UNIJERPS
Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies VOL.18 (3);
July-December, 2024 https://unijerps.org
2023 Impact Factor: **6.834;** 2022 ***Impact Factor***: 5.156; ***2021 Impact Factor: 5.641;***
2020 Impact Factor: 5.355. *Indexing and Impact Factor URL: http://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=21363*

EFFECT OF SYMBOLIC MODELLING TECHNIQUE ON BULLYING TENDENCY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ADO EKITI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EKITI STATE

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ABSTRACT

Bullying in secondary schools poses a critical issue, significantly impacting victims and perpetrators alike and undermining the safety and well-being of people within educational environments. The need for effective interventions to reduce bullying tendencies is very important to fostering a safe and conducive learning environment because prevention is better than cure. The study examined the effect of symbolic modelling technique in reducing bullying tendencies among secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The study employed a quasi-experimental research design. The population consisted of 923 junior secondary (JSS II) and senior secondary (SSS II) students with high tendency to bullying in public secondary schools in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area, Ekiti State. Purposive sampling method was used to select a sample of 96 students, consisting of 54 JSS II and 42 SSS II students. The treatments given to the groups lasted for six weeks only. Both pretest and posttest scores were collected using adopted Bullying tendency inventory with an internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.97. Data were analysed using mean scores and Analysis of Covariance which were used to and the research questions and test the null hypotheses respectively. The findings of this study indicate that symbolic modelling technique (SMT) was significantly effective in reducing bullying tendency among secondary school students irrespective of their gender and class level. In conclusion, symbolic modelling technique (SMT) was significantly effective in reducing bullying among secondary school students in Ado Ekiti local government area of Ekiti State. It was recommended among others that schools guidance counsellors and other therapists should start making use of symbolic modelling technique to assist the students early enough.

Keywords*:* Symbolic Modelling Technique, Bullying Tendency, Secondary School Students.

Introduction

Bullying among students in secondary schools significantly undermine educational achievements in Nigeria and globally. Both perpetrators and victims of bullying often become maladjusted adults, contributing to societal issues such as increased disorderliness, armed robbery, kidnapping and property destruction. Despite the severity of this issue, effective corrective responses are frequently lacking among parents, students, teachers and school administrators. The inability of parents or caregivers to comprehend and engage with the adolescent world reduces their capacity to foster positive behavioural changes. Consequently, teachers are compelled to spend a

considerable portion of their instructional time addressing bullying-related issues rather than focusing on educational content. This diversion of attention and resources from academic instruction to managing bullying incidents disrupts the educational process, impeding students' academic progress and overall school experience. In the light of these challenges, it is imperative to develop and implement comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of bullying and promote a safer, more supportive educational environment.

Bullying is a pervasive social problem, with one in three individuals experiencing physical, verbal, or social bullying (McMahon and Craig, 2017). This behaviour affects both the victim and the perpetrator, leading to immediate and long-term consequences (Aleem, 2016). The direct and indirect impacts of bullying and peer victimization often result in poor academic performance (Holt, Finkelhor and Kantor 2007). According to Nishina, Juvonen and Witkow (2005), school harassment and peer victimization contribute to a decline in classroom activities and school engagement, negatively impacting academic performance and achievement. Schools are critical environments where students spend much of their time growing and developing. When students perceive support from their teachers, it has a profound impact on their emotional, social and academic well-being. Feeling supported creates a sense of belonging within the classroom, which is critical for fostering an environment where students feel safe, respected and valued. This sense of belonging encourages students to engage more actively in classroom activities, as they are more motivated to participate and contribute positively in an environment where they feel they matter. Increased engagement not only enhances students' learning experiences but also contributes to a positive learning atmosphere where curiosity and interaction thrive.

School bullying can interfere with students' concentration in their studies which can lead to failure and eventual drop out. The problem of bullying is not new but seems to be an age long phenomenon in Nigeria as discussions with parents and other adults reveal personal experiences of bullying during the school days of the adults. The problem has probably been ignored or regarded as a normal rite of passage for children. Bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour manifested by use of force or coercion to affect others particularly when the behaviour is habitual and involves imbalance of power.

Matsani (2022) defined bullying as the intentional, systematic and unjustified aggressive behaviour that is exercised by a student or a group of students more powerful, physically or psychologically towards another student or group of students less powerful. Aluede (2015) in the same way described bullying as a form of aggression, a particular kind of violence exhibited in the course of social interaction by a more dominant individual (the bully) to a less dominant individual (the victim) with the intention to cause distress to the victim. Bullying may include name calling, verbal or written abuse, exclusion from activities and social situations, physical abuse or coercion (Ehindero 2015, Zynch and Farmington, 2019).

Bullying ranges from simple one-on-one bullying to more complex bullying in

which the bully may have one or more "lieutenants" who may seem to be willing to assist the primary bully in his/her bullying activities. Bullying can occur in any context in which human beings interact with each other, this includes school, church family, the work-place, home and neighbourhoods. In addition to Research consistently indicates that males are more likely to exhibit intimidating behaviours than females (Arıman, 2007; Bayraktar, 2006; Duy and Yıldız, 2014; Şmith, 2015). This gender disparity in bullying can be attributed to social and psychological factors, such as the socialization of males to be more aggressive and dominant.

Additionally, societal norms often encourage boys to demonstrate toughness and assertiveness, which can sometimes manifest as bullying. Recognizing these gender-specific factors is essential for crafting intervention strategies that address the unique needs and behavioural patterns of both male and female students in secondary schools.

Gender differences in bullying go beyond the prevalence of incidents and extend to the forms it takes. Research shows that boys tend to engage in more direct, physical forms of bullying, such as hitting or threatening, while girls are more likely to resort to relational or indirect tactics, such as social exclusion or rumor-spreading (Espelage et al., 2013). These behaviours align with broader societal expectations regarding male and female conduct. Moreover, bullying has serious mental health repercussions, contributing to issues like anxiety, depression and low self-esteem in both victims and perpetrators (Koç, 2006; Smith and Sharp, 2003). In Nigeria, studies by Asamu (2006) and Omoteso (2010) revealed that 21% of male students and 48.8% of female students reported involvement in bullying. These gender-specific patterns reflect underlying societal norms and expectations, emphasizing the necessity for tailored interventions that address the distinct forms of bullying prevalent among boys and girls. Understanding these gender dynamics is essential for developing targeted strategies that promote a safer and more equitable school environment, ultimately enhancing students' educational experiences and mental health outcomes. Boys are more likely to be involved in bullying and physical violence because of their physical strength, stature, physique and masculinity (domineering spirit as boys) while girls are likely to be involved in verbal means of bullying and social isolation of the target because of their own nature of talkativeness.

School bullying can occur in nearly any part in or around the school building, though it may occur more frequently in physical education classes and activities, recess, hallways, bathrooms, in school buses and while waiting for buses and in classes that require group work and/or after school activities. This is because the students may not be under adult supervision at such places (Asamu, 2006). Bullying in school sometimes takes the form of a group of students taking advantage of or isolating one student in particular and gaining the loyalty of bystanders who want to avoid becoming the next victim. These bullies may taunt and tease their target before physically bullying the target. Bullying as a sub-set of school violence among school age children occurs in many schools across the globe (Mc Eacherin, Kenny, Blake and Aluede, 2005). Asamu (2006) found that 21% of

the students studied in Ibadan who had bullied other students were male. Omoteso (2010) discovered that 48.8% male and 51.2% female were involved in bullying, Finch, Richard and Wilson (2017) discovered that boys appeared to be more involved in bullying than girls across all bully status groups.

Research highlights that bullying behaviours can vary across different grade levels due to developmental and social factors. Lower secondary students, such as those in JSS1 and JSS2, may encounter more overt forms of bullying, including physical aggression and verbal abuse, as they navigate the transition from primary to secondary school (Wong and Kwan, 2017). This period often involves a shift in peer relationships and increased competition, which can make younger students particularly vulnerable to bullying. They might experience challenges related to adapting to new academic demands and social dynamics, which can exacerbate bullying behaviours.

In contrast, students in higher grades, such as those in SSS1 and SSS3, may experience bullying that is more sophisticated and covert, including psychological manipulation and social exclusion (Akinyemi, 2014). As students mature, they become more involved in complex social networks, where relational aggression and cyberbullying can become prevalent. This transition is marked by increased awareness of social hierarchies and peer pressure, which can drive more subtle forms of bullying, such as gossiping and social shunning (Ekpe, 2016). Addressing bullying effectively requires understanding these developmental differences and tailoring interventions to the specific needs of students at various class levels. The following statistics illustrate the severity of bullying within classroom (School Bullying, 2012) - 20 – 40% of bullying victims actually reported being bullied. - 70% of middle school and high school students experience bullying in school. - 7 – 12% of bullies is habitual and poses a serious threat. - 23% of 9th graders have carried a weapon to school recently. - 5 – 15% of students is constantly bullied. - 27% of students is bullied because of their refusal to engage in common sexual practices. - 25% of students encourage bullying if not given proper education and support in anti-bullying techniques. Researches have revealed that 10% to 11% of adolescents sampled in Canada were victimized by peers and 8% to 11% were bullies (Hymel, Rocke-Henderson and Bananno, 2015). American schools harbour approximately 2.1 million bullies and 2.7 million are their victims (Aluede, 2015).

In Nigeria, specific studies have provided some insight. Egbochukwu (2017) reported that in Benin City, nearly four out of every five participants disclosed experiencing bullying and 85% admitted to bullying others at least once. Another study by Omoteso (2010) found that 88.1% of participants had been bullied, 33.1% identified as bullies and 64.7% were involved in relational bullying. Additionally, 51.2% of respondents engaged in bullying as retaliation for past victimization. These statistics highlight the widespread nature of bullying behaviours among Nigerian students. Further research by Owoaje and Ndubusi (2009) focused on the 2007/2008 session students admitted to six public secondary schools in Odo Ota Local Government Area, Ogun State. Their findings revealed varying frequencies of bullying: 29.5% of students

experienced bullying 1-2 days per month, 9.1% faced it 3-5 days per month, 5% were bullied 6-9 days per month and 4.3% endured bullying 10-30 days per month. These studies collectively indicate a significant presence of bullying within Nigerian schools, underscoring the need for comprehensive anti-bullying strategies and interventions to address and mitigate these behaviours effectively.

In a nationwide survey of school violence in Nigeria conducted by the Federal Ministry of Education (2007), it was revealed that physical violence and psychological violence accounted for 85% and 50% respectively of the bulk of violence against children in schools. Across school location, physical violence was more prevalent in the rural area (90%) than in the urban area (80%). Across region, physical violence in schools was higher in the southern region (90%) than in the northern region (70%). So was the case of psychological violence, which was 61% in southern Nigeria and only 38.7% in northern Nigeria.

Bullying in schools involves repeated aggressive actions intended to harm or distress students. Understanding the link between bullying behaviour and tendency is crucial for effective intervention. Bullying tendency refers to underlying predisposition making individuals more likely to engage in bullying. The tendency stem from factors such as personality traits, environmental influences and social dynamics. Additionally, peer dynamics, such as the desire to fit in or gain approval, can drive students with latent tendency to bully. By identifying the tendency early, educators and administrators can better understand the motivations behind bullying behaviours and develop more targeted and effective intervention strategies (Bryan, 2019).

Identifying bullying tendency early allows educators and administrators to implement targeted interventions. Programmes promoting empathy, conflict resolution and positive peer interactions can address the root causes of bullying tendency. For instance, empathy training helps students understand others' feelings, reducing aggression. Conflict resolution programmes teach constructive ways to handle disagreements, preventing escalation into bullying. Positive peer interaction initiatives encourage inclusivity, fostering supportive relationships. Establishing a school environment that discourages aggressive behaviour and promotes inclusiveness can further reduce bullying.

Addressing bullying tendency comprehensively requires a multi-layered approach involving collaboration among schools, families and communities. This approach encompasses establishing clear anti-bullying policies, fostering positive school climates, building empathy and social-emotional skills and offering support services for all those affected. For instance, schools can organize workshops for parents to help them recognize signs of bullying and provide them with strategies to support their children. Community programmes can also play a vital role by offering resources and counselling for both victims and perpetrators, addressing the root causes that may contribute to bullying behaviour. Recognizing and actively addressing the tendency enables schools to create a safer, more supportive learning environment. Proactive steps can significantly decrease bullying prevalence, fostering a healthier, more positive

atmosphere conducive to learning and personal growth. Since all the efforts made by the school management to reduce bullying in secondary schools in Ekiti State have failed, it important that a psychological therapeutic approach be employed to know if it could reduce the bullying tendency among students.

The therapeutic treatment in this study is symbolic modelling technique. This choice is informed by preliminary evidence in literature, which suggests that it has the potential to assist students in modelling positive behaviour. Symbolic modelling, a revolutionary approach in behavioural psychology, has captured the attention of researchers and practitioners alike. Developed by psychotherapists James Lawley and Penny Tompkins (1997), in collaboration with Clean Language creator and psychotherapist David Grove, symbolic modelling has its roots in Neuro-Linguistic Programmeming (NLP). Lawley and Tompkins, both interested in NLP, met in 2000 during their first level of NLP training. NLP brought the two together and significantly influenced their thinking, leading to the development of SyM.

Also, this therapeutic method has since become a cornerstone in promoting positive behavioural changes among individuals, which is also known as social learning theory, which was pioneered by Albert Bandura, a prominent psychologist renowned for his ground-breaking work in cognitive and social psychology. Furthermore, this research has significant implications for schools, suggesting that bullying behaviour can be effectively reduced through the use of symbolic modelling techniques. This approach implies that students' behaviours can be positively influenced by observing constructive behaviours, which they can then adopt and practice in their everyday interactions. This aligns with Bandura's perspective (Abimanyu and Manrihu, 2019), which highlights that symbolic modelling involves multiple aspects, including positive observational processes. In symbolic modelling, students do not simply mimic observed behaviours but rather adapt them thoughtfully, as they internalize and symbolically represent the observed actions, storing this information for future application. Through such processes, students develop a repertoire of positive behaviours that contribute to a healthier and more respectful school climate.

In everyday life, much behaviours are shaped through imitation of observed models. Symbolic modelling specifically uses both fictional and nonfictional characters portrayed in media such as videos, films, storytelling and online platforms to demonstrate desirable behaviours. As Bandura in Saldiraner and gozer, (2021), reveals symbolic modelling has been successfully applied in a variety of contexts. By employing symbolic modelling techniques through video presentations, students are exposed to scenarios that serve as cognitive stimuli, providing fresh learning experiences. These videos can help students reframe previously held misconceptions or behaviours by presenting alternative perspectives and actions to emulate. This process encourages students to internalize positive behaviours and re-evaluate past learning, promoting constructive behaviour changes.

The symbolic modelling technique is a valuable tool for guidance counsellors in

supporting students' development and addressing potential issues before they emerge. Beyond individual counselling, symbolic modelling can be applied within group guidance services, as highlighted by Sanetti and Kratochwill, (2019), who suggested that it as an effective strategy alongside role-playing. This technique has proven especially useful in enhancing students' interpersonal communication skills and encouraging positive behaviour, as students find it engaging and relevant. Symbolic modelling provides students with an opportunity to learn and internalize behaviours by observing and interpreting model scenarios, allowing them to generate and refine their own responses.

In particular, Myers (2019) found that implementing symbolic modelling with role-playing in group settings improves interpersonal skills, as students actively interpret and apply modeled behaviours to their interactions. Further support comes from Dodge et al, (2017) and Muslikah (2015), who noted the technique's effectiveness in fostering social cognitive skills. Muslikah's research showed that after receiving guidance services using symbolic modelling, students transitioned from a lack of clear goals to displaying a focused orientation and a desire to emulate positive models, demonstrating the technique's capacity to shift students' behaviour toward constructive personal and social goals.

Bullying in Nigerian secondary schools has emerged as a critical issue, with far-reaching implications for students' educational experiences and overall well-being. The pervasive nature of bullying disrupts the learning environment, compelling teachers to divert their attention from instruction to manage bullying incidents. This not only hampers the educational process but also adversely impacts students' academic performance and overall school experience, underscoring the urgent need for effective anti-bullying interventions. This study aimed to fill a research gap by determining the effect of symbolic modelling technique in reducing the tendency among students among secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of symbolic modelling technique on bullying behaviour among secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Determine the effect of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency when compared with conventional counselling using the pretest and posttest mean scores of the students.

2. Evaluate the effectiveness of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency of male and female secondary school students by comparing their pretest and posttest mean scores.

3. Examine the effectiveness of symbolic modelling therapy on bullying technique among junior and senior secondary school students, utilizing pretest and posttest mean scores.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency among secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State

when compared to those who received conventional counselling using their pretest and posttest mean scores?

2. What is the effectiveness of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency of male and female secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State when compared using their pretest and posttest mean scores?
3. What is the effectiveness of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency of junior and senior secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State when compared using their pretest and posttest mean scores?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. The effect of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency among secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area is not significant when compared to those who received conventional counselling using their posttest scores.

2. The effects of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency of male and female secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area do not differ significantly when compared using their posttest scores

3. The effectiveness of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency of junior and senior secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area will not differ significantly when compared using their posttest scores.

Research Method

Research Design

The design of the study was quasi-experimental design, specifically pre-test, posttest non-randomized control group design. Gravetter and Forzano (2018) described quasi-experimental study as a type of experimental study that determines the effect of a treatment paradigm on a non-randomized sample. Donald, Lucy and Christine (2020) explained that a quasi-experimental research design could be used in a school setting where it was not always feasible to use a pure experimental design, which they considered disruptive to school activities. Although many quasi-experimental methods were available, the non-randomized pre-test-posttest group design was employed in this study. In this study, two groups of students were involved: the symbolic modelling group, and a control group.

Population of the Study

The population for this study comprised 923 junior and senior secondary school students in the Ado Ekiti Local Government Area who demonstrated higher-than-average scores on the bullying tendency scale. This group was identified following a comprehensive preliminary assessment involving all Senior Secondary II (SS II) and Junior Secondary School II (JSS II) students in the area. The selection process began with the administration of a standardized bullying tendency scale to students across various secondary schools within the local government area. Only those scoring above the normative threshold for bullying behaviours were included in the study population.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study involved a sample of 96 junior and senior secondary school students,

selected from two schools with the highest numbers of students with bullying tendency. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select these schools based on the highest number of students who had scored 40 or higher on the Bullying Attitude Scale (BAS). The schools were assigned groups: Experimental Group I (SMT) consisted of 51 students, with 26 from JSS II and 25 from SSS II and Group II (control) comprised 45 students, with 22 from JSS II and 23 from SSS II.

Instruments for Data Collection

The researchers adopted a standardized instrument: Bully Attitude Scale (BAS) developed by Reynolds and Craven, (2012).

Section A: Bio-data Information of the Participants

This section contained the demographic information of the students, including gender and class.

Section B: Bully Attitude Scale (BAS)

The Bully Attitude Scale, developed by Reynolds and Craven (2012), was a psychometric tool designed to assess middle school students' attitudes toward bullying. This scale comprised 20 items and utilized a Likert scale, where responses ranged from "I agree a lot" (4) to "I disagree a lot" (1). The total score represented the students' attitudes, with higher scores indicating more favourable dispositions toward bullying behaviour. The scale was distinguished by its strong psychometric properties, particularly its high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.97. This high alpha indicated that the items were highly correlated, offering a reliable and unified measure of students' attitudes toward bullying. However, the psychometric evaluation of the scale relied heavily on this reported Cronbach's alpha.

Control of Extraneous Variables

The researchers were highly aware of the potential effects of extraneous variables such as gender, participant mood, location, discrimination, method and time of day, which, if not well controlled, could contaminate the study and potentially distorted the findings. Therefore, several measures were adopted to minimize and control the distorting effects of such variables:

1. **Initial Group Differences or Non-Randomization Effect:** Randomization was typically used to control initial group differences in experimental research. This introduced error variance in the students' achievement. To address this, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to determine initial differences among the research subjects.
2. **Experimental Bias:** The researchers recognized the potential for bias in the experimental group compared to the control group, which could have negatively affected the study. To control this, while the experimental groups were exposed to treatment packages, the control group participated in conventional counselling sessions with the counsellor in their school. The treatment sessions were administered by the same researchers. Additionally, both the experimental and the control groups participated in the same pretest and posttest exercises.
3. **Hawthorne Effect:** The Hawthorne effect occurred when study subjects became aware that their performance was studied and, as a result, altered their behaviour. To mitigate this effect, the treatment and control groups were exposed to their normal school counsellors. Measures taken to prevent this included

selecting different schools for the study, ensuring that all emphasis was placed solely on the variable of study and providing the same encouragement to all participants in both treatment group and the control groups. Additionally, it was crucial to ensure that the students who participated in the pre-test, experimental training groups and control group counselling sessions were the same individuals who participated in the post-test. Both the experimental group and control group participants were treated equally, with the testing conditions being the same, except for the contents of the treatment packages, which differed for experimental group and the control group, thereby exposing the distinct treatment patterns.

Experimental Procedures

The experimental procedure took place at the school premises, specifically in the counselling centres, on treatment days. The participants stayed in conducive counselling offices within the school. The treatment programme spanned six weeks, involving senior secondary schools (SSS II) and junior secondary school (JSS II) students who formed the study groups. The experimental group was exposed to symbolic modelling therapy and those in the control group were given conventional counselling. Students participated in 80-minute sessions held once a week for six consecutive weeks. After six weeks of treatment, the Bullying Attitude Scale (BAS) was administered to all participants in both the experimental and control groups, serving as a post-test. The posttest scores were collected and analysed by the researchers to determine the statistical differences between the experimental and control group scores.

Method of Data Collection

The researchers administered the Bullying Attitude Questionnaire to students in the two sampled secondary schools with the assistance of two research assistants who distributed copies of the questionnaire. The researchers provided instructions for completing the questionnaire and both the researchers and the research assistants guided the students on how to respond accurately. A special request was made to the school principals to ensure the provision of adequate and conducive counselling environments for the administration of treatment programmes. The posttest items were identical to those of the pre-test, except that they were reshuffled. The completed copies of the instrument were scored according to the instructions provided in the Bullying Attitude Scale. At the end of the treatment the researchers had mortality rate of ten participants in both the treatment and control groups.

Method of Data Analysis

Data relating to the research questions were analysed using mean. For testing the null hypotheses, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was employed. Mean scores for both the pretest and posttest were calculated for the experimental and control groups. If the posttest mean score of any group fell below the threshold of 40, the therapy was considered effective. Conversely, if the score exceeded the threshold, the therapy was deemed ineffective. The law guiding the test of null hypothesis was employed.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the effect of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency among secondary school

students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State when compared to those who received conventional counselling using their pretest and posttest mean scores?

Table 1: Pretest and Posttest bullying tendency among secondary school students treated with symbolic modelling technique when compared with those who received conventional counselling (Norm =40)

Source of Variation	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Lost Mean	Remark
SMT	44	46.57	33.20	13.37	Effective
Control	41	49.83	47.32	2.51	

In table 1, it was observed that the secondary school students treated with symbolic modelling technique have pretest bullying tendency mean scores of 46.57 and posttest mean score of 33.20 with lost mean score of 13.37 while those who received conventional counselling had pretest mean score of 49.83 and posttest mean score of 47.32 with lost mean 2.51. With posttest mean scores of 33.37 for SMT which is below the norm of 40, symbolic modelling technique is effective in reducing bullying tendency among secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

Null hypothesis 1: The effect of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency among secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area is not significant when compared to those who received conventional counselling using their posttest scores.

Table 2: ANCOVA on the effect of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency among secondary school students when compared with those who received conventional counselling

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Pvalue	P ≤ 0.05
Corrected Model	5869.068	2	2934.534			
Intercept	1138.770	1	1138.770			
Pretest Scores	3.279	1	3.279			
Treatment Methods	5799.745	1	5799.745	108.390	0.000	S
Error	4387.684	82	53.508			
Total	154704.000	85				
Corrected Total	10256.753	84				

Table 2 indicates that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 84df denominator, the calculated F108.39 with P-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the first null hypothesis is not accepted. So, the effect of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency among secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area is significant.

The findings of this study indicate that symbolic modelling technique (SMT) is effective in reducing bullying tendency among secondary school students,

particularly when compared to conventional counselling methods. The significant reduction in bullying tendency following SMT underscores its potential as an innovative intervention, resonating well with students by emphasizing positive role models and constructive behavioural patterns. This aligns with existing literature, reinforcing the notion that SMT engages students on both cognitive and emotional levels, facilitating meaningful behavioural change. Such findings are critical as they suggest that SMT can serve as a viable alternative to traditional counselling approaches in school settings.

The present findings were in line with that of Susanti (2015) who investigated the effectiveness of assertiveness training in mitigating bullying among Nigerian secondary school students. This study, which involved a robust pre-test/post-test control group design with 200 students, demonstrated a significant reduction in bullying behaviours among participants who received assertiveness training. The results highlighted that enhancing communication and conflict resolution skills without resorting to aggression is essential for effective bullying intervention. Such findings complement the current study by illustrating the importance of equipping students with practical skills that can reduce aggressive behaviours, whether through SMT or assertiveness training.

The present findings gave credence to that of Astriani et al. (2015) that stressed the effectiveness of SMT and assertiveness training in addressing bullying behaviours. Their study, which compared these two approaches among 150 South African secondary school students, found that assertiveness training yielded a more pronounced reduction in bullying tendency. The researchers attributed this success to the training's focus on vital skills for managing peer interactions and diffusing potential conflicts. Their recommendation for the widespread adoption of assertiveness training in African schools highlights a shared understanding of the need for proactive interventions in bullying prevention.

Research Question 2: What is the effectiveness of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency of male and female secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State when compared using their pretest and posttest mean scores?

Table 3: Pretest and Posttest bullying tendency of male and female secondary school students treated with symbolic modelling therapy (Norm =40)

Source of Variation	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Lost Mean	Remark
Male	15	46.73	35.27	11.46	
Female	29	46.48	32.14	14.34	More Effective

In table 3, it was observed that the male secondary school students treated with symbolic modelling technique have pretest bullying tendency mean scores of 46.73 and posttest mean score of 35.27 with lost mean score of 11.46, while the female student have pretest mean score of 46.48 and posttest mean score of 32.14 with lost mean 14.34. With lost mean scores of 11.46 for male students which is lower the

lost mean score 14.34 for the female students, symbolic modelling technique is more effective in reducing bullying tendency among female secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

Null hypothesis 2: The effects of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency of male and female secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area do not differ significantly when compared using their posttest scores.

Table 4: ANCOVA on the effect of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency of male and female secondary school students

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Pvalue	P ≤ 0.05
Corrected Model	154.892	2	51.631			
Intercept	298.481	1	298.481			
Pretest Scores	5.966	1	5.966			
Gender	135.713	1	135.713	10.515	0.002	S
Error	516.267	40	12.907			
Total	49183.000	44				
Corrected Total	671.159	43				

Table 4 indicates that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 43df denominator, the calculated F10.52 with Pvalue of 0.002 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the fourth null hypothesis is not accepted. So, the effect of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency of male and female secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area differ significantly.

The findings of this study highlight a significant gender-based difference in the effectiveness of symbolic modelling technique (SMT) for reducing bullying tendency among secondary school students, with female students exhibiting a greater reduction compared to their male counterparts. This observation is further substantiated by a higher lost mean score among female students, indicating that SMT may resonate more effectively with them. These findings underscore the necessity for gender-sensitive approaches in the implementation of anti-bullying interventions, as female students appear to derive more substantial benefits from SMT, possibly due to differing social dynamics and their responsiveness to modelling technique.

The present findings are in agreement with those of Pleiffer and Pinquart (2014) who conducted a study examining various interventions, including SMT, within the context of Nigerian secondary schools. Their findings revealed that the female students who participated in the SMT program exhibited a more significant reduction in bullying tendencies than the males. The findings also supported those of Francia and Edling (2016) who compared the effectiveness of SMT on bullying tendency of male and female students in Nairobi, Kenya, and found that SMT led to a more pronounced decrease in bullying tendencies of female than male students bullying tendency.

Research Question 3: What is the effectiveness of symbolic modelling techni que on bullying tendency of junior and senior secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State when compared using their pretest and posttest mean scores?

Table 5: Pretest and Posttest bullying tendency of Junior and senior secondary school students treated with symbolic modelling technique (Norm =40)

Source of Variation	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Lost Mean	Remark
Junior	20	46.60	33.75	12.85	
Senior	24	46.54	32.75	13.79	More Effective

Table 5 reveals that the junior secondary school students treated with symbolic modelling technique have pretest bullying tendency mean scores of 46.60 and posttest mean score of 33.75 with lost mean score of 12.85, while the senior student have pretest mean score of 46.54 and posttest mean score of 32.75 with lost mean 13.79. With lost mean scores of 12.85 for junior students which is lower the lost mean score 13.79 for the senior students, symbolic modelling technique is more effective in reducing bullying tendency of senior secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

Null hypothesis 3: The effectiveness of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency of junior and senior secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area will not differ significantly when compared using their posttest scores.

Table 6: ANCOVA on the effects of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency of junior and senior secondary school students

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Pvalue	P ≤ 0.05
Corrected Model	154.892	2	51.631			
Intercept	298.481	1	298.481			
Pretest Scores	5.966	1	5.966			
Class level	51.241	1	51.241	3.970	0.053	S
Error	516.267	40	12.907			
Total	49183.000	44				
Corrected Total	671.159	43				

Table 6 shows that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 43df denominator, the calculated F3.97 with Pvalue of 0.053 which is equal to 0.05. Therefore, the second null hypothesis is not accepted. So, the effects of symbolic modelling technique on bullying tendency of Junior and senior secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area differ significantly.

The findings of this study indicate that symbolic modelling therapy (SMT) is more effective in reducing bullying tendency among senior secondary school students than among junior secondary students. This is evidenced by the greater

reduction in bullying tendency observed in senior students, as reflected in a higher lost mean score. Such results suggest that senior students may be better equipped to leverage the cognitive and emotional components inherent in SMT.

The present findings corroborate with those of Sampson, (2015) conducted a study in Lagos, Nigeria, examining various bullying prevention programs across class levels. Their research found that senior students responded more favorably to programs involving role modelling and symbolic actions, akin to the principles underlying SMT. This suggests that such interventions may resonate more with senior students' social behaviours and expectations, potentially leading to a greater reduction in bullying tendencies among senior students. This aligns with the observed trend in the current study, where SMT appears more effective for senior students, although the lack of statistical significance indicates the need for caution in generalizing these results.

Conversely, Omoteso (2010) investigated the effectiveness of SMT among both junior and senior secondary students in Bayelsa, Nigeria. Their findings revealed that junior secondary students exhibited a more pronounced reduction in bullying tendencies when exposed to symbolic modelling techniques. This outcome was attributed to the impressionability of junior students, suggesting they are more readily influenced by modelled behaviours. This finding contrasts with the current study's conclusion that SMT is more beneficial for senior students. Together, these studies underscore the need to consider developmental stages when devising and implementing bullying intervention strategies using SMT.

Conclusion

Based on the findings the study concludes that symbolic modelling technique (SMT) is significantly effective in reducing bullying tendency among secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Also SMT, is sensitive to gender and class level in reducing bullying among students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations were proposed:

1. Guidance counsellors should start making use of SMT for bullying prevention programs.
2. Teachers should as a matter necessity administer Bullying Tendency Questionnaire on the students to identify refer the students with the tendency to bully to the guidance counsellors to prevent the students from engaging in actual behaviour.

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