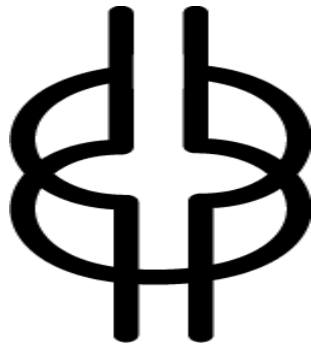


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NYANSAPO – "Wisdom Knot"

Symbol of wisdom, ingenuity, intelligence and patience

# **Effects of Three Counselling Interventions on Attitude to and Involvement in Bullying among Senior Secondary Students in Owerri, Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the effects of three counselling interventions on attitude to and involvement in bullying among senior secondary students in Owerri, Nigeria. Four hundred and twenty students drawn from twelve senior secondary schools were chosen for the study. The schools were assigned the social skills training, inhibitory modelling, persuasion or the waiting-list control. The participants were exposed to 6 weeks, one-hour weekly, training designed to change their attitude to and involvement in bullying behaviours. Two research instruments were used for data collection. Similarly, two research hypotheses were formulated in the study. The hypotheses were tested using 2 x 4 Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). The findings show that the counselling interventions successfully modified students' attitude to bullying. The counselling interventions were equally effective in reducing the students' involvement in bullying. However, the inhibitory modelling was superior to persuasion and social skills training in modifying the participants' involvement in bullying. Based on the findings, it is recommended that an anti-bullying policy be formulated at both junior and secondary school levels.

**Key words:** Bullying; attitude to bullying; social skills training; inhibitory modelling; persuasion; counselling.

## **Introduction**

Bullying has been identified as one of the world's most pervasive anti-social behaviour. It is observable in the family, public sector, military, social services, political dimension, primary, secondary and tertiary schools. Hence it is generally classified as workplace bullying, school bullying and family bullying (Mellor, 2005). It has even been shown that young children (toddlers) in the kindergarten are also involved in bullying (Rigby, 2005). The involvement of people in bullying is diversified in the sense that bullying takes different forms and inflicts varying degrees of physical, psychological and emotional pains on the victims.

Bullying is often erroneously thought of in terms of only physical assaults, but Swearer, Espelage and Napolitano (2009) make it clear that relational, verbal and /or social bullying can be just as damaging as or even more damaging than physical bullying. According to them, the old adage "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," is untrue. They further asserted that the negative effects of these less overt forms of bullying can last well into adulthood.

According to Espelage and Swearer (2010), bullying is highly entrenched among secondary school children. School bullying has attracted a lot of national and international concerns in recent years because of its multi-dimensional destructive effects on school children and society at large (Sullivan, Cleary & Sullivan, 2005; Superville, 2011). The pervasiveness of bullying in secondary schools is attributable to several factors. One of these factors, according to Sullivan et al., (2005), is the age of the students - adolescent age - a period of stress and storms, mood swings, identity crises and when there is intense need to be part of a group, to be accepted, defined and mirrored by a cohort of peers. Erikson (as cited in Corey, 2008) tries to throw light into the forces influencing adolescent development. According to him, the major developmental conflicts are related to the development of personal identity. The diverse pressures from parents, peers and society make it difficult for them to get clear sense of identity and if they fail to achieve a sense of identity, role confusion is the result. Erikson strongly opines that models are very important in this search of identity (Corey, 2008). When wrong models like bullies are available, then the adolescents are likely to be bound to identify with them and engage in bullying.

Some other factors have been identified as being significant predictors of bullying among school children include low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, negative interpersonal orientation and poor social skills among others. Sullivan et al., (2005) opine that certain set of bullies whom they identified as “not-so-clever” bullies are often mean minded and have negative view of the world. They are frequently failures at school and direct their anger at people they see as weak, but their anger and bullying behaviour is often a displacement of their own lack of self-esteem and self-confidence. This assertion is opposed by Limber, Agatston and Kowalski (2008) who posit that bullies tend to be confident, with high self-esteem, contrary to many people’s belief that bullies act tough in order to hide feelings of insecurity and self-loathing. On the other hand, Rigby (2005) reports that being victimized by peers was found to be significantly and independently associated with low self-esteem. By this, he implies that victims, rather than bullies, possess low self-esteem. It seems that there are differing opinions pertaining to whether lack of self-esteem is more associated with bullies than victims or otherwise. The opinion of Taylor, Peplau and Sears (2006) that people with low self-esteem are more concerned about their social impact on other people appears to suggest that helping students to improve their self-esteem might reduce students’ involvement in bullying either as victims or as bullies.

Statistics show that bullying is highly endemic among children all over the world. A survey of 130,000 Norwegian students by the world renowned pioneer researcher in bullying behaviour, Olweus (1994), shows that one student in seven or approximately 84,000 were involved in bullying / victim problems with some regularity. Similarly, thirty percent (30%) of U.S. students in grades six through ten are involved in moderate or frequent bullying — as bullies, as victims, or as both — according to the results of the first national school bullying statistics and cyber bullying statistics survey on this subject (Lumsden, 2002; [www.how-to-stop-bullying.com](http://www.how-to-stop-bullying.com), 2017).

The study of Lind and Maxwell (as cited by Sullivan et al., 2005) reveals that among the three worst experiences of secondary school students in New Zealand, bullying came second, while the death of someone very close (e.g. mother, father, sibling) came first. The investigation of Greeff and Grobler (2008) on the nature and prevalence of bullying behaviour as experienced and reported by pupils in upper middle-class, single-sex, English-medium primary schools in

Bloemfontein, South Africa reflected that 203 students out of the 360 students (56.4 percent) who were tested had indeed reported experiencing some form of bullying since the beginning of the academic year under investigation. Badejo and Ubangha (2002) found out from their research among students in Lagos that over 60% of their respondents admitted to have been involved in one form of bullying or the other. Egbochukwu (2007) found out that from the sample of 300 secondary school students studied in Benin, Nigeria, almost four in every five participants (78%) reported being bullied to some degree and 85% of the children admitted to bullying others at least once. Omoteso (2010) found from a sample of 750 secondary school students studied in Ile-Ife that 88.1% (444) of the students had been bullied by other students, 11.9% (60) had not, 33.19% (167) had taken part in bullying other students and 66.9% (337) had not. According to Nwankwo and Unachukwu (2006), in Anambra State, 76.81% and 92.50% of primary and post primary school teachers respectively identified bullying as a disruptive disorder in school. In a study on curbing deviance through peace education by Jegede, Ememe and Gami (2008) carried out in Lagos, 41.5% and 39.4% of the teachers and students respectively identified bullying as frequent deviant behaviour existing in schools. Eneh (1999) agrees that out of major anti-social behaviour tested among adolescents in Nigeria, bullying other children ranks second, while stealing is the highest. All these show that bullying is indeed very prevalence among secondary school students.

Researchers have shown that it is not only the victims that suffer from the problems of bullying, rather, bullying also poses a lot of problems to the bully, the bystander, the entire school programme and the larger society (Barbra, 2001; Coloroso, 2008; Field, 2007; Khan, 2006). It is a problem to the victim because he is made to feel hurt, worried, disturbed, depressed, insecure or lose property (Khan, 2006; Nwankwo & Unachukwu, 2006). Sometimes the victim tends to have lower level of self-esteem (Aluede, 2011; Marzano, 2003; Obe, 2009; & Rigby, 2005). Bullying has also led to loss of lives (Coloroso, 2008; Haber & Glatzer, 2007). The death of ten years old Damilola Taylor in Peckham, UK on the 27<sup>th</sup>, November 2000 still sends ripples of pain through the heart and marrows of many people (Wikipedia, 2018). Many children have attempted or committed suicide, sustained permanent injuries and dropped out of school as a result of bullying (Field, 2007; Swearer, Espelage & Napolitano, 2009), hence their

future was marred. The Popular Peaceful Schools International (PSI), a Canadian Charitable Organization was established in 2001 by Hetty van Gorp (an internationally recognized educator and author), as a result of her son, Ben, who died due to an incident of aggression by a boy who had been bullying him (Gorp & Levin, 2009).

The bullies often graduate into criminal behaviour that requires the use of weapons (Ekeh, 2007; Olweus, 2003). They may be highly distracted from serious academic work since they spend much of their time scheming and strategizing on whom, how, and when to bully. The researchers recall clearly the case of one student in a secondary school in Owerri, Imo State in 1998, who was hit to death by his classmate. His classmate (a reactive bully) hit the deceased to retaliate for being bullied by the deceased the previous day. Though the reactive bully was sentenced to life imprisonment for manslaughter, the original active, initiative-perpetrator (the deceased) has long ended his own life and caused his parents much sorrow. Indeed bullying has lifelong debilitating consequences in the life of the bully himself.

The bystanders have their own share of the negative consequences of bullying. Bystanders who frequently observe bullying may also imbibe bullying culture as a result of social learning. According to Taylor, Peplau and Sears (2006), people often learn social attitude and behaviour simply by watching other people, known technically as “models”. There are also occasions that bullying ends up in serious violent conflicts involving the use of weapons among adolescents in such ways that bystanders get injured. From the foregoing, one could liken bullying to ‘an evil wind that blows no man any good’.

Various attempts are being made in the Western world to curb the incident of bullying among students. The renowned Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme (OBPP) is now in use in Europe and North America (Olweus, 1994). Social-Skills training is recommended and used by Wong (2004) as part of the techniques for modifying bullying. Different types of anti-bullying campaign strategies are mounted by both governmental and non-governmental agencies to help the victims of bullying and to also stop bullies from perpetrating bullying behaviour. Some states in U.S.A are beginning to require schools to adopt anti-bullying policies (Lumsden, 2002 and Rigby, 2005). According to Khan (2006) and Obe (2009), Colorado, New Hampshire, and West Virginia have passed legislation that makes it

mandatory for schools to have anti-bullying policies; Massachusetts has allocated one million dollars to "bully-proof" its schools and several websites and telephone lines are made available to children and parents for the purposes of reporting bullying cases and also for receiving counselling. National Education Protocol Against Bullying has been initiated in the Netherlands (Wong, 2004). Government funded camps are organised to equip children with skills that will help them to stop bullying and /or avoid being bullied. It seems that any form of bullying at any level is viewed as a serious offence because of the government's sensitivity to its attendant consequences on the children and the larger society.

In Nigeria, Aluede (2011) and Egbochukwu (2007) have examined bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Benin. Badejo and Ubangha (2002) assessed and managed bullying among secondary school students in Lagos. Omoteso (2010) studied bullying among secondary school students in Ile-Ife, Osun State. Ikeagu (2006) carried out a study on the incidence and consequences of bullying in schools as perceived by students in Imo State. All these have not aroused the desired attention from the stake-holders and the government against bullying. It still seems as if our attention to bullying only arises when it erupts into severe violent conflicts and formation of cultic groups as it appears to be the present situation in Imo State and Owerri Metropolis in particular. Series of killings and cultic movements in Owerri Metropolis among students (Ministry of Education, 2003) are not un-associated to bullying. The Imo State Government through the Special Adviser for Security matters issued a white paper on the measures to combat cultism in secondary schools which include the following: abolition of use of handsets, immediate creation of security committee in all schools, compilation of names of student cultists and those of their parents for forwarding to the Security Bureau for appropriate action, creation of more recreational activities, introduction of excellent /good behaviour awards in all schools and prosecution of any teacher confirmed as a cult member, among other things (Eguh, 2009). In addition, the 'New Face Vigilante', a security outfit established by Imo State Government was mandated to arrest and discipline students who are reported to be cultists. On the face value it appears as if the visits and disciplinary measures of the New Face Vigilante are reducing the rate of violent inter-cult and inter-school fights. However, the entrenched bullying culture has not been handled.

A lot of work is required to instil in the students the appropriate attitude to bullying behaviour and modify the acquired bullying behaviour in order to have a lasting behavioural change since most students join cults in order to fight, retaliate or shield themselves from bullies.

Bullying behaviour disrupts the peace and tranquillity necessary for the normal functioning of our schools. It interferes with the normal developmental processes of children and hinders their smooth passage through adolescence, thereby rendering them dysfunctional in the society (Sullivan et al, 2005). In Imo state and Owerri Metropolis in particular, most of the violent behaviour prevalent in the public secondary schools are traceable to bullying. Frequently, lessons are disrupted, lives of students and teachers are under threat and the school administrators spend ample time and money to address issues which arise from bullying.

This situation is made worse by the realization that despite the widespread nature of the bullying culture among secondary school students in Owerri, very insignificant attention is directed to the problem in the schools. The study of Badejo and Ubangha (2002) revealed that both bullies and victims of bullying can be successfully helped with a treatment package based on the principles of cognitive restructuring and assertiveness training. Ikeagu (2006), in her study, found that helping students to master difficult skills and concepts, introducing variety while teaching, using suspense, random recitation and presentation of unusual materials, firmness about reprimands, flogging and scolding, suspension and expulsion and provision of encouragement and praise among others are methods which are suggested by teachers and students as appropriate for managing bullying. Most of these appear to be at their best, appropriate for classroom management but may not be adequate for the inculcation of a lasting attitudinal and behavioural change required to reduce bullying behaviour to the barest minimum.

Previous research works had reported diverse findings on managing incidence of bullying among youths (Wong, 2004; Sullivan, et al., 2005; Egbochukwu, 2007; Aluede, 2011). However, many of these studies did not report the combination of social skills training, inhibitory modelling and persuasion in changing secondary school students' attitude to and involvement in bullying. Social skills training is designed to help students develop, maintain or terminate relationships with other peers without causing any hurt, pains or



misunderstanding. Inhibitory modelling is designed to provide an avenue for the participants to listen to some of the terrible experiences narrated by prison inmates and ex-cultist(s) who bullied others in the past and are meant to pay enormous the price for their misdeeds. This would serve to restrain or inhibit bullying behaviours in the participants. The persuasion method assumes that people are rational in the way they process information. That they can be motivated to attend to a message, learn its contents, and incorporate it into their attitudes. Individuals sometimes change their attitudes because they have been persuaded by information received from others to acquire the attitudes you wish to promote.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of the study was to investigate the relative effectiveness of social skills training, inhibitory modelling and persuasion as counselling interventions to manage the attitude to and involvement in bullying behaviour among senior secondary school students in Owerri Metropolis. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Investigate the relative effectiveness of social skills training, inhibitory modelling and persuasion in modifying the attitude of senior secondary school students to bullying behaviour.
2. Appraise the relative effectiveness of social skills training, inhibitory modelling and persuasion in modifying the involvement of senior secondary school students in bullying behaviour.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions are raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent will participants exposed to three counselling interventions and waiting-list control differ in attitude to bullying behaviour?
2. What is the effectiveness of social skills training, inhibitory modelling, persuasion and waiting-list control in reducing the involvement of senior secondary school students in bullying behaviour?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. There is no significant difference in post-test mean scores on the attitude to bullying behaviour among participants in the four experimental groups (three counselling interventions and waiting-list control).
2. There is no significant difference in post-test mean scores on the involvement in bullying among participants in the four experimental groups.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study adopted the quasi-experimental research design. The quasi-experimental design was appropriate for this study because it involved human behaviour and did not permit complete randomization of subjects to the conditions and control of all variables (Ilogu, 2005; Nwadinigwe, 2005).

### **Area of Study**

The study was carried out in four Local Government Areas in Owerri Metropolis, Imo State. Owerri is the capital of Imo State, Nigeria. It is the most densely populated town in the state and is inhabited by a good representation of all the people of the state and other foreigners from within and outside Nigeria who are mostly civil servants and private business men and women. Imo State is in the South East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

### **Sample**

The study sample comprised 420 senior secondary two students (SS 2) drawn from twelve senior secondary schools in Owerri Metropolis. This was made up of 215 boys and 205 girls. The age range of the students was 15 to 19 years, while the mean ages for the male and female participants were 16.65 years and 16.37 years respectively. The SS 2 students were chosen, firstly, because they were not preparing for senior school certificate examination and therefore likely to be more available for the study. Secondly, senior students seem to be more involved in bullying than junior students.

The procedure adopted was simple random sampling. Firstly, three schools were selected from each of the four Local Government Areas that make up Owerri Metropolis. Secondly, one intact SS 2 class was randomly selected from each school bringing the total to 12 intact

classes. The total number of students in the intact classes chosen was 592. The students who scored at least 40 on Involvement in Bullying Rating Scale met the criterion for inclusion in the study. Consequently, 420 students from the twelve schools qualified for inclusion in the study. Thirdly, the four experimental conditions (three treatment and one waiting-list control) were randomly assigned to the four Local Government Areas. The schools in the same Local Government Area were exposed to similar experimental condition.

### **Instruments**

The following instruments were used to collect data for this study:

#### **Involvement in Bullying Rating Scale**

The instrument was designed to obtain information on the participants' involvement in bullying as a victim, a bully and a bystander respectively. It also provides information on the prevailing types of bullying behaviour (physical, verbal, social and emotional). The test-retest reliability coefficient of the instrument obtained at three weeks interval was 0.61.

#### **Attitude to Bullying Rating Scale**

This is 20-item, 4-point Likert scale instrument designed to provide information on the attitude of participants to the various types of bullying behaviour. The test-retest reliability coefficient obtained at three weeks interval was 0.75.

### **Procedure**

Two weeks before the commencement of the treatments, the researchers administered the Involvement in Bullying Rating Scale and Attitude to Bullying Rating Scale to the participants in the twelve intact classes. The three treatments ran almost concurrently, except in some cases where some groups were ahead of others in the administration of some treatment packages due to certain logistics. Every treatment group met once every week for six weeks and each session lasted for 60 minutes. Two weeks after the treatments, the assessment instruments were re-administered to the participants in all the experimental groups.

## **Treatments**

### **Social Skills Training**

The objectives of this treatment were to inculcate social skills in the participants in order to help them to cultivate/develop, maintain or terminate relationships with other peers without causing any hurt, pains or misunderstanding. The participants were helped to acquire the core values necessary for the attainment of responsible citizenship in the community; and help them to strive for wholesome social interaction in order to gain lasting acceptance and respect from their peers.

### **Inhibitory Modelling**

This intervention was designed to provide an avenue for the participants to listen to some of the terrible experiences narrated by prison inmates and ex-cultist(s) who bullied others in the past and are meant to pay enormous the price for their misdeeds. This would serve to restrain or inhibit bullying behaviours in the participants. The prison inmates and ex-cultist(s) were the inhibitory models.

### **Persuasion**

The persuasion method assumes that people are rational in the way they process information. That they can be motivated to attend to a message, learn its contents, and incorporate it into their attitudes. By controlling the way clients perceive you, the way your messages are organized and presented, and who your clients are, you may persuade them to change their attitudes. Individuals sometimes change their attitudes because they have been persuaded by information received from others to acquire the attitudes you wish to promote. In this study, persuasion was in the form of talk given to the participants on the dangers of involvement in bullying.

### **Waiting List Control**

The participants in the waiting-list control group did not receive any treatment. They were told that owing to logistic problems their intervention will come at a later date. However, they were administered the pre- and post-test assessment measures.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data analysis was carried out by the means of both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The means, mean differences and standard deviations for pre- and post-treatment

assessment scores were computed. All the hypotheses were tested using the 2 x 4 Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA).

## **Results**

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations and mean differences for pre-test and post-test scores of the participants' attitude to bullying behaviour based on experimental groups and gender. From the results in Table 2, there is significant difference in the post-test mean scores in attitude to bullying behaviour among the four experimental groups ( $F_{\text{calculated}} = 1037.47$ ,  $F_{\text{critical}} = 2.62$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The hypothesis one is therefore rejected. The pair wise comparisons in Table 3 using the Fisher's protected t test indicate that inhibitory modelling evidenced superiority over social skills training in changing attitudes to bullying. In the same vein the persuasion technique was superior to the social skills training; while no significant difference exists between inhibitory modelling group and the persuasion group.

Table 4 presents the means, standard deviations and mean differences for pre-test and post-test scores of participants' involvement in bullying based on experimental conditions and gender. As shown in Table 5, there is significant difference in the post-test scores on involvement in bullying among the participants in the four experimental groups ( $F_{\text{calculated}} = 479.47$ ,  $F_{\text{critical}} = 2.62$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis two is, therefore, rejected. In order to determine where the significance between experimental groups lies, post hoc comparisons were conducted using the Fisher's protected t-test. The results in Table 6 show that inhibitory modelling emerged the most effective technique for modifying participants' involvement in bullying, followed by persuasion and finally social skills training.

**Table 1: Pre-test and Post-test mean scores on the Participants' Attitude to bullying based on Experimental Conditions and Gender**

Experimental Groups	Gender	N	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean difference
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Social Skills Training	Male	50	45.10	8.49	22.60	1.50	22.50
	Female	55	44.11	7.40	23.95	1.64	20.16
	Total	105	44.58	7.75	23.30	1.70	21.28
Inhibitory Modelling	Male	59	42.20	6.67	22.00	1.74	20.20
	Female	46	45.37	6.85	21.91	1.56	23.46
	Total	105	43.60	6.90	21.96	1.65	21.64
Persuasion	Male	60	45.88	7.25	21.72	1.25	24.16
	Female	45	45.04	7.17	21.80	1.32	23.24
	Total	105	45.52	7.20	21.75	1.28	23.77
Waiting List Control	Male	46	42.89	7.96	43.22	7.94	-0.33
	Female	59	44.56	8.09	48.85	7.42	-4.29
	Total	105	43.83	8.04	46.38	8.12	-2.55
Total	Male	215	44.05	7.64	26.62	9.54	17.43
	Female	205	44.73	7.35	30.18	12.63	14.55
	Total	420	44.38	7.50	28.37	11.28	16.01

**Table 2: 2 x 4 Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on Influence of experimental conditions and Gender on Attitude to Bullying Behaviour among Participants**

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean square	f cal
Main effects	46753.94	5	9350.79	645.41
Covariate	813.55	4	813.55	56.15
Experimental Groups	45092.99	3	15030.10	1037.47*
Gender	267.66	1	267.66	18.47
<u>2 Way Interactions</u>				
Experimental Groups versus Gender	35537.04	3	179.01	12.36
Residual	5940.16	411	14.49	
Total	53231.13	419	127.35	

\* Significant,  $p < 0.05$ , F critical at 0.05 (1,411) = 3.86

**Table 3: Pair-wise comparison of the influence of the experimental conditions on the attitude of the participants' attitude to bullying behaviour**

Experimental Conditions	Social Skills Training (n=105)	Inhibitory Modelling (n=105)	Persuasion (n=105)	Waiting-List Control (n=105)
Social Skills Training	23.30	2.55*	2.95*	-43.88*
Inhibitory Modelling	1.34	21.96	0.40	-46.43*
Persuasion	1.55	0.21	21.75	-46.83*
Waiting-List Control	-23.08	-24.42	-24.63	46.28

Note: Group means are in the diagonal; mean differences are below the diagonal; while the protected t values are above the diagonal.

\* Significant at 0.05; d.f. = 208; t critical = 1.96.

**Table 4: Pre-test and Post-test mean scores on the Participants' Involvement in Bullying Behaviour Based on Intervention Type and Gender**

Experimental Groups	Gender	N	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean difference
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Social Skills Training	Male	50	39.02	7.26	23.34	3.29	15.68
	Female	55	41.04	7.02	26.00	4.50	15.04
	Total	105	40.08	7.17	24.73	4.17	15.35
Inhibitory Modelling	Male	59	37.83	5.27	21.07	4.03	16.76
	Female	46	43.04	7.97	21.98	3.86	21.06
	Total	105	40.11	7.05	21.47	3.97	18.64
Persuasion	Male	60	39.17	4.52	23.08	3.19	16.09
	Female	45	39.49	5.47	23.64	4.20	15.85
	Total	105	39.30	4.93	23.32	3.65	15.98
Waiting List Control	Male	46	40.39	4.80	42.02	4.36	-1.63
	Female	59	41.54	5.67	38.63	5.01	2.91
	Total	105	41.04	5.31	40.12	5.01	0.92
Total	Male	215	39.02	5.56	26.65	9.53	12.37
	Female	205	41.29	6.64	28.21	12.63	13.08
	Total	420	40.13	6.21	27.41	11.28	12.72

**Table 5: 2x4 Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on Influence of Experimental Conditions and Gender on Involvement in Bullying Behaviour among Participants**

Source of Variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	f-cal
Main effects	23764.27	5	4752.85	305.85
Covariate	573.97	1	573.97	36.94
Experimental Groups	22352.80	3	7450.93	479.47*
Gender	5.43	1	5.43	0.35
<b>2 Way Interactions</b>				
Experimental Groups versus Gender	478.49	3	159.50	10.26
Residual	6386.98	411	15.54	
Total	30629.74	419	73.10	

\* Significant,  $p < 0.05$ , F critical at 0.05 (1,411) = 3.86

**Table 6: Pair-wise comparison of the influence of the experimental conditions on the involvement of the participants in bullying**

Experimental Conditions	Social Skills Training (n=105)	Inhibitory Modelling (n=105)	Persuasion (n=105)	Waiting-List Control (n=105)
Social Skills Training	24.73	5.60*	2.59*	-28.29*
Inhibitory Modelling	3.30	21.43	-3.40*	-34.28*
Persuasion	1.41	0.21	23.32	-30.88*
Waiting-List Control	-15.39	-18.66	-16.80	40.12

Note: Group means are in the diagonal; mean differences are below the diagonal; while the protected t values are above the diagonal.

\* Significant at 0.05; d.f. = 208; t critical = 1.96.

**Summary of the Findings**

The following are the highlight of the findings:

1. Social skills training, inhibitory modelling and persuasion were effective in modifying the attitude of participants to bullying behaviour.



2. The participants in the three counselling interventions recorded fewer tendencies to be involved in bullying behaviour than those in waiting-list control.
3. The inhibitory modelling was superior to persuasion and social skills training in reducing the participants' involvement in bullying.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

It is evident from the findings that social skills training, inhibitory modelling and persuasion are all significantly effective in modifying the attitudes of the participants to, and their involvement in bullying behaviour. The effectiveness of Social skills training in modifying the attitude and involvement of the participants in bullying behaviour supports the prescription of Wong (2004), who embarked on exploring effective ways to tackle bullying problems in Hong Kong. He referred to the elements adopted by National Education Protocol against Bullying initiated in the Netherlands which included social skills training for bullies and victims among others. He recommended from his findings that providing students with social skills and emotional-control training packages, among other elements are essential for dealing with problems of school violence. Though, Wong (2004) used all the students in the junior classes of secondary schools in Hong Kong, this study focussed on all senior secondary two students in Owerri, Nigeria. There still exists a great deal of agreement between the results of his work and the present one with regard to the efficacy of Social Skills Training in modifying bullying behaviour.

The observation that inhibitory modelling was effective in modifying the attitude to, and involvement of the participants in bullying behaviour supports the assertion of Corey (2008), that the behaviour of an individual or a group (the model) acts as a stimulus for similar attitudes, and behaviour on the part of observers. It is a generally accepted fact that people often learn social attitude and behaviour simply by watching other people, known technically as "models" (Cardwell & Flanagan, 2003; Haralambos, Holborn & Heald, 2008; Taylor, Peplau & Sears, 2006). Many of the students imbibed bullying attitude and behaviour from observing the seniors who serve as disinhibitory models bullying others, they tend to imitate them. This was more facilitated when the seniors' bullying behaviour was not

punished but they were rather hailed by their peers and the bullies were accorded much 'respect' by both their mates and the juniors.

When the students were presented with inhibitory models (ex-cultists, well known miscreants in their environments and teenage prison inmates) in the treatment package, the paradigm appeared to have shifted from hailing and respecting the bullies to feelings of disgust, regrets and pity. The use of teenage prison inmates was very captivating because the students were apt to identify with them. This may have influenced the observed change in attitude and behaviour towards bullying by the participants in this study. It is not, therefore, surprising that inhibitory modelling emerged the most superior technique among the three for modifying the involvement of the participants in bullying behaviour.

The effectiveness of persuasion in modifying the attitude of the participants to, and involvement in bullying behaviour is not surprising because the persuasion technique involved such elements which stimulated and tasked the students' thoughtful involvement and contributions in the treatment package. The debates and group assignments seriously engaged their minds and those who spoke in favour of bullying decided to change their stands half-way in the debate in order not to lose abysmally. Persuasion technique also appears to have intensely drawn the participants' attention to the numerous irrational thoughts and illogical beliefs that kick-start and maintain bullying among students. At the same time, participants were helped to appreciate what they stand to benefit when they desist from bullying.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Teachers, counsellors, school heads and administrators should devote ample time to inculcate appropriate social skills into the students by deliberately teaching these social skills during moral instructions, orientation weeks and special school programmes.
2. Adequate class supervisions are recommended for both the junior and senior students since bullying is least experienced when teachers are in the classroom. If possible, teachers' offices should be sandwiched between classrooms, instead of being far away and secluded from the classrooms.

3. Students who are actively involved in bullying and are rated as potential criminals should be helped with special programmes that will enable them appreciate that bullying is an evil wind that blows no man any good. They should be taken to visit teenage inmates in the prisons to see for themselves some of the consequences of their present behaviour.
4. Counsellors can utilise the inhibitory modelling technique to help students who are highly involved in bullying and are rated as potential criminals, instead of waiting till the time such students will be arrested and put in prison cells. This could be done with video tapes, visits to prison, visits to motor parks and by bringing a willing model to the school.

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