

Teachers' Perception of the Causes and Management of Bullying Among Primary School Pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State

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Abstract

This study investigated teachers' perceptions of the causes and management of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of primary school teachers in Moro Local Government Area, while a sample of 320 teachers was selected through simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled Questionnaire on Teachers' Perception of Causes and Management of Bullying among Primary School Pupils (QTPCMBPSP). The instrument was validated by experts and subjected to reliability testing. Mean and rank order statistics were used to answer the research questions, while independent sample t-test statistics were used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that teachers perceived peer pressure and the desire to fit in as the major cause of bullying among primary school pupils (Mean = 2.82). The study also found that immediate teacher intervention was perceived as the most effective strategy for managing bullying (Mean = 2.87). Furthermore, there was a significant difference in male and female teachers' perceptions of the causes of bullying ($t = 2.92, p = 0.004$), while no significant difference existed in their perceptions of bullying management ($t = 0.24, p = 0.62$). The study concluded that peer influence plays a major role in bullying behaviour among primary school pupils and that prompt teacher intervention remains crucial for effective management. It was recommended that schools strengthen anti-bullying programmes, provide teacher training on bullying prevention, and encourage collaboration between schools and parents to create safer learning environments.

Keywords: Bullying, Causes, Management, Primary School Pupils, Teachers' Perception

Introduction

Bullying among primary school pupils has emerged as a significant challenge within the educational system due to its negative effects on pupils' academic achievement, emotional well-being, social relationships, and overall development. As a form of aggressive behaviour characterized by repeated intimidation or victimization of less powerful pupils, bullying can occur through physical, verbal, social, relational, and increasingly digital means. Beyond individual acts of misconduct, bullying reflects broader social and behavioural problems that undermine pupils' sense of safety and belonging and disrupt the teaching and learning process. Consequently, schools are expected not only to provide quality education but also to create environments that promote safety, respect, and positive interpersonal relationships among learners (Aluede et al., 2018; World Health Organization, 2022; Olweus, 2023).

Research suggests that bullying is influenced by multiple interacting factors arising from the home, school, peer groups, and the wider social environment. Inadequate parental supervision, exposure to violence, harsh parenting practices, negative peer influence, poor classroom management, and weak enforcement of school rules have all been identified as conditions that may encourage bullying behaviour among children (Eze & Okeke, 2020). At the same time, pupils may engage in bullying to gain social acceptance, establish dominance, or achieve a higher social status within peer groups. The interconnected nature of these factors indicates that bullying cannot be attributed to a single cause but rather to a combination of environmental, social, and behavioural influences that vary

across schools and communities (Smith & Brain, 2020; UNESCO, 2021).

Given the complex nature of bullying, teachers play a crucial role in recognizing its causes and supporting efforts to prevent and manage it within the school environment. As the adults who interact most frequently with pupils, teachers are often in a position to observe bullying behaviours, identify vulnerable pupils, and respond to incidents when they occur. Their perceptions and understanding of bullying can influence how effectively they identify risk factors, implement classroom management practices, and support both victims and perpetrators. Studies have consistently shown that successful bullying prevention and intervention depend on a combination of early identification, appropriate responses, collaboration with parents and other stakeholders, counselling support, and the promotion of values such as empathy, respect, and peaceful coexistence among pupils (Federal Ministry of Education Nigeria, 2021; van Aalst et al., 2025; Lestari & Sumarno, 2025; Tran et al., 2026).

In response to growing concerns about school violence and child protection, governments and international organizations have introduced policies and programmes aimed at reducing bullying and promoting safer learning environments. These initiatives include the development of anti-bullying policies, establishment of reporting mechanisms for victims, teacher training programmes, social-emotional learning interventions, and peace education initiatives that encourage tolerance and conflict resolution. Although such measures have the potential to reduce bullying, their effectiveness largely depends on how teachers interpret the causes of bullying and apply appropriate management strategies within their schools (UNICEF Nigeria, 2021; United Nations Children's Fund, 2021; Adedigba, 2026). This underscores the importance of understanding teachers' perspectives, as these perceptions can shape both the implementation and outcomes of school-based anti-bullying interventions.

Despite increasing efforts to address bullying in schools, concerns remain regarding teachers' understanding of the factors that contribute to bullying and the most effective approaches for managing it. Variations in teachers' experiences, beliefs, and professional judgments may influence how bullying behaviours are recognized and addressed, which in turn may affect the success of intervention programmes. Although previous studies have highlighted the importance of teacher awareness and involvement in bullying prevention and management, there is still a need for empirical evidence on how teachers perceive the causes of bullying and the strategies required to address it effectively, particularly within specific local contexts (Aihie & Okei, 2022; Olalekan & Adewuyi, 2025; Adewuyi & Olalekan, 2025).

The lack of adequate information on teachers' perceptions of bullying causes and management presents challenges for school administrators, policymakers, and other stakeholders seeking to design effective anti-bullying programmes and school safety policies. Without a clear understanding of how teachers interpret the factors associated with bullying and the strategies they consider effective, interventions may fail to address the realities of primary school settings. This gap is particularly relevant in this locale, where empirical evidence on teachers' perceptions remains limited. Therefore, this study sought to examine teachers' perceptions of the causes and management of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State, with the aim of providing evidence that can support the development of effective preventive measures, improved management practices, and safer, more inclusive learning environments.

Statement of the Problem

Bullying among primary school pupils has become a persistent challenge that negatively affects pupils' academic performance, emotional well-being, social relationships, and overall school experience. Evidence from studies in Nigeria indicates that bullying remains prevalent in many schools, with a considerable proportion of pupils reporting experiences either as victims or perpetrators of bullying behaviours (Aluede et al., 2018; Aihie & Okeji, 2022). Research has also linked bullying to poor academic achievement, low self-esteem, anxiety, school absenteeism, social withdrawal, and other adverse developmental outcomes among children. Despite various

disciplinary measures, counselling services, and anti-bullying initiatives introduced in schools, bullying continues to occur, suggesting that existing interventions may not be adequately addressing the factors that sustain the problem.

One possible explanation is that teachers, who are often the first individuals to identify and respond to bullying incidents in schools, may hold different perceptions regarding the causes of bullying and the most effective strategies for managing it. Such differences in perception can influence how bullying cases are recognized, prevented, and handled within the school environment. Although previous studies have examined the prevalence, effects, and management of bullying among school children, relatively few have specifically focused on teachers' perceptions of both the causes and management of bullying among primary school pupils. Furthermore, empirical evidence on this subject is limited within the context of Kwara State, particularly in Moro Local Government Area. This lack of context-specific information creates a gap in knowledge that may hinder school administrators, counsellors, and policymakers from designing effective anti-bullying policies, intervention programmes, and teacher training initiatives that reflect the realities of primary schools. Therefore, this study investigated teachers' perceptions of the causes and management of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State, with the aim of providing empirical evidence that could support the development of more effective prevention and intervention strategies in schools.

Purpose of the Study

The study sought to:

1. examine teachers' perceptions of the causes of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State.
2. examine teachers' perceptions of the management of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State.
3. determine whether there is a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the causes of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State based on gender.
4. determine whether there is a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the management of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State based on gender.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

1. What are the teachers' perceptions of the causes of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State?
2. What are the teachers' perceptions of the management of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were postulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the causes of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State based on gender.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the management of bullying among primary schools' pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State based on gender.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine teachers' perceptions of the causes and management of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State. The population comprised 1,653 primary school teachers from public and private schools, consisting of 813 teachers in public primary schools and 840 teachers in private primary

schools based on the Annual School Census Report. A sample size of 320 teachers was determined using the Research Advisor (2006) sample size determination guideline. To ensure adequate representation of teachers from both public and private schools, proportionate stratified sampling technique was first used to categorize the population into public and private school strata. Thereafter, simple random sampling technique was employed to select respondents from each stratum. Based on proportional allocation, 157 teachers were selected from public primary schools and 163 teachers from private primary schools, making a total of 320 respondents. This sampling procedure ensured that all teachers had an equal chance of being selected while maintaining proportional representation of the two school categories.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *Teachers' Perception of Causes and Management of Bullying Questionnaire (TPCMBQ)*. The instrument consisted of three sections. Section A contained five items on respondents' demographic characteristics, including gender, age, educational qualification, years of teaching experience, and school type. Section B consisted of 15 items designed to elicit teachers' perceptions of the causes of bullying among primary school pupils, while Section C contained 15 items on the management of bullying among primary school pupils. The questionnaire items in Sections B and C were measured using a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in Early Childhood and Primary Education as well as an expert in Test, Measurement and Evaluation to ensure its appropriateness and relevance to the study objectives. Reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot study involving 25 primary school teachers outside the study area. Data obtained from the pilot study were analysed using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.827, indicating that the instrument was reliable for data collection.

Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while independent samples t-test was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. For the interpretation of mean scores, a criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted. Mean scores of 2.50 and above were regarded as an indication of agreement with an item, while mean scores below 2.50 were interpreted as disagreement. This criterion was obtained by dividing the sum of the scale values ($4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10$) by the number of response categories (4), resulting in a benchmark mean of 2.50.

Results

Research Question One: What is the teachers' perceptions of the causes of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State?

Table 1:

Descriptive table showing teachers' perceptions of the causes of bullying among primary school pupils

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Ranks	Remarks
1.	Peer pressure and the desire to fit in are major causes of bullying.	2.82	0.83	1 st	Always
2.	Children who experience violence at home are more likely to bully others.	2.75	0.86	8 th	Always
3.	Overcrowded classrooms create opportunities for bullying.	2.76	0.87	5 th	Always
4.	Lack of supervision during break periods leads to bullying incidents.	2.63	0.83	10 th	Always
5.	Poverty and visible socio-economic differences among pupils fuel bullying.	2.81	0.80	2 nd	Always

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Ranks	Remarks
6.	Exposure to violent media content influences bullying behaviour.	2.80	0.72	3 rd	Always
7.	Teachers' tolerance of minor aggression encourages more serious bullying.	2.72	0.84	9 th	Always
8.	Lack of clear school rules against bullying allows it to persist.	2.77	0.78	4 th	Always
9.	Bullying is sometimes motivated to achieve social status among peers.	2.76	0.81	5 th	Always
10.	Poor parental discipline at home contributes to bullying in school.	2.76	0.83	5 th	Always

Table 1 indicate that all the listed factors were perceived as causes of bullying, with mean scores ranging from 2.63 to 2.82. Peer pressure and the desire to fit in ranked 1st (Mean = 2.82), poverty and socio-economic differences ranked 2nd (Mean = 2.81), while exposure to violent media content ranked 3rd (Mean = 2.80). Other identified causes included lack of clear school rules against bullying (4th), overcrowded classrooms, bullying for social status, and poor parental discipline (5th), children experiencing violence at home (8th), teachers' tolerance of minor aggression (9th), and lack of supervision during break periods (10th). Since peer pressure and the desire to fit in had the highest mean score (2.82), it was identified as the major perceived cause of bullying among primary school pupils in the Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State. Therefore, teachers perceived peer pressure and desire to fit in as the major cause of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State (Mean = 2.82).

Research Question Two: What is the teachers' perceptions of the management of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State?

Table 2:

Descriptive table showing teachers' perceptions of the management of bullying among primary school pupils

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Ranks	Remarks
1.	Immediate teacher intervention is effective in stopping bullying.	2.87	0.78	1 st	Always
2.	Schools should have clear anti-bullying policies to reduce bullying.	2.74	0.83	9 th	Always
3.	Parental involvement is crucial in managing bullying.	2.75	0.84	6 th	Always
4.	Counselling both bullies and victims is an effective strategy.	2.69	0.84	10 th	Always
5.	Peer mediation programs will help pupils to reduce bullying.	2.79	0.82	3 rd	Always
6.	Consistent enforcement of school rules reduces bullying.	2.79	0.82	3 rd	Always
7.	Supervision during break times is essential for bullying prevention.	2.81	0.86	2 nd	Always
8.	Schools should provide safe reporting channels for victims.	2.74	0.80	8 th	Always
9.	Social-emotional learning programs help prevent bullying.	2.75	0.84	6 th	Always

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Ranks	Remarks
10.	Monitoring and evaluation of anti-bullying efforts are important.	2.79	0.80	3 rd	Always

Table 2 presents that all the identified strategies were perceived as effective in managing bullying, with mean scores ranging from 2.69 to 2.87. Immediate teacher intervention ranked 1st (Mean = 2.87), supervision during break times ranked 2nd (Mean = 2.81), while peer mediation programmes, consistent enforcement of school rules, and monitoring and evaluation of anti-bullying efforts ranked 3rd (Mean = 2.79). Other strategies included parental involvement and social-emotional learning programmes (6th), provision of safe reporting channels (8th), clear anti-bullying policies (9th), and counselling of bullies and victims (10th). Since immediate teacher intervention recorded the highest mean score (2.87), it was identified as the most effective perceived strategy for managing bullying among primary school pupils.

Research Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the causes of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State based on gender.

Table 3:

t-test table showing a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the causes of bullying among primary schools' pupils

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig.	Decision
Causes	Male	83	56.16	3.51	318	2.92	0.004	*Sig.
	Female	237	54.81	3.94				

If $p < 0.05$ = Reject H_0

If $p \geq 0.05$ = Do not reject H_0

Table 3 shows that there was a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the causes of bullying based on gender ($t = 2.92$, $p = 0.004$). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that male and female teachers differ significantly in their perceptions of the causes of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State ($t = 2.92$, $p = 0.004$).

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the management of bullying among primary schools' pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State based on gender.

Table 4:

t-test table showing a significant gender difference in teachers' perceptions of the management of bullying among primary school pupils.

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig.	Decision
Management	Male	83	41.36	3.64	318	0.24	0.62	*Not Sig.
	Female	237	41.35	3.50				

If $p < 0.05$ = Reject H_0

If $p \geq 0.05$ = Do not reject H_0

Table 4 shows that there was no significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the management of bullying based on gender ($t = 0.24$, $p = 0.62$). Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This indicates that male and female teachers had similar perceptions regarding the management of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State gender ($t = 0.24$, $p = 0.62$).

Discussion of the Findings

The finding of the study revealed that teachers perceived peer pressure and the desire to fit in as the major cause of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara

State. This implies that teachers believe many pupils engage in bullying because they want to gain acceptance, maintain popularity, impress their peers, or establish social status within their groups. This finding may be attributed to the strong influence of peer relationships during childhood, as pupils often seek approval from their friends and may adopt negative behaviours to gain recognition or avoid rejection. The finding aligns with Eze and Okeke (2020), who identified peer influence and social factors as important contributors to bullying behaviours among Nigerian primary school pupils. However, the finding differs slightly from Aluede et al. (2018), who emphasized that bullying results from multiple interacting factors, including family background, school environment, and individual characteristics rather than peer pressure alone. The educational implication of this finding is that anti-bullying programmes should go beyond punishing offenders and focus on shaping positive peer relationships. Schools should promote cooperative learning, peer mentoring, social-emotional learning, and value-based education that encourage empathy, respect, and inclusiveness among pupils. Teachers should also be trained to identify unhealthy peer group dynamics and intervene before such interactions develop into bullying behaviour. This finding further highlights the importance of creating a school culture in which positive behaviours are rewarded and pupils do not feel pressured to engage in aggression to gain acceptance.

The finding of the study revealed that teachers perceived immediate intervention by teachers as the major approach to managing bullying in primary schools in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State. This implies that teachers believe that responding quickly whenever bullying occurs is the most effective way of preventing the behaviour from escalating and protecting affected pupils. The possible reason for this finding may be that teachers are the closest adults to pupils during school activities and are usually the first to witness bullying incidents; therefore, they are in the best position to provide immediate responses before the situation becomes more serious. The finding agrees with van Aalst, Huitsing, and Veenstra (2025), who emphasized that teachers' willingness and readiness to intervene play an important role in reducing bullying situations in schools. Similarly, Tran et al (2026) highlighted that effective teacher responses, particularly prompt identification and intervention, are critical components of bullying management. The finding is also consistent with Lestari and Sumarno (2025), who reported that teachers' active involvement and timely intervention are important strategies for handling bullying cases in elementary schools. The educational implication of this finding is that schools should strengthen teachers' capacity to identify and respond to bullying promptly and effectively. Professional development programmes should focus on practical intervention skills, conflict resolution techniques, and classroom management strategies. Schools should also establish clear reporting and response procedures to ensure that teachers are supported when dealing with bullying cases. In addition, the finding underscores the need for school administrators to create an environment where teachers feel empowered to take immediate action without fear of administrative constraints or inadequate institutional support.

The finding of the study revealed that male and female teachers differ significantly in their perceptions of the causes of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State. This indicates that male and female teachers do not have the same understanding of the factors responsible for bullying, as their personal experiences, observations, and interpretations of pupils' behaviours may influence how they explain the causes of bullying. The possible reason for this difference may be associated with variations in teachers' experiences, classroom interactions, social perspectives, and levels of exposure to bullying situations, which may shape how they identify and interpret the causes of bullying. This finding is supported by Aihie and Okei (2022), who noted that teachers' perceptions of bullying may differ based on personal and professional factors, including their experiences and understanding of peer aggression. However, the finding differs from studies that suggest teachers generally share similar views about the common factors contributing to bullying, as bullying is often recognized as resulting from multiple social, family, and school-related influences (Aluede et al., 2018). The educational implication of

this finding is that teacher training programmes should provide a comprehensive and standardized understanding of bullying and its causes. While diversity in perspectives can enrich intervention efforts, significant differences in perception may lead to inconsistent identification of bullying risk factors. Therefore, schools should ensure that all teachers receive regular training on the multifaceted nature of bullying, enabling them to recognize its causes from social, family, psychological, and environmental perspectives. Such uniformity can improve the effectiveness and consistency of anti-bullying interventions across schools.

The finding of the study revealed that male and female teachers had similar perceptions regarding the management of bullying among primary school pupils in Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State. This means that both male and female teachers generally agree on the appropriate strategies required to control bullying, such as immediate intervention, supervision of pupils, enforcement of school rules, counselling, and collaboration with parents. The possible reason for this finding may be that teachers are exposed to similar professional training, school policies, and classroom experiences that shape their understanding of effective bullying management practices. This finding aligns with van Aalst et al (2024), who reported that teachers' approaches to identifying and reducing bullying are often influenced by professional responsibilities and school-based practices rather than personal characteristics alone. Similarly, Tran, Nguyen, and Bennett (2026) emphasized that teachers generally rely on common intervention approaches when responding to bullying situations, including prompt action, support for victims, and behaviour correction. The educational implication of this finding is particularly important because it suggests that schools already possess a relatively strong foundation for implementing collaborative anti-bullying initiatives. Since male and female teachers generally agree on management approaches, schools can focus on strengthening existing intervention strategies through coordinated programmes, staff workshops, and school-wide policies. The finding also implies that efforts aimed at improving bullying management are likely to receive broad support from teachers regardless of gender, thereby enhancing the likelihood of successful implementation and sustainability of anti-bullying programmes.

Conclusion

The study concluded that teachers perceive peer pressure and the desire to fit in as the major causes of bullying among primary school pupils, while immediate teacher intervention is regarded as the most effective strategy for managing bullying in schools. The study further concluded that although male and female teachers differ in their perceptions of the causes of bullying, they share similar views regarding appropriate bullying management strategies. These findings suggest that bullying among primary school pupils is strongly influenced by social interactions within peer groups and that teachers play a critical role in preventing and addressing such behaviours through timely intervention.

Beyond identifying the causes and management of bullying, the study highlights the importance of fostering safe, inclusive, and supportive school environments where positive peer relationships are encouraged and bullying behaviours are promptly addressed. The findings underscore the need for schools to strengthen anti-bullying policies, promote values such as empathy, respect, and cooperation among pupils, and provide continuous professional development opportunities that enhance teachers' capacity to recognize and respond effectively to bullying incidents. Furthermore, the study emphasizes that improving teachers' understanding of bullying and equipping them with appropriate intervention skills can contribute significantly to school safety, pupils' emotional well-being, positive learning experiences, and overall educational outcomes. Therefore, creating a bullying-free school environment requires collaborative efforts among teachers, school administrators, parents, and other stakeholders to ensure that all pupils learn in a secure and supportive atmosphere.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. Schools should organize programmes that discourage negative peer pressure and promote positive relationships among pupils to reduce bullying. Such programmes should emphasize teamwork, empathy, mutual respect, and healthy peer interactions to help pupils develop positive social behaviours and resist negative group influences.
2. Teachers should be encouraged to intervene immediately whenever bullying occurs through regular training and clear school procedures. School authorities should provide continuous professional development opportunities and establish well-defined intervention guidelines to enable teachers respond promptly and effectively to bullying incidents.
3. Regular awareness programmes should be organized for both male and female teachers to improve their understanding of the causes of bullying. These programmes should focus on increasing teachers' knowledge of the various factors associated with bullying, thereby promoting a more comprehensive and consistent understanding of the problem across schools.
4. Schools should implement a uniform anti-bullying policy that guides all teachers in managing bullying consistently. The policy should clearly define bullying behaviours, outline reporting and intervention procedures, and promote collaboration among teachers, school administrators, parents, and counsellors to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for all pupils.

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