

## **Perceptions about Bullying Behaviour in Secondary schools in Tanzania: The case of Dodoma Municipality**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper presents the findings on bullying behaviours among secondary school students in Tanzania. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and students about bullying behaviours among secondary schools in Tanzania. More specifically, the study explored the elements of bullying, characteristics of bullies, factors and consequences of bullying behaviours among secondary school students as perceived by both teachers and students. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used throughout the study, in which a cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The study gathered data from 120 informants, where 100 teachers who were obtained through random sampling participated in the study. Purposive sampling was used to identify discipline teachers and students who participated in the interview. It was found that physical bullying was perceived to be the dominant element of bullying. Boys were highly preferred to be bullies than girls. Also, watching violent films was the dominant factor for bullying and poor academic performance was mostly preferred as the impact of bullying. The study recommends a collective collaboration among all educational stakeholders to combat the problem.*

**Key Words:** Bullying, Victim, Bully, Behaviour

### **Background to the Research Problem**

Bullying is the most common form of violence in our schools. Studies show that this violence makes schools unsafe places for children and has contributed to the perception that some schools are not safe anymore (Maliki et al., 2009). Bullying behaviour may be referred to a repeated aggressive behaviour perpetuated by a bully or a group of bullies who systematically victimize weaker peers (Olweus, 1993). It is also bullying when a student is teased repeatedly in a way he or she does not like. But it is not a bullying when two students about the same strength quarrel or fight (Omoteso, 2010). Bullying is a common problem that is gradually increasing in every part of the society and in schools (ibid.). Incidents on bullying have always come to occur from time to time and they have negative impacts especially on students' academic, emotional and social development during the school period and some involve a gradual increase of violence that leads to some fatalities (Kartal, 2009).

Bukowski et al., (2000) point out that, transition periods are problematic among secondary school students because they face two major transitions of entering puberty and starting a new school. As such they suddenly have new peer group and different school system (Pellegrini and Long, 2002). Secondary school students are faced with complex rules, less integrated and more discrete curriculum and assessment regime (Bukowski, 2000). In Tanzania, for example, bullying behaviour among Secondary schools is widespread and has a negative impact on students' right to learn in a safe and secure environment without fear. Mgalla et al. (1998) conducted a study in rural and urban Tanzania; and their investigation revealed that the incidences of bullying were real and some of the pupils had been adversely affected following the acts which are normally done to both male and female pupils. Basing on the documentation of the case which took place in Ruvuma Region in Tanzania, Chindiye as cited by Moris (2008) claims that, bullying is not only a case of school children bullying their peers, teachers are also involved either as victims or as bullies.

Bullying is commonly characterized as aggressive behaviour that is intended to cause distress or harm and involves an imbalance of power or strength between the aggressor and the victim, and commonly occurs repeatedly over time (Nansel et al., 2001). Similarly, Olweus (1993) describes bullying as any repeated harmful acts and imbalance of power against a victim who cannot properly defend himself or herself because of size or strength. Bullying in secondary schools can take many forms; including physical, verbal or psychological. Physical bullying involve physical injury or threat of injury to someone, verbal bullying refers to teasing or insulting someone while psychological bullying refers to the use of peer rejection or exclusion to humiliate or isolate a victim (Moris, 2008). A wide range of physical or verbal behaviours of an aggressive or antisocial nature are encompassed by the term bully and these include: insulting, teasing, abusing verbally and physically, threatening, humiliating, harassing and mobbing.

Most studies conducted in some African countries were gender-based studies, focusing largely on sexual bullying or harassment of female students. Such studies have been conducted in Ghana (Afenyadu and Lakshmi, 2003), Ethiopia (Terefe and Desere, 1997), Cameroon (Mbassa and Daniel, 2001) and Tanzania (Mgalla et al., 1998). The studies on bullying in Turkey demonstrate that about 30% of the students are involved in bullying either as a bully or a victim, or both a bully and victim (Nansel et al., 2001). In the studies carried out in the U.S. (Nansel et al., 2001), and in England and Germany (Wolke et al., 2001), the frequency of bullying was reported to be in the region of 15% to 20%. In Africa, the prevalence of bullying behaviour has been reported by Asamu (2006) that, 22.5% of the students she studied in Ibadan, Nigeria were below 15 years of age. She found that bullying behaviour was peculiar to junior secondary schools 21% of male students had bullied other students.

The most prevalent acts reported by students in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in the study conducted by Moris (2008) were gossiping 74.3%, stealing 71.7% spreading rumors 70%, excluding other from a group 70.2%, Jeering 66.1%, and threatening 54%. Teachers' bullying acts to students included humiliation, sexual harassment by male teachers and corporal punishment (ibid). In the similar vein, Chindiye as cited by Moris (2008) reported an incident in one school in Ruvuma region-Tanzania where a form one boy of 13 years was hospitalized for several days as a result of cruel punishment by his headmaster for misbehaving. Teachers consider bullying as part of the development in the

growth of children and some believe that bullying will better prepare oneself for life by toughening a kid up (Maliki et al., 2009).

Corporal punishment, as one form of physical bullying, influences the prevalence of bullying in schools in Tanzania. Omari (2006) maintains that, corporal punishment in Tanzania is enshrined on the parliamentary Act of 1978 expounded in the National Education (Corporal Punishment) Regulations of 1979 and it has been reiterated in 2002. The main belief is that, corporal punishment is useful in maintenance of discipline and improvement of performance (ibid). This gives legal mandate to head of schools to administer corporal punishments to students but some of them violate and abuse this power.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

In view of the background, educational stakeholders including parents, teachers and policy makers in Tanzania have different attitudes towards bullying. For instance, in the study conducted across Tanzania by Global Initiatives in 2008, revealed a high prevalence rate of corporal punishment and strong support of parents in both urban and rural schools. Eighty five percent (85%) of parents accepted corporal punishment as the form of bullying and all pupils disliked corporal punishments. Punishments included contorted body positions, frog jumps, push-ups, kneeling down, standing in bright sunshine, lying on sand and lifting stones, with most pupils being subjected to more than two types of corporal punishment (RAWG, 2008).

Also another study by Partika, (2007) on Nyakahoja school (Mwanza- Tanzania) show that teachers employ corporal punishment as one form of bullying to encourage and motivate pupils to work harder and to discipline them. It is also due to teachers' frustration and stress than the students' misbehaviour. Their stress and frustrations are due to overcrowded classrooms, poverty and to some, the tightened time table, poor training at colleges, underpayment, being undervalued, poor teaching and learning resources and poor sanitary conditions. However, lack of knowledge on the alternative ways of punishing students has also been attributed to the persistence of bullying. Teachers are said to have inadequate knowledge on the proper classroom order or management, effective management of discipline, children's rights, of healthy child development, of how children learn and other factors that may cause learners fail to catch up (Patterson, 1982). This may be attributed to the poor training they received in their colleges and poor professional development programmes at their schools.

The available data in Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania (BEST, 2012) show that 55155 (84.7%) out of 65086 secondary school teachers have professional qualification and 9931 (15.3%) do not qualify to teach in secondary schools but they are teaching. The number is unusual. This implies that about 15.3% of secondary school teachers have not attained even psychological skills on how to handle students' behaviours. The available literature shows that teachers lack enough competencies on dealing with students' behaviours due to poor training. Some colleges of teacher education in Tanzania still use outdated and irrelevant curricula that are insensitive to what people need. Indeed, they are not dynamic enough to accommodate new educational reforms or innovations (Anangisye, 2011).

This supports my observation that majority of secondary school teachers in Tanzania have poor understanding and they are involved in bullying behaviour because of poor training. Unfortunately, their attitudes towards bullying have not directly given variations in approach. It is on this concern, a researcher attempted to investigate on the problem. Therefore, this paper, sought to critically investigate the perceptions of secondary school teachers towards bullying behaviour in school.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study has the following potential benefits. In the first place, it informs teachers' understanding on the bullying behaviours in schools. Second, the study provides greater insight to the school administrators, managers and teachers on the factors that contribute to bullying. Thirdly, it provides the need for school counselors to identify bullies, prevent victimization and help students to interact in more appropriate way with their schoolmates. Finally, it informs teacher preparation colleges and educational curriculum developers to improve their programmes so that teachers can be more effective in dealing with students' behaviour.

### **Prevalence of Bullying Behaviours in Tanzanian Secondary schools**

The available literature shows that bullying behaviour persist in secondary school in Tanzania. The research conducted in Dar es Salaam region-Tanzania by Moris (2008) found that bullying behaviour is a significant problem among secondary school students. Children are bullied by their peers and teachers as well. Godwin (2006) reported a bullying incidence of a form four male secondary school student aged 20 years. The student sustained severe injuries and fainted due to the punishment he received from his teacher. When the teacher discovered that the boy had fainted, he locked him in the office and called other students to take him to hospital for treatment. When the boy was interviewed, he said he was accused of misbehaving during a school function.

Another reported bullying is an incidence of a teacher in Iringa region-Tanzania who was charged under Section 25 of the Prevention of Corruption Act No. 11 of 2007 for demanding sexual favours from the complainant-a form one girl by then. He requested sexual intercourse as a condition for favouring her in English and Divinity examination results and other preferential treatment. He was convicted and sentenced to pay a fine of Tshs. 500,000/= or serve a term of imprisonment for one year (TAWJA, 2011). This kind of bullying is contrary to the childrens' rights. Teachers who are involved in bullying students need to be aware of the impacts on students' achievements. A good teacher should be a role model to the pupils. The teacher should be diligent, honest and should have good manners so that pupils can emulate. Teachers need to help children to understand character traits and values, they also model desirable character traits in the students both within the school setting and in the larger society (Oladipo, 2009).

### **Causes and Effects of Bullying**

Different scholars explain causes of bullying in different ways. Omoteso (2010) explains that personality characteristics and typical reaction patterns, combined with the level of physical strength or weakness in the case of boys, can help to explain the development of bullying problems

in individual students. At the same time, environmental influences, such as teachers' attitudes, behaviours and supervisory routines play a crucial role in determining the extent to which these problems manifest themselves in a classroom or a school. Also, parents who model aggression as a way of meeting their needs, or who use harsh or aggressive methods of discipline are significantly more likely to have children who engage in aggression or bullying (ibid).

Likewise, Bowers et al. (1992) maintain that, children who have experienced child abuse or witnessed domestic partner abuse or been bullied by their siblings and had mothers who were rejecting, cold or indifferent are likely to become bullies. Bullies are also motivated by the desire to appear influential. Reporting on bullying at schools, Olweus (1993) asserts that, parenting styles also play an important role in the development of bullying behaviour in young children.

Bullying is pervasive and terribly harmful for bullies, victims, schools and communities (Omoteso, 2010). Victims often have difficulties in concentrating on their schoolwork and may experience a decline in academic performance (ibid). They have higher than normal absenteeism and dropout rates and may show signs of loneliness as well as having trouble in making social and emotional adjustments, difficulty in making friends, and poor relationships with classmates (Lumsden, 2002). Victims of bullying often suffer humiliation, insecurity, and loss of self-esteem and may develop a fear of going to school (Shellard, 2002).

In the similar vein, Olweus (1991); Pepler and Craig (2000) maintain that victims often fear school and consider it an unhappy and unsafe place. Students who are targeted by bullies often have difficulty concentration on their school work and their academic performances tend to be "marginal to poor" (Ballard et al., 1999). Victims of bullying are not the only ones who are adversely affected but also those who bully are more likely to drop out of school, use drug and alcohol, as well as engage in subsequent delinquent and criminal behaviour (Omoteso, 2010).

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions;

1. What are the teachers' perceptions on element of bullying behaviour in secondary schools?
2. What are the dominant characteristics of bullies in secondary schools?
3. What are the factors of bullying behaviour in secondary schools?
4. What are the impacts of bullying behaviour among students in secondary schools?

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design where both quantitative and qualitative paradigms were used. The cross-sectional survey design involves selection of a sample of respondents and conducting interviews and questionnaires to gather information on variables of interest to the study (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993 in Chireshe 2006). The present researcher believed that, if surveys could be done correctly, sound information could be collected. Thus the cross-sectional survey design was seen as the most appropriate one to explore the perceptions of teachers and students on bullying behaviours. According to Cresswell (2012), a cross-sectional survey design enables the researcher to examine the way in which individuals think about issues (attitudes, beliefs and opinions) and their actual behaviour (practice). In this regards, data collected

aimed at establishing the existing perceptions and beliefs of teachers on bullying behaviours in schools.

The study sample included 100 teachers and 20 students. Simple random sampling was used in the selection of teachers who participated by filling in the questionnaire. This technique is the most basic form of probability sample in which each member has equal chance to be included in the study (Brayman, 2004). Purposive sampling was used because it is a type of non probability sampling that is most effective in studying certain phenomenon with knowledgeable experts within the field (Godambe, 1982). In this regards, students and few teachers who participated in the interview were selected on the basis of their knowledge about students' behaviours. Students were selected on the basis of being victims of bullying. The use of three sources of collecting similar data was for complementarity reason (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2007) because the survey questionnaire had specific focused questions while in the observation guide and interview, questions were purposefully made to accommodate more views from research participants.

### **Research Instruments and Procedures**

In this particular study, three research methods were employed namely; interviews schedule, questionnaire and observation schedule. Paul and Jeane (2001) argue that there is no single highway that leads us exclusively towards a better understanding of the unknown. For this reason, a triangulated procedure was adopted in selecting the instruments for the present study. Interview guides, questionnaires and observation guide were presented to one of the lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of Dodoma-College of Education for scrutiny and advice. Questionnaires were administered to 100 teachers. The researcher administered all questionnaires in person, thus the researcher moved from one school to another.

The information from questionnaires was analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 to reveal descriptive results like mean and standard deviation and summarized in tabular form. Responses from interviews and observation were recorded under headings emerging from interviews and discussion with the interviewees. Responses were transcribed and then organized in themes and categories that emerged.

### **Summary of Results by Research Questions and Discussion**

1. What are the teachers' perceptions on element of bullying behaviour in secondary schools? Data related to this question is tabulated in terms of indices of elements of bullying; Mean, and Standard Deviation as shown in Table 1.0 below.

**Table 1.0 Descriptive Statistics (n=100) on Indices of Elements of Bullying**

Indices of Elements of Bullying	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Physical bullying such as hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, stealing, and destruction of property	100	1.00	4.00	3.4200	.72725
Verbal bullying such as taunting, malicious teasing, name calling, and making threats	100	1.00	4.00	3.3500	.77035
Psychological bullying such as spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, exclusion from a peer group and intimidation	100	1.00	4.00	3.3100	.70632
Sexual bullying like unwelcome touching and kissing	100	1.00	4.00	3.0400	1.02415
Girls seduce males by their dressing	100	1.00	4.00	2.8700	.94980
Solicit unwanted sexual advances through cell phones and emails	100	1.00	4.00	2.5500	1.13150
Forcing others to do work for them	100	1.00	4.00	2.5700	.99752
Sexual innuendoes, noises, jokes, comments or remarks to another person about one's sexuality or body	100	1.00	4.00	3.0900	1.02588
Put reflecting mirrors under girls' legs to watch their underpants	100	1.00	4.00	2.6500	1.20080
Write on the walls especially in toilets nasty messages and insults (graffiti) about other students	100	1.00	4.00	3.2400	.86597
Valid N (listwise)	100				

Mean: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree

The results in table 1.0 above show that physical bullying such as hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, stealing, and destruction of property was most preferred by the respondents (teachers) at the mean of (3.42) as an indicator of bullying in secondary school as perceived by teachers and none of the indices were confirmed as strongly disagree. This implies that there is a very high prevalence of physical bullying behaviours in secondary schools in Tanzania.

Most of the interviewed teachers on whether they had ever been involved in bullying behaviour denied, rather they perceive corporal punishment as an effective way of controlling students' discipline. One teacher was quoted saying:

*"..... I wonder, a teacher to bully students! It is impossible! We punish students for the purpose of helping them to change their bad behaviours and become useful members of the society. In so doing we encourage and motivate pupils to work harder and be more disciplined"*

To explore further if teachers applied corporal punishment as one form of bullying at schools, one teacher from school X stated that:

*"Dear researcher, most students at our school are from difficulty environment and most of them have challenging behaviours like that of fighting each other. It becomes so difficult for us manage them. Others are even involved in drug abuse and thus become very aggressive to others. This forces us to apply physical punishments including frog jumping, push-up and caning when a severe misbehaviour is observed"*

However, this study concurs with the findings by the study conducted in Dar es Salaam-Tanzania by (Moris, 2008) which indicated that teachers admitted that corporal punishments were administered in their schools. Majority of them did not consider it as bullying if it was administered reasonably. Although teachers assume that the purpose of punishment is to decrease the undesirable behaviours, most of the learning theories show that punishment does not decrease the unwanted behaviours and indeed sometimes increase the unwanted ones over time (Polito, 2005). In this regard, teachers need to develop the ability to deal with students' behaviour in an effective way.

## 2. What are the dominant characteristics of bullies in secondary schools?

Data related to this question is tabulated in terms of indices of characteristics of bullies; Mean, and Standard Deviation as shown in Table 2.0 set below.

**Table 2.0 Descriptive Statistics (n=100) on Indices of characteristics of bullies**

Indices of characteristics of bullies	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
They are aggressive than others	100	2.00	4.00	3.5200	.68873
They normally perform poorly in their assignments	100	1.00	4.00	3.4700	.83430
They are mostly girls	100	1.00	4.00	2.4900	1.03957
They are mostly boys	100	1.00	4.00	3.5900	.76667
They are regular truants	100	1.00	4.00	3.4200	.72725
They are normally orphans	100	1.00	4.00	2.2500	1.02863
They are normally from higher grade	100	1.00	4.00	2.6400	1.06856
They are normally from poor parenting homes	100	1.00	4.00	2.6200	.99270
They are normally from the same grade	100	1.00	4.00	3.5000	.68902
They normally have physical disabilities	100	1.00	4.00	1.9700	.88140
Valid N (listwise)	100				

Mean: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree

The results in table 2.0 above show that male students were highly ranked at the mean of 3.59, students who are aggressive than others were preferred by the respondents at the mean of (3.52) as indicators of characteristics of bullying and students with physical disabilities were confirmed as strongly disagree by the respondents. The above findings suggest that bullying behaviours among male students in secondary schools are very high. In the interview with some teachers, it was revealed that bullying by boys uses more physical aggression. One teacher was quoted saying:

*“At our school, boys are more aggressive than girls, and they are too violent. I believe that all these are the results of moral failure among parents. Most parents in our communities are not responsible in guiding their children on what is good or bad as a result most students especially boys are violent. I remember two form three boys who were suspended because of their involvements in fights. The same boys had already been reported in our offices before, because of their involvements in other several incidences like theft and smuggling..... So, who is to blame?”*



*Obvious parents! It is unusual to find a child from good parental family smuggling or fighting with fellow students”*

In the interview with a female student, it was also revealed that boys are mostly involved in bullying in different forms especially in the absence of teachers in the classroom and when doing cleanliness in the school compound. This student responded that;

*“Most boys at our school are smoking; they use break time and self-reliance periods to hide themselves in the nearby bushes for the purpose of smoking. Some of them even force girls in our class to engage in love with them. There are classmates especially boys who support and defend them”*

On the other hand, it was revealed that most students who are involved in bullying others are approved by their peers. The bullies said that; they are accepted by all of their classmates all the time and they normally defend others when there is a fight in the classroom. One form four student at school Z was quoted saying:

*“One of our classmates tends to be the chief of everything in our class; he is too violent especially to new comers. Some of the student leaders know him but never reported him to teachers. Others are even happy with what he is doing to others and sometimes he takes a pride in forcing others to write some notes for him in absence of teachers. When you reject to obey you will be slapped and punched. In fact, this boy is too aggressive in our class”*

These findings concur with the findings by Pepler and Craig (2000) who observed that those who bully tend to be disruptive, impulsive and aggressive to their peers, teachers, parents, and others. They tend to be assertive and easily provoked, contrary to general belief. According to Olweus (1993) aggressive males who bully are not anxious and insecure under a tough exterior and do not suffer from poor self esteem. Typically, males who bully have an aggressive personality combined with physical strength. They have little empathy for their victims and show little or no remorse. Olweus observed that those who bully may come from families where there is lack of attention and warmth toward the child, poor supervision, and use of physical and verbal aggression. In the the study conducted in Turkey by Kartal (2009) revealed that both girls (44.3%) and boys (66.1%) reported that the bullies were mostly male students. On the other hand, there were a very low percentage (10.0 %) of boys who were reported to have been bullied by female students and 34.8% of the girls reported that they were bullied by female students. The current findings are contrary to the research findings by Moris (2008) who revealed that girls are more likely to be involved in bullying others than boys. She found that girls (14.7%) bullied others, boys (12.5%) bullied others and 44.8% of boys and 30.7% of girls were bullied by teachers.

### 3. What are the factors of bullying behaviour in secondary schools?

Data related to this question is tabulated in terms of indices of factors of bullying; Mean, and Standard Deviation as shown in Table 3.0 set below.

**Table 3.0 Descriptive Statistics (n=100) on Indices of Factors of Bullying**

Indices of Factors of Bullying among students	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Watching the violent film and pornographic pictures	100	1.00	4.00	3.1300	.97084
Being from a broken home vulnerability in the community	100	1.00	4.00	3.1600	.92899
Feeling stronger than others	100	1.00	4.00	3.3500	.90314
Feeling older than others	100	1.00	4.00	1.8700	.90626
Teachers' poor classroom management	100	1.00	4.00	2.2800	1.01583
Being from a monogamous family	100	1.00	4.00	2.1400	1.06382
Being a regular orphans	100	1.00	4.00	2.3700	.98119
Copying parents'	100	1.00	4.00	2.4700	1.09595
Being from a polygamous family	100	1.00	4.00	3.1100	.91998
Being from well-off families	100	1.00	4.00	3.2500	.88048
Valid N (listwise)	100				

Mean: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree

The results in table 3.0 above show that feeling stronger than others (mean of 3.35), being from well-off families (mean of 3.25), being from a broken home vulnerability in the community (mean of 3.16) and watching the violent film and pornographic pictures at the mean of 3.13 were highly ranked as factors for bullying among students and only one indicator was confirmed as strongly disagree. This confirms that teachers are aware of the factors associated with bullying in secondary schools.

The information collected from both teachers and students during the interview also confirmed that feeling stronger than others is the most common factor associated with bullying among students. One of the form two students who were bullying others was quoted saying:

*"... usually my fellow students complain about me because I am stronger than them. For example, they complain about me when I fight with others. They mock at me, they use a nickname for me but I won't tell you about it. I normally feel good after fighting and winning the fight. I have only four friends in my classroom who normally support me. I love nobody except these four friends".*

To explore further about factors associated with bullying behaviour among students, it was stated that watching violent films is one of the factors that is associated with bullying behaviour among students. In explaining the reasons for bullying behaviour among students one teacher said;

*"...there was a fighting case reported in our office in which one student menaced his fellow with a knife on the left leg. When this student was asked about the reason of being violent to his fellow, he said that he used such a technique for defending himself because he sees the same in films. Also when we communicated with his parent he also reported that his son do spend much time watching violent films".*

Also the findings revealed that, the way children are raised by their parents determines their behaviours in schools. One discipline teacher was quoted saying;

*“Dear researcher, I may say that parents are no longer responsible to their children. As you might be aware that in African tradition, and elsewhere, parents are being referred to as the first moral teachers and role models that young children have on their moral education and development. Today the situation is quite different, children are involved in several misbehaviours but parents don’t care; when they bring their children at school they don’t even cooperate with us. I think if we want to prevent bullying behaviour among students, we need to encourage parents to change their parenting style and collaborate with teachers”.*

It was observed that, students coming from distant areas were highly bullied by their teachers because of being late to school. This observation was confirmed by one female student who was noted to be a victim of bullying after being caned by her teacher. Commenting on this, one female student from school Y reported that:

*“I am walking from home to school for about two to three hours. I am living with my grandmother, who cannot pay the bus fare for me. I feel so sad when I come to school late and the teacher canes a lot. I normally try to express my problems to my teachers but they never understand me. It becomes very difficult to me and some of my fellow students to come early because of poverty”.*

The above findings confirm that students from families of low economic status are highly bullied by teachers while students from economically well-off families are not victims of bullying but they bully others. The results concur with a recent study conducted in Nigerian secondary schools on bullying by Omoteso (2010). The study found that many students (64.7%) were involved in relational bullying with watching violent films (57.5%) and retaliation for being bullied in the past (51.2%) were some of the factors associated with bullying. Study results in German by Smith et al (1999) which examined the relationship between bullying among students and the socio-economic status, the findings revealed that there was a weak relation between bullying behaviour and students’ socio-economic status. Another study which was conducted in Ankara found that, a substantial number of children were self-identified as “victims” (35.1%) and bully/victims” (30.2%) and 6.2% as “bullies”. It was also found that children from families of higher socio-economic status were more commonly engaged in bullying behaviour than children from families of middle or low socio-economic status (Pelligrini and Long, 2002).

The current results are also in line with the study findings by Craven and Parada (2002) who found that, some homes have no parents, some are single parent and other parents are practicing different parenting styles like authoritarian, democratic, flexible, negligent and abusive. Problematic family background and negative attitude between parents and learner can lead to bullying behaviours (Nansel et al 2001). Social learning theory also suggests that students from homes or families where parent or guardian prefer punishment as means of correcting antisocial behaviours are more likely to bully others (Bandura, 1963). However, the conclusion of the present study in relation to the

research question under review is that there are many factors associated with bullying behaviours among students. The most preferred factor is feeling stronger than others. In due regards, collaborative efforts by all educational stakeholders are needed to combat the situation.

#### 4. What are the impacts of bullying behaviour among students in secondary schools?

Data related to this question is tabulated in terms of indices of elements of bullying; Mean, and Standard Deviation as shown in Table 4.0 set below.

**Table 4.0 Descriptive Statistics (n=100) on Indices of impacts of bullying behaviour among students**

Indices of impacts of bullying behaviour among students	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bullying behaviour leads into fear and insecurity	100	1.00	4.00	3.4200	.75452
Bullying behaviour leads into isolation	100	1.00	4.00	3.4400	.80804
Bullying behaviour leads into confidence	100	1.00	4.00	2.0200	.68135
Bullying behaviour leads into Happiness	100	1.00	4.00	2.1300	.96038
Bullying behaviour leads into truancy	100	1.00	4.00	3.2300	1.08110
Bullying behaviour leads into depression	100	1.00	4.00	3.0500	1.08595
Bullying behaviour leads into social-emotional disorder	100	1.00	4.00	3.2000	.92113
Bullying behaviour leads into poor academic performance	100	1.00	4.00	3.5500	.72995
Bullying behaviour leads into dropout	100	1.00	4.00	3.3600	.83509
Leads into physical damage	100	1.00	4.00	3.2600	.86012
Valid N (listwise)	100				

Mean: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree

The results in table 4.0 above show that bullying behaviour as a factor for poor academic performance was mostly preferred by the respondents at the mean of (3.55). None of the indices were confirmed as strongly disagree. This implies that there is a very high rate of effects of bullying behaviour in secondary schools in Tanzania.

From the interview, it was revealed that students suffer a lot as a result of maltreatment from teachers. Bullying reduces students' freedom to study, communicate and increases school truants and dropout. One student was quoted saying:

*"..... I cannot ask any question in the class because I know some teachers are very harsh, I always run away from teacher X because whenever he sees me automatically he will formulate a problem so as to punish me. When he is on duty, I find better not go to school than to go to suffer. I never had any pass in his subject because I hate him so much and I never concentrate on his lesson. I have already requested my parents to transfer me from this school because I suffer a lot from these unnecessary corporal punishments, but even my parents seem to support my sufferings".*

Also bullying among students reduces self esteem, motivation to learn and affect a child psychologically, something which may affect the general development of a child in all aspects. One female student reported that;

*“Most fellow students in my class don’t love me, they always laugh at me and nickname me as zero meaning that I’m worthless, local and outdated. When teachers give us group assignments they normally run away from me and don’t like to discuss with me. The source of all these problems is that when I was transferred to this school from the neighbor school, I performed better in the class. It is three years now, but the situation today is not good anymore, I yet perform poorly. I don’t like school any more”.*

Data contained in the statements above reveal that bullying behaviour is still a serious problem in Tanzania. The available government statistics show that secondary school students have poor performance in their final exams. For instance, pass rates in form four national examinations have been fluctuating from year to year. In 2008 the failure rate was 16.3%, 27.5 in 2009 and 49.6% in 2010 (BEST, 2012). This may be associated to poor management of students’ behaviour by both teachers and parents.

On the other hand, the study by Nansel et al (2001) conducted in the United States of America found that, bullying is a physically harmful, psychologically damaging and socially isolating aspect of a large number of school children’s school experience. Studies also show that children who are bullied have higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression and illness, and an increased tendency to suicide. The victims are two to three times more likely to contemplate suicide than their peers (Rigby, 1998). The present findings are contrary to the study reported in Britain which shows that children who are bullied suffered health problems such as eating and sleep disorders, headaches and stomach aches (William, et al, 1996). Those who bully are more likely to drop out of school, use drug and alcohol, as well as engage in subsequent delinquent and criminal behaviour.

The above findings support the researcher view that the number of school dropouts in Tanzania is high due to bullying behaviour. The government statistics show that 76,002 students dropped out of secondary school in 2011. Out of 76,002 students (72.7%) were due to truancy; (6.8%) were due to pregnancy; (1.1%) were due to death; (13.9%) were unable to meet basic needs; (1.4%) were due to illness; (0.4%) were due to parental illness and (3.8%) were due to misbehaviours including bullying (BEST, 2012). As it can be seen in the above statistics, the number of students’ dropout because of misbehaviour is high and the number of truants is high too. As it has been observed in the current findings; students’ truancy is one of the problems facing schools because of bullying behaviour being perceived by both teachers and students. However, the conclusion of the present study in relation to the research question under review is that poor academic performance, isolation, truancy and students’ dropout are mostly perceived to be the negative impacts of bullying behaviour among students. As one of the most persistent and destructive forms of aggression in the continuum of violence, bullying deserves the attention of everyone.

### **Recommendations**

The central idea of the study was to critically explore and examine the perceptions about bullying in secondary schools. In this regard, the target group for advice included policy makers, teachers and parents. Reducing and preventing bullying requires the joint efforts of the policymakers, school

administrators, teachers, students, parents and community members. Thus, for bullying to be reduced, the following recommendations are made: First, The Ministry of Education and Vocational training is responsible for the welfare of people and their development, therefore it should devote the political will to empower students development by setting aside a clear policy about punishment in secondary schools. Second, schools need to introduce intervention programmes for both teachers and students. Teachers need to be aware of the alternative ways of punishing students which are not aggressive in nature and students need to be informed on the best ways of interaction when at school. Finally, there is a need for the parents to be aware of the positive returns of investing in their children's education. Parents need to be educated on the negative effects of bullying so as to assist their children develop good moral values and behaviour. However, as the study focused only on the school environment, the researcher recommends that, future studies on bullying should be expanded to involve the network of in-family relations as well.

### Conclusion

Bullying behaviours among students in Tanzania are still a challenge and result into students' problems including; truancy, dropout and poor academic performance. In this regards, intervention programmes need to be initiated in order to combat it. All educational stakeholders including parents, students, policy makers and teachers need to create collaborative efforts in combating the problem. The main reason for all these efforts should be to cleanse not only the schools but also the whole society on bullying behaviour.

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