also a significant predictor of crime of force and fraud (Grasmick et al., 1993); shoplifting (Piquero&Tibbetts, 1996) and binge drinking (Piquero, et al., 2002). Similarly, studies reported that, low self-control has a significant effect on adolescents' victimization (Stewart et al., 2004; Pratt et al., 2014). Related empirical studies also found that, a wide range of students' problem behaviours are

attributable to low self-control (Hay, 2001; Wang et al., 2009; Meece& Robinson, 2014). The association between self-control and school bullying have also got support from different empirical studies. For instance, Unnever and Cornell (2003) examined an association between low self- control and students' experience of bullying and the result indicated that low self-control is a significant cause for bullying. Similarly, Jolliffe and Farrington (2011), using affective empathy as one dimension of self-control, found that, low affective empathy as a significant predictor of male bullying, while high impulsivity was significantly related to various types of bullying for both males and females. Moon et al., (2011), using Korean adolescents examined the association between low self-control and school bullying.

In addition to looking the relationship between self-control and bullying behaviour of students, the present study also tried to see whether there is a significant gender difference in self-control among secondary school students. It was hypothesized that girls would be high on self-control behaviour as compared to boys in secondary schools. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare self-control scores of boys and girls in school. Tables below show the results of the analysis.

Table 3: t-test analysis for gender difference in self-control

Group statistics					
variable		N	Mean	St. Dev.	Std. error mean
Self-control	Boys	77	27.2338	6.97910	.79534
	Girls	63	28.1111	6.58226	.82929

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
									Lower Upper

Self-control	Equal variances assumed	.085	.771	-.759	138	.449	-.87734	1.15582	-3.16276	1.408
	Equal variances not assumed			-.764	135.198	.446	-.87734	1.14904	-3.14976	1.395

As can be seen from tables above there was less significant difference in scores for males ($M = 27.23$, $SD = 6.98$) and females ($M = 28.11$, $SD = 6.58$; $t(138) = .76$, $p = .45$, (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = .88, 95% CI: 1.41 to 1.40) was very small ($\eta^2 = .004$). The value of .76 is above the cut point of .05. As indicated from the report; even though girls were high on self-control behaviour as compared to boys in secondary schools the result did not reach the level of significance. Therefore, it is concluded that there is statistically less significant difference in the mean self-control scores for males and females. Specifically the effect size of .004 is very small and shows that only 0.4% of variance in self-control is explained by gender of students.

Empirical studies reported that girls are higher in self-control than boys which are similar to the present study. Supporting this claim and the current study, studies reported that, due to differences in how children were socialized by their parents, there is a significant self-control difference based on individual's gender. For instance some findings reported that men have low self-control and these findings are irrespective of whether self-control is measured by attitudinal and behavioural measures (Burton Jr. et al., 1998; Gibbs et al. 1998, 2010; Tittle et al. 2003; Ward et al. 2010). In the same context, the difference in self-control between male and female is also reported by different investigators indicating that, men have lower average levels of self-control compared to women (Burton Jr. et al. 1998; Gibbs et al. 1998, 2010; Tittle et al. 2003; Ward et al. 2010). These results are in agreement with Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) explanation that there is fundamental gender difference in self-control considering general population which is caused by family socialization practices

Although several studies support girls are high in self-control, than boys more recent research indicated that contextual factors determine gender differences in self-control behaviour. Therefore, the present finding is supported by different results in that, girls have high self-control than their boys' counterpart, and however the result of the current study was not

significant as reported by other studies. This may be due to social desirability problems and other cultural and contextual factors. Therefore, based on the results from the present study and consistent empirical studies discussed, it is concluded that high self-control reduces children's aggression and bullying behaviour. The finding has an implication for families, teachers, counsellors and school community in general in that the behaviour of children in school is affected by social skills such as self-control and others and these skills has to be developed in home, schools and the culture of that particular community.

Apart from seeing gender differences in self-control, the present study also tried to see whether there is a significant gender difference in bullying behaviour among secondary school students. It was hypothesized that boys would be high on bullying behaviour as compared to girls in secondary schools. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare bullying behaviour scores of boys and girls students. Table below show the results of the analysis.

Table 5: t-test analysis on gender difference in bullying

Condition	Sex of participants	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bullying	Boys	77	35.1039	9.69751
	Girls	63	32.5397	8.76545

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Bullying	Equal variances assumed	2.702	.102	1.625	138	.107	2.56421	-.55649	5.68492
	Equal variances not assumed			1.641	136.599	.103	2.56421	-.52528	5.65371

As can be seen from tables above there was less significant difference in scores for females ($M = 32.54$, $SD = 8.76$) and males ($M = 35.10$, $SD = 9.69$; $t(138) = 1.63$, $p = .11$, two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = 2.56, 95% CI: 5.68 to

5.65) was very small ($\eta^2 = .02$). The value of 1.63 is above the cut point of .05. As indicated from the report; even though boys were high on bullying behaviour as compared to girls in secondary schools the result did not reach the level of significance. Therefore, it is concluded that there is statistically less significant difference in the mean bullying scores for males and females. Specifically the effect size of .02 is very small and shows that only 2% of variance in bullying is explained by sex of students.

Consistent studies reported that, although research suggests that more boys than girls bully, when data is collected by survey approaches, when researchers on the playground observe children, or when social bullying is included in the definition of aggression, the discrepancy is not as great. Using the broader definition, girls are rated as bullying as often as boys (Henington et al., 1998). Henington and colleagues (1998) estimate that if bullying is measured without including relational bullying in the definition, sixty percent of aggressive girls would be missed, but only seven percent of aggressive boys would be missed.

Looking at how gender impacts bullying requires careful reasoning about gender differences in practices of bullying behaviour, yet in addition moving beyond these differences to consider different manners by which gender may affect the complex phenomenon of bullying (Espelage, Mebane, and Swearer, 2004). Moving beyond mean gender differences in bullying requires careful thinking about where gender differences do and do not exist.

Therefore, scholars' attention against drawing any definitive conclusions about gender differences in bullying was difficult. Perhaps the most significant assignment from these studies is that both boys and girls are aggressive, and individuals working with children should not make assumptions about the nature of their aggression but should conduct studies for further decisions.

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