

Curbing Students' Bullying Among Secondary School Learners: The Effectiveness of School Bullying Interventions

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of bullying interventions in addressing student bullying within secondary schools in Machakos County. Anchored on social learning theory, which elucidates the role of behavior in fostering bullying among learners, the research employed a descriptive survey research design to gather and analyze primary data. A sample of 333 respondents was drawn from a population of 116,053 individuals across 36 schools. Questionnaires and interview guides served as the primary research instruments. The analysis encompassed both qualitative and quantitative methods. Results revealed persistent student bullying despite intervention efforts, with disciplinary measures like suspensions and punishments predominantly employed. Conversely, restorative interventions, anti-bullying programs, and supportive measures were underutilized, demonstrating ineffectiveness in bullying eradication. The study underscores the prevalence of student bullying in secondary schools, attributing it to the inadequate implementation of interventions. Recommendations urge school principals and stakeholders to enhance the efficacy of bullying interventions in secondary education settings.

Keywords: Students' Bullying, School Bullying Interventions, Public Secondary Schools

A. INTRODUCTION

Bullying among students constitutes deliberate and repetitive acts of intimidation perpetrated by individuals or groups, often targeting those who are less able to defend themselves (Olweus, 2013). Olweus asserts that the primary aims of such bullying behavior are to inflict harm and distress upon the victim, exploiting their perceived inability to retaliate effectively. This dynamic is often characterized by a power differential between the aggressors and their targets, which may stem from factors such as physical prowess, social standing within the peer group, group size (e.g., a collective targeting an individual), and the victim's susceptibility based on familial background. The motivations behind bullying behavior are diverse, encompassing motives such as retaliation, peer influence, the prevailing culture within the school environment, and adverse familial circumstances (UNESCO, 2017).

To address bullying incidents within schools, the Ministry of Education implemented a policy mandating school management boards to address bullying through disciplinary measures against perpetrators. One proposed action included the suspension or expulsion of offenders. However, this policy lacked legal backing specifically targeting bullying, leaving disciplinary actions ambiguous. Without specific legislation against bullying, it becomes challenging to pursue disciplinary or legal action against bullies, except in cases of physical harm, which may be prosecuted under the Penal Code. Consequently, students face obstacles in seeking legal recourse, particularly when unable to meet the stringent evidentiary standards set by the Penal Code. Therefore, it is imperative to scrutinize the implementation and efficacy of such intervention measures in schools to mitigate bullying behavior.

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The prevalence of bullying incidents in Kenyan schools has been well-documented, with recent high-profile cases even occurring in national institutions. For instance, a reported incident at Nairobi School resulted in severe brain injuries to the victim (Njeru, 2019). Furthermore, a report by the World Health Organization (2017) highlighted Kenya's alarming rates of bullying among adolescents aged 13 to 17, ranking the country among those with the highest prevalence globally. Nationally, Kenya recorded a bullying prevalence of 57%, with students reportedly experiencing bullying incidents at least twice a month. Gender-specific data indicated a bullying rate of 66% among boys' schools and 57.4% among girls (Kigithi, 2017). Additionally, Gichuki (2022) noted that while the global average bullying prevalence stands at 15%, Kenya's public secondary schools report rates ranging from 50% to 63%. Notably, physical and verbal bullying constitute the most prevalent forms, accounting for 82% and 72%, respectively. In Machakos County, reports by Gumbihi (2021) underscored a significant prevalence of bullying in public secondary schools, corroborated by Nyaga (2019), who also highlighted elevated incidences of student bullying in the region.

(Mbah, 2020) posited that implementing disciplinary measures and fostering amicable conflict resolution among students effectively mitigated instances of bullying within secondary school environments. Meanwhile, an analysis of student bullying within Ugandan schools by (Naula et al., 2018) revealed that managerial interventions proved efficacious only when consistently enforced. This engendered a culture of discipline, thereby diminishing the occurrence and ramifications of bullying incidents. The authors advocated for supportive interventions as pivotal in combating bullying within educational settings. These interventions, comprising collaborative efforts from school administrators, educators, and parents, aim to ensure prompt action against bullies and provide requisite support to victims. The overarching goal of such support interventions is to facilitate behavioral reform among bullies and facilitate the recovery of victims, thereby enhancing their self-esteem, safety, and academic focus while fostering harmonious coexistence among all stakeholders.

A seminal study (Sekatawa, 2019) meticulously scrutinized the nexus between bullying and adolescent depression within Ugandan secondary school contexts, revealing the deleterious consequences of unchecked bullying on students' self-esteem and mental well-being. Meanwhile, (Kakuru, 2020) conducted a rigorous inquiry into the efficacy of corporal punishments and governmental interventions as pivotal strategies in mitigating bullying prevalence within Tanzanian secondary education. Remarkably, while punitive measures have traditionally dominated the discourse, emerging paradigms advocate for a holistic approach through restorative methodologies. This alternative framework, as elucidated by (Menngan, 2016), pivots on the principles of accountability and reconciliation, compelling perpetrators to acknowledge the repercussions of their actions and actively engage in redemptive processes, thereby fostering healing and restoring harmony within the school community.

In Kenya, a study by (Lugulu and Katwa, 2020) delved into the efficacy of administrative interventions in addressing school bullying within secondary schools in Uasin-Gishu County. Their findings illuminated the pivotal role of school management in adopting punitive measures to deter bullying behaviors. Additionally, they elucidated that bullying mitigation was achieved through equipping students with skills to address bullies, thus emphasizing the efficacy of restorative interventions in combating student bullying. Drawing from the insights of (Inamullah et al., 2016), the restorative approach to bullying intervention facilitates the recovery of bullying victims, thereby mitigating the likelihood of retaliatory actions and disrupting the cycle of bullying. Moreover, (Inamullah et al. 2016) posit that restorative interventions aim to mediate and foster improved relationships between bullies and victims, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and supportive school culture conducive to long-term bullying prevention. This study explores the restorative approach as a critical intervention strategy, focusing on guidance and counseling, assessments, and mediation to assess its effectiveness in mitigating bullying behaviors among secondary school students.

(Okwemba, 2018) advocates for the implementation of anti-bullying programs, which encompass structured initiatives and sessions aimed at guiding schools in adopting comprehensive frameworks to combat bullying. These programs can be tailored for individual institutions (intra-school) or implemented across multiple schools (extra-school programs). According to Okwemba, such programs play a pivotal role in fostering awareness among students about the detrimental effects of bullying while simultaneously fostering a unified cultural approach within educational institutions nationwide. Local research studies in Kenya, particularly at the secondary school level, have underscored the prevalence of bullying and emphasized the urgent necessity for proactive intervention measures to address the escalating incidences of bullying (Manyibe & Anyona, 2018; Itegi, 2017; Musa, 2016).

Problem Statements

Secondary education is pivotal in driving a nation's socio-economic and political advancement. Its efficacy profoundly influences societal progress by imparting learners with essential academic, social, and psychological competencies. However, the attainment of these objectives is impeded by various challenges, including the escalating prevalence of bullying among students. Thus, Public secondary schools must devise robust measures to combat the rising tide of bullying incidents. Machakos County, in particular, grapples with alarmingly high rates of student bullying within its secondary schools, surpassing neighboring counties. Such trends contravene the provisions of the Children Act of 2012, which mandates the protection of children from harm, including bullying. To address this pressing issue, the Ministry of Education, guided by the basic education guidelines of 2016, has enjoined school administrators to implement interventions to curb bullying and foster discipline among learners.

While punitive actions and zero-tolerance approaches have been touted as effective in curbing school bullying, according to some studies, others have yielded inconclusive results regarding the efficacy of such reactive measures. Literature suggests a shift towards psychosocial and interactive interventions to address school bullying more comprehensively. This underscores the necessity of assessing the implementation and effectiveness of proposed intervention measures within school settings, particularly concerning their impact on mitigating student bullying. Hence, the present study evaluates the effectiveness of school-based interventions in addressing student bullying among secondary school learners in Machakos County, Kenya.

This study sought to evaluate the efficacy of school interventions in mitigating student bullying among secondary school learners in Machakos County, Kenya. Specifically, it aimed to elucidate the role of bullying interventions in eradicating bullying within secondary school settings. By addressing this objective, the study aimed to fill existing research gaps concerning how bullying interventions contribute to reducing bullying incidents. Ultimately, the findings are anticipated to reduce bullying in public secondary schools, fostering a more conducive and harmonious learning environment.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura initially proposed the study in 1963, grounded in social learning theory, and further refined it to align with contemporary learning environments (McLeod, 2016). This theoretical framework illuminates the processes and determinants of learning, elucidating the intricate interplay between individual behaviors and environmental stimuli (Bandura, 2004; Bandura & Walters, 1977). Recent iterations of the theory, as articulated by (Bandura, 2004), underscore the role of observational learning in shaping positive and negative behaviors. Recent empirical investigations by (Ahn et al., 2020) suggest that social learning encompasses emulating negative behaviors and adopting restorative measures to cultivate positive behaviors. (Miller and Morris, 2016) contend that just as students may emulate negative behaviors like bullying, they can also be socialized to adopt prosocial behaviors such as cooperation and peer harmony. Social learning posits that individuals acquire complex behaviors through observation and subsequent imitation of modeled behaviors (Carel & Burkart, 2011). (Akers and Jensen, 2017) assert that through observational learning, students can transition from endorsing negative behaviors like bullying to embracing positive conduct, contingent upon the behaviors they observe and the contextual factors facilitating their learning.

While Bandura's original conceptualization did not explicitly address student bullying as a manifestation of modeling, it is posited that exposure to behaviors modeled in various contexts—such as school, media, family, and social groups—can influence the likelihood of engaging in bullying behaviors. This underscores the importance of proactive interventions and environmental supports to guide students toward socially desirable behaviors and mitigate the risk of bullying. This article examines the impact of social media and family dynamics on student bullying behaviors, particularly in adopting aggressive problem-solving approaches. The study highlights how such behaviors can significantly affect both the victim and the overall academic atmosphere when manifested within school settings. However, educators possess the capacity to mitigate and prevent bullying by employing modeling techniques, reinforcing positive conduct, providing incentives for desired behavior, and engaging in persuasive efforts to deter bullying tendencies. Drawing upon the insights of (Hurd et al., 2011), the article underscores the importance of observing and recognizing positive behavior's benefits before integrating it into their conduct.

Bullying Interventions

Disciplinary Intervention Approach and Student Bullying

Discipline encompasses cultivating desired behavioral patterns in individuals to rectify undesirable conduct or as a preemptive measure against deleterious behaviors (Cotton, 2016). Principals of secondary schools wield the ability to enforce disciplinary interventions by resorting to measures such as student suspension, the imposition of punitive measures upon perpetrators of bullying, and, in severe cases, expulsion from the educational institution (Gershoff et al., 2017). However, Gershoff and colleagues argue that a prolonged reliance on punitive measures may engender resistance and embitterment among learners, potentially exacerbating the incidence of bullying rather than mitigating it. They caution that such punitive actions can incite anger, aggression, fear, and bitterness within the affected students, warranting prudence in their application.

A recent study by (Mehmet and Siddika, 2021) aimed to elucidate school principals' perspectives regarding bullying within the context of middle (secondary) schools in Turkey. Their findings underscored the prevalent belief among principals in the efficacy of disciplinary interventions, including punitive measures and the adoption of a stance of deterrence against bullies, in combatting bullying within their institutions. Furthermore, the study revealed that disciplinary actions targeting bystanders and other accomplices in bullying contributed significantly to reducing such incidents. These results corroborate those of (Manna et al., 2019), who, in their investigation of bullying among students in Italian schools, advocated for creating a safe, educational environment achieved by removing bullies via punitive measures as a crucial aspect of anti-bullying endeavors. In a related inquiry, (Kang et al., 2021) explored parental attitudes toward the use of corporal punishment as a means to address bullying in schools. In some instances, their findings indicated a recognition of the necessity for corporal punishment in facilitating behavioral change among bullies. Such insights underscore the complexity inherent in addressing bullying behaviors and the varied approaches advocated by stakeholders in the educational community.

(Pouwels et al., 2016) conducted a comprehensive investigation into the role of participants in adolescent bullying, employing a descriptive research methodology to explore effective intervention strategies for reducing bullying within school environments. Their study illuminated the efficacy of punitive measures and the expulsion of perpetrators as exemplary actions that signal the school's unequivocal stance against bullying, consequently diminishing its prevalence. Pouwels and colleagues posit that implementing such disciplinary actions establishes clear boundaries regarding acceptable behavior, thereby fostering a safer school climate.

Furthermore, their findings suggest that the absence of punitive repercussions may inadvertently perpetuate bullying behaviors among school-going adolescents, as the lack of consequences may be interpreted as tacit approval. This assertion aligns with the observations made by (Regmi et al., 2019) in their examination of bullying dynamics among secondary school students. While acknowledging the multifaceted nature of bullying, including its psychological underpinnings, Regmi, and co-authors advocate for the maintenance of punitive measures as a short-term solution to address immediate instances of bullying, emphasizing the importance of delineating clear expectations and consequences for perpetrators.

Restorative Intervention Approach and Student Bullying

The restorative intervention approach is a proactive measure to prevent and resolve conflicts among students and between staff and students, thereby mitigating further harm inflicted upon victims. It provides a platform for bullies and their victims to engage in dialogue regarding the adverse effects of bullying, fostering accountability and promoting behavioral change among perpetrators. School administrators can facilitate the implementation of restorative intervention strategies through various means, including guidance, counseling, mediation, and expert assessments (Swank et al., 2019). Guidance and counseling play pivotal roles within the restorative intervention framework, with counselors assuming key responsibilities in aiding bullies and victims toward positive transformation. In addition to their supportive role, counselors can actively engage other stakeholders and utilize peer support and mentoring, as recommended by Lui et al. (2018), to reinforce the effectiveness of the intervention. Juan et al. (2018) underscore the significance of this approach in empowering students to actively participate in devising solutions to address the scourge of bullying, thus fostering a collaborative and sustainable approach to combating bullying within educational settings.

The intervention also encompasses an educational anti-bullying program implemented by educators and professionals to foster a school culture that prioritizes kindness and rejects unnecessary bullying. As delineated from the background, prevailing school interventions to combat bullying encompass a spectrum of approaches, including anti-bullying programs, supportive interventions targeting behavioral and attitudinal shifts in both victims and perpetrators, disciplinary measures such as punitive actions to reprimand bullies, and restorative

interventions like mediation aimed at fostering reconciliation and cohesion between bullies and victims. Mediation stands out as a critical restorative approach available to teachers and administrators in secondary schools to address student bullying. In this framework, both the aggressor and the victim collaborate to resolve their grievances under the guidance of a neutral facilitator (Cowie & Smith, 2010). However, mediation's efficacy hinges significantly on both parties' genuine willingness to engage in the process, a factor that may be lacking, particularly among aggressors. Additionally, mediators may encounter challenges in maintaining neutrality, particularly when they perceive the bullying incident as unjustified (Hu et al., 2019).

(Gutierrez et al., 2018) conducted a study examining school interventions aimed at eradicating bullying in German schools, revealing two primary strategies with promising outcomes in reducing bullying: raising student awareness regarding the detrimental effects of bullying and fostering a culture of reporting bullying incidents. These findings echo those of (Sarzoza and Urzúa, 2015), who advocate for a restorative approach centered on student engagement and victim support as the most effective long-term solution for addressing bullying within educational contexts.

Anti-Bullying Programmes and Student Bullying

Implementing anti-bullying policies represents a crucial avenue for addressing issues related to bullying within educational settings. Various forms of anti-bullying programs, including extra-school initiatives, intra-school initiatives, and classroom-based interventions, can effectively target student bullying. Extra-school and intra-school programs are mainly instrumental in mitigating bullying behaviors within the school environment. (Garandeanu et al., 2014) underscore the significance of anti-bullying programs designed to foster unity among students and raise awareness about the detrimental effects of bullying, positing them as vital proactive measures for eradicating bullying in schools.

(Cho and Chun, 2018) suggest that anti-bullying programs contribute significantly to the reduction of bullying incidents in secondary schools, reflecting a widespread assumption within the academic discourse. Moreover, (Kakuru, 2020) highlights that an increased emphasis on anti-bullying programs fosters the dissemination of positive behaviors counteracting bullying among students, promoting harmonious coexistence and fostering a more inclusive school community. These insights align with the findings of (Burger and Bachmann, 2021), who assert that the integration of anti-bullying programs enables schools to foster stronger interpersonal connections among students and cultivate a culture that vehemently opposes bullying, ultimately leading to the successful mitigation of this pervasive issue.

(Gabrielli et al., 2021) conducted a comprehensive examination of school interventions to prevent bullying among students within Italian educational institutions, focusing on cyberbullying. Their study scrutinized the efficacy of proactive and reactive strategies in mitigating student bullying behaviors. The findings underscored the pervasive impact of cyberbullying on students and emphasized the imperative of school-based programs, supported by educational stakeholders, in effectively addressing this phenomenon. Gabrielli and colleagues elucidated the concept of "upright intervention," which involves equipping students with coping mechanisms and fostering resilience to withstand the adverse effects of bullying.

In a related study, (Muli et al., 2019) investigated the prevalence of bullying and its repercussions on students' academic performance within public secondary schools in Kitui County. The research explored the identification of students exhibiting bullying behaviors and examined the measures implemented by teachers to combat bullying and its detrimental effects on academic achievement. The findings underscored the significant negative impact of bullying behaviors on students' academic performance. Through proactive measures such as identifying students engaged in bullying and implementing interventions including classroom strategies, fostering open communication, and engaging parents, teachers played a pivotal role in curbing bullying behaviors and mitigating their adverse consequences on students' academic success.

Supportive Intervention Approach and Student Bullying

Supportive interventions, which entail establishing a support system for students, particularly for the victim and the bully, wherein their interactions are monitored, and their conflicts are resolved amicably, hold significant potential in combating bullying. (Kakuru, 2020) underscores the efficacy of supportive interventions, emphasizing their capacity to engender greater involvement from various stakeholders, including parents, thus facilitating the development of enduring solutions to the bullying problem. In a study conducted by (Eriksen et al., 2014) focusing on bullying within elementary schools in Chicago, intervention strategies were found to hinge upon addressing the root causes underlying bullying behaviors and the commitment of schools to integrate input

from external parties through supportive approaches. The researchers elucidated the importance of implementing collective interventions targeting the broader school community and individualized responses tailored to specific cases to mitigate school bullying effectively.

(Mavisi et al., 2019) conducted a study examining teachers' perceptions regarding using bibliotherapeutic interventions to address student bullying within public secondary schools in Kenya. Employing a cross-sectional research design, the study surveyed 44 participants and revealed that most teachers viewed bibliotherapeutic interventions as crucial in combating student bullying. Bibliotherapeutic intervention entails using literary materials, such as novels, by teachers to counsel students on bullying-related issues. According to (Mavisi et al., 2019), this approach is an effective intervention method, as it aids students in altering their perceptions of bullying and empowers them to advocate against bullying behavior.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive research aims to systematically depict a phenomenon or subject matter by facilitating the collection and analysis of data that addresses fundamental questions such as what, when, where, and how. This approach enables researchers to gather and analyze data pertinent to the effectiveness of interventions and their potential for further enhancement in eradicating bullying within secondary schools. The target population for this study comprised 351 public secondary schools in Machakos County. A total population of 116,053 individuals was identified, including 351 principals, 351 deputy principals, 351 teachers responsible for guidance and counseling, and 115,000 students. Employing a 10% threshold, 36 schools were selected for inclusion in the study. Stratified random sampling was utilized to select these 36 schools, while principals, deputy principals, and teachers responsible for guidance and counseling were purposively sampled from these schools. Additionally, a sampling formula outlined by (Nassiuma, 2000) was applied to randomly select 225 students from each of the 36 schools, resulting in a total sample size of 333 respondents for the study.

The study used a questionnaire and an interview guide to gather primary data. Structured questionnaires were administered to deputy principals, teachers, and students, while data from school principals were collected through interviews. Approval for the research was obtained from Kenyatta University Graduate School, and acquiring a research permit from NACOSTI. These documents and an introduction letter from the university were appended to the questionnaire, facilitating permission-seeking from the management of selected schools for data collection from teachers and students. Prearrangements were made with school principals to ensure their interview availability, accommodating their busy schedules. The collected data underwent analysis employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Qualitative data, derived from open-ended questions and interview schedules, was initially organized, cleaned, and coded. Microsoft Excel was utilized for coding qualitative data, while quantitative data, garnered from closed-ended questions and other quantifiable sources, was coded using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Subsequently, thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data, aligning with the study's key themes or objectives utilizing content analysis techniques. Quantitative data, on the other hand, underwent analysis utilizing descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, percentages, and frequencies.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

The study involved a sample comprising 36 teachers, 36 principals, 36 deputy principals, and 225 students. Questionnaires were administered to teachers, deputy principals, and students, while principals were interviewed using an interview guide. Table 1 presents the response rates obtained. The results indicate an overall response rate of 78.1%. Specifically, 61.1% of school principals, 69.4% of deputy principals, 86.1% of teachers, and 80.9% of students participated in the study. As noted by (Saunders and Bezzina, 2015), a response rate of at least 60% is considered adequate for research purposes.

Table 1: Response Rate

Target Respondents	Sample Size	Response	Return Rate	Non-response Rate
Principals	36	22	61.1%	38.9%
Deputy Principals	36	25	69.4%	30.6%
Teachers	36	31	86.1%	13.9%
Students	225	182	80.9%	19.1%

Target Respondents	Sample Size	Response	Return Rate	Non-response Rate
Overall	333	260	78.1%	21.9%

Source: research data, 2024

The Status of Students' Bullying among Secondary Schools in Machakos County

Participants were tasked with providing insights into the prevalence of student bullying within secondary schools in Machakos County. The objective was to assess the extent of bullying within the surveyed schools. Teachers and deputy principals were asked to assess the frequency of bullying incidents occurring in their respective schools, while students were queried about their personal experiences with bullying or involvement in bullying activities. Responses from teachers and deputy principals were elicited using a 4-point Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements regarding bullying issues at their schools. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Level of Agreement with Statements on Students' Bullying

Statements	SD	D	A	SA	Mean
	%	%	%	%	
There have been fewer cases of students bullying their peers in the school for the past two years	68.0%	20.2%	5.1%	6.7%	2.56
The school has been recording fewer cases of bullied students over the recent past	23.0%	38.8%	10.7%	27.5%	2.81
The students have been more actively reporting any cases of bullying than it was before	47.8%	36.5%	5.1%	10.6%	2.15
The academic performance of bullying victims has increased in the recent past	21.8%	36.0%	25.2%	17.0%	2.34
There have been cases of students dropping out of the school after being bullied	30.4%	14.6%	26.4%	28.6%	3.05

Source: research data, 2024

As illustrated in Table 2, a majority of deputy principals and teachers (88.2%) disagreed that there had been a decline in incidents of student-to-student bullying within their respective schools over the past two years (Mean = 2.56). Similarly, a significant portion of teachers and deputy principals (61.8%) disagreed with the assertion that their school had witnessed a reduction in the number of students being bullied in recent times. These findings align with those of (Kesho, 2018), who observed that instances of bullying remained pervasive in many secondary schools across Kenya.

Furthermore, a substantial majority (84.3%) of teachers and deputy principals disagreed with the suggestion that students in their schools were now more proactive in reporting instances of bullying compared to the past. Conversely, 57.8% of teachers and deputy principals disagreed with the idea that academic performance among bullying victims had shown improvement recently. Additionally, 54.0% of teachers and deputy principals acknowledged the occurrence of student dropout following instances of bullying. These findings resonate with those of (Steyn and Singh, 2018), underscoring the ongoing prevalence of bullying within secondary school settings.

Effectiveness of Bullying Interventions in Curbing Students' Bullying among Secondary Schools in Machakos County

The study sought to assess the efficacy of various interventions in mitigating student bullying within secondary schools in Machakos County. Critical interventions included disciplinary measures, restorative approaches, anti-bullying programs, and supportive interventions. These were evaluated through a regression model, with the results presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Regression Coefficients on the Effectiveness of Interventions on Curbing Students' Bullying

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	β	Std. Error	β		
1 (Constant)	.206	.262		.787	.432
Disciplinary Interventions	1.038	.121	.542	8.561	.000
Restorative Interventions	.358	.056	.434	6.385	.000
Anti-Bullying Programmes	.674	.082	.524	8.168	.000

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	β	Std. Error	β		
Supportive Interventions	.581	.092	.429	6.307	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Curbing Bullying in Secondary Schools

Source: research data, 2024

The results indicate a statistically significant positive correlation ($\beta = 1.038$; $P < 0.05$) between disciplinary interventions and reducing student bullying in public secondary schools within Machakos County. These findings corroborate the assertions of principals, who emphasized the importance of disciplinary measures in schools' efforts to address bullying incidents effectively. Furthermore, the study unveiled a significant relationship between restorative interventions and mitigating student bullying in secondary schools across Machakos County ($\beta = 0.358$; $P = 0.000 < 0.05$). The regression coefficient (β) of 0.358 suggests that restorative interventions contribute to a 35.8% reduction in bullying within these schools. The obtained P-value of 0.000, below the standard threshold of 0.05, underscores the substantive impact of restorative interventions in combating bullying. However, the findings also indicate that adopting restorative measures has not been fully optimized within these schools, as bullying remains prevalent.

Similarly, the study revealed a significant association between anti-bullying programs and the reduction of student bullying in Machakos County secondary schools. The regression coefficient (β) for anti-bullying programs is 0.674, with a corresponding P-value of $0.000 < 0.05$. This indicates that anti-bullying programs account for a 67.4% reduction in bullying incidents. The findings underscore the efficacy of anti-bullying initiatives in fostering a culture of intolerance towards bullying behaviors within school environments. These results resonate with the findings of Burger and Bachmann (2021), who emphasized the pivotal role of anti-bullying programs in fostering a supportive and inclusive school climate conducive to curbing bullying.

As highlighted by (Inamullah et al., 2016), anti-bullying programs cultivate positive behavior among students, equipping them with coping mechanisms within the school environment and fostering healthier interpersonal relationships. These programs may adopt a school-wide approach involving multiple schools or be implemented at the class level, targeting specific groups, particularly those with a high incidence of bullying.

The findings regarding the effectiveness of restorative interventions in mitigating student bullying reveal a regression coefficient (β) of 0.581 for supportive interventions, with a corresponding P-value of $0.000 < 0.05$. This coefficient suggests that supportive interventions contribute to a reduction in student bullying by up to 0.581 units. The obtained P-value below the standard threshold signifies the significant impact of supportive interventions in addressing student bullying within secondary schools in Machakos County. These results imply that the increased prevalence of bullying observed in secondary schools in Machakos County may be attributed to the inadequate implementation of supportive interventions aimed at curbing this issue. In line with this perspective, (Ahn et al., 2020) assert that without offering support to bullies and victims, schools fail to foster a culture that opposes bullying, consequently perpetuating its occurrence. Furthermore, Kakuru (2020) underscores the effectiveness of supportive interventions in eradicating bullying, emphasizing their capacity to engage various stakeholders, including parents, in finding sustainable solutions to this issue.

D. CONCLUSION

The study's findings underscored the continued prevalence of bullying within the majority of secondary schools in Machakos County, exposing learners to adverse psychological and physical effects that impede their academic performance. Confirmations from learners, teachers, deputy principals, and principals alike reiterated the persistence of bullying incidents throughout the county's secondary school system. Moreover, the study concluded that while disciplinary interventions played a significant role in addressing student bullying in Machakos County secondary schools, their efficacy was limited by their short-term nature. It was observed that disciplinary measures often focused on enforcing compliance rather than proactively addressing underlying behavioral issues, thus rendering their impact fleeting. On the other hand, the study highlighted the crucial role of restorative interventions in combating student bullying within Machakos County secondary schools. By offering guidance and counseling to both perpetrators and victims and facilitating mediation between conflicting parties, restorative measures were found to mitigate bullying effectively. Despite being underutilized in many schools,

restorative interventions were deemed more sustainable in eradicating bullying due to their holistic approach to addressing underlying issues.

The study further determined that the adoption of anti-bullying programs by schools significantly reduces bullying among secondary school students in Machakos County. By incorporating a range of interventions from extracurricular programs to intra-school and classroom-based initiatives, students became increasingly aware of the harmful consequences and detrimental effects of bullying, thereby refraining from such behaviors. Additionally, the study concluded that supportive interventions were crucial in effectively addressing student bullying within secondary schools in Machakos County. It was revealed that by engaging parents and establishing a collective support system involving both perpetrators and victims, more sustainable outcomes were achieved in the eradication of bullying.

Recommendations

The study proposes several recommendations to address the issue of bullying in secondary schools effectively. Firstly, it suggests that the Ministry of Education undertake a thorough review of its existing frameworks and policies concerning bullying in secondary schools. This review should aim to develop more robust and enduring solutions to combat the menace of bullying. Secondly, the government is urged to update its policies to incorporate broader interventions to address bullying in schools. By doing so, policy guidelines can be made more apparent and more reflective of the evolving dynamics in today's world. Thirdly, school principals are encouraged to take proactive measures in fostering discipline among students. They should implement key disciplinary measures to shape student behavior, effectively controlling bullying and discouraging such behavior among learners.

Moreover, schools should adopt a more innovative approach in implementing restorative measures in collaboration with principals and teachers. This involves placing greater emphasis on guidance and counseling, facilitating arbitration between students, and engaging experts to assess and address bullying behavior among learners. Furthermore, in partnership with schools, the government should design comprehensive programs to raise awareness of bullying and deterrence among students. These programs should encompass various settings, including extracurricular, intraschool, and classroom-based initiatives, to address bullying comprehensively across all facets of society. Lastly, school principals need to involve parents to combat bullying. They should establish parent-based support mechanisms, engaging parents to identify potential underlying issues leading to bullying behavior among their children. Additionally, schools should provide support to bullied students to help them regain their confidence and break the cycle of retaliation stemming from unresolved conflicts between bullies and victims.

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