Full Length Research

The perception of students on the influence bullying has on performance and personality in second cycle institutions of Cape Coast Metropolitan, Ghana

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The study aimed to find out the perception of students on the effects of bullying on the learning behaviour of S.H.S students in Cape Coast Metropolis. The researchers looked at the effect of bullying on learning behaviour in terms of relationship with self, relationship with others in terms of learning and relationship with teachers during teaching sessions. Questionnaires were administered to three hundred and forty-six respondents from selected senior high schools in the metropolis using the stratified proportion and simple random selection technique. The study revealed that bullying in second cycle institution is a pertinent issue which had devastating effects on students' learning behaviour although students indicated it was on the low side.

Key words: Bullying, victim, bully, behavior, performance, perception.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

Undoubtedly, education is the key element that every individual seeks to acquire to gain some knowledge and also develop their personality. In the course of acquiring this knowledge, individuals meet people with different background, unique mindsets and behavioral characteristics which tend to influence their learning behaviors. Bullying among school children as indicated by some researchers has been found to be a significant global problem (Smith and Brain, 2000) with serious psychological and general well-being implications for victims of bullying as well as bullies themselves (Swearer et al., 2010).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) recognizes a child's right to a safe environment and protection from every form of harm, including bullying in schools. However, schools now cannot guarantee total protection for students. Bullying is recognized as one of the major problems facing schools today (Carroll-Lind, 2009).

In Ghana, it is evident that bullying in senior high schools

suggests that it starts predominantly from the onset of so called "homoing" rituals and behaviors of some students especially those in upper classes (Owusu et al., 2011). "Homoing" refers to a variety of practices including face painting and to the extreme molesting to usher in new students into a school.

Second cycle institutions in the Central Region are likely to experience bullying because models of bullying behavior are prevalent throughout society and human institutions, even though there is no statistical index on the prevalence of bullying in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Bullying in second cycle institutions are usually among peers (Coy, 2001). There are peer risk factors that are likely to cause bullying, these factors are friends who bully, friends who have positive attitudes about violence, some aggressive children who take on high status roles may use bullying as way to enhance their social power and protect their prestige with peers, some children also with low social status may use bullying as a way to deflect taunting and aggression that is directed towards them

or to gain social recognition from higher status peers. This form of violent behavior in our schools should be given the necessary attention. Bullying at school also affects others who are not involved directly but who simply witnessed or were aware of mistreatment of another student. These students may suffer from fear and concern about their schoolmate who is targeted. They may feel guilty but also may fear the bully so much that they do nothing to help. Worse, they may become offenders themselves because they fear the perpetrator will target them if they do not become accomplices.

Victims of bullying are more likely to be truant from school, undergo psychological distress, and have higher rates of suicide (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999; Owusu et al., 2011). The findings of Williams (2013) in Ghana evince that bullying is associated with increased absenteeism for both boys and girls. Bullies tend to have poor learning behaviors, thus both bullies and victims are at increased risk for mental illness and low level of performance in victims' learning. A study in Norway by Olweus also discloses that victims of bullying typically are very unhappy children who suffer from fear, anxiety, and low self-esteem as a result of them being bullied. They may try to avoid school and social interaction in an effort to escape being bullied. Some victims of bullying are so distressed that they commit suicide. Several instances of suicide by boys who had been severely bullied in Norway in the early 1980's were recorded. These tragic events mobilized the Norwegian country to being a nation-wide anti-bullying program in the early 1980's (Olweus, 1992). Owing to these, most researchers continuously and vigorously explore potential risk or predicting factors that may in many ways than one predispose a child to engaging in bullying (Duncan, 2011).

Bullying is a widespread problem that has significant deleterious effects on the physical, mental and social health of students in the second cycle institutions. In a recent survey of over 30 million U.S. students between the ages of 12 and 18, nearly 32 percent reported that they were bullied at school (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

According to Banks (1997), bullying in schools is a worldwide problem that can have negative consequences for the general school climate and for the right of students to learn in a safe environment without fear. He asserts that bullying can also have negative lifelong consequences for students who bully and for their victims too. Evidence of bullying has also been found in Ghana, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Italy, as well as other European countries (Ammermueller, 2012; Brown and Taylor, 2008; Dunne et al., 2013; Eriksen et al., 2012).

The problems associated with bullying have been noted and discussed wherever formal schooling environment exist. Bullying tends to have immense effect on students academically and their learning behavior such as low level of interest in school, increased absenteeism, and decreased concentration levels for students. In terms of personality, victims and most especially perpetrators can develop anti-social behaviors like vandalism, shoplifting, truancy and frequent drug use (Williams, 2013).

In Ghana, in the midst of this chaotic environment bullying creates for students in our various second cycle institutions, it seems there is still little attention or research work on the effects of bullying on students. This is exacerbated by the widely held views of bullying being a normal adolescence practice. Studies have focused generally on the causes and effects of bullying on students. Against this backdrop, this study tries to fill the research gap by an in-depth investigation focusing on how personality and students learning behaviors are affected by bullying as well as contribute to existing knowledge.

In carrying out this study, the following questions were addressed;

1. What are the perceptions of students on the prevalence of bullying in second cycle
schools in Cape Coast metropolis?
2. What are the perceptions of students on the types of bullying students suffer in the second cycle schools?
3. What are the perceptions of students on motives of bullies to bully?
4. What is the perception of students on how bullying will affect their learning
behaviours?
5. What is the perception of students on how bullying affects relationship with others in terms of learning?

The main aim of this study was to investigate the perception of students on bullying. Among the questions that were examined are as follows:

1. To investigate the perceptions of students on the prevalence of bullying in second cycle schools in Cape Coast metropolis.
2. To know the perceptions of students on the types of bullying students suffer in the second cycle schools.
3. To analyze the perceptions of students on motives of bullies to bully.
4. To understand the perception of students on how bullying will affect their learning behaviors.
5. To examine the perception of students on how bullying affects relationship with others in terms of learning.

This paper presents the perception on the effects of bullying on students learning behavior from the Ghanaian perspective. In this sense, the paper will enrich literature with empirical evidence from the country so as to improve understandings. In addition, the findings will be of practical relevance to school authorities, educators and counselors at the metropolis and even the district levels of Ghana Education Service to shape action plans and intervention policies and programs on bullying.

In the course of the study, the researchers encountered series of problems. There were some lapses with the questionnaire design which made analyzing the data very difficult. Also, getting materials from the Ghanaian setting for the study was highly difficult so it makes the whole of the literature to be clouded with foreign background.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides a comprehensive examination of pertinent literature to better understand perception relating to bullying and how they affect senior high school students in the Cape Coast Metropolis. This chapter will further review theoretical and empirical frameworks that will put this study into perspective. The literature review revealed significant information about the forms or types of bullying, characteristics of bullying, effects of bullying and the age range of bullying. It will therefore contain works covering the subject under study conducted by other researchers.

The concept of perception

Our environment is composed of many forces that keep impinging on our sensory receptors continuously by the various stimuli present. We therefore become aware of some light, sound or chemical stimuli by experiencing some sensations that information about the stimuli which are relayed by our sensory transmitter to the centres of the nervous system. Perception is the process of attaining awareness or understanding of sensory information. The word "perception" comes from the Latin words perceptio, percipio, and means "receiving, collecting, and action of taking possession, apprehension with the mind or senses (Shergill, 2012)." Perception depends on complex functions of the nervous system, but subjectively seems mostly effortless because this processing happens outside conscious awareness. Although the senses were traditionally viewed as passive receptors, the study of illusions and ambiguous images has demonstrated that the brain's perceptual systems actively and precociously attempt to make sense of their input. The perceptual systems of the brain enable individuals to see the world around them as stable, even though the sensory information is typically incomplete and rapidly varying (Lee, 2016). Human and animal brains have similar modular structure, with different areas processing different kinds of sensory information. Some of these modules take the form of sensory maps, mapping some aspect of the world across part of the brain's surface. These different modules are interconnected and influence each other. For instance, taste is strongly influence by smell.

Based on the meaning derived, we come to conclusion that, perception is a process rather than being a product or outcome of some psychological phenomenon (Mangal, 1995). It deals with input (sensory impressions or experiences from the environment) and output (meaning given to the input). Perception used in this study seeks to find out how the input (bullying) affect their learning behaviour and understanding or giving meaning to bullying as adverse activity in educational settings.

Perception can be seen as information extractor (Mangal, 2013). In every environment or setting, there are whole lots of information or jumble sensory impressions but in perception relevant information are extracted out of a jumbled sensory impression. In the study, students or respondents are likely to extract information concerning bullying and its potential affect likely to affect their learning behaviour at school.

According to Babu, perception can be highly individualized (2014). Individuals perceive objects, events or relationships differently even when it is the same event (Silverman, 1978). Relating to the study, views given by students concerning bullying can vary. There can be varying opinions concerning prevalence of bullying in their schools, the motives for bullying, how bullying affect their relationship with others concerning learning and even the likelihood of bullying affecting their learning behaviour. Students' perception of bullying can be influenced by factors like how they pay attention to bullying, expectations concerning bullying, what motivates them to bully and their past experiences with bullying especially the victims of bullying.

Perception would somehow be split in two: Firstly, processing sensory inputs which transform low-level information to higher-level information (Douglas 2010). In relation to the study, students are exposed to varying forms of bullying activities from the less prevalent form to the high prevalent form in the school setting. Secondly, processing which is connected with person's conception and expectations (knowledge), and selective mechanisms (attention) that influence perception. With this, students view of the bullying activity whether they see it as positive or negative, knowledge or ideas they have of bullying activities and the extent of attention they pay to those bullying activities.

Psychologist Jerome Bruner has developed a model of perception. According to him people go through the following process to form opinions: Firstly, when we encounter an unfamiliar target we are open to different information cues and want to learn more about the target. Thus, when fresh students are admitted to the school settings and they experience the bullying situations for the first time (whether been victim of bullying or been bystander to the bullying situation). In the second step we try to collect more information about the target. Gradually, we encounter some familiar cues which help us categorize the target. Thus, these fresh students tend to acquire much information about the bullying situation (are students bullied for just fun, because they peers or seniors, because it is a tradition etc.) through their experience. They experience different forms of bullying and become familiarize with them.

At this stage, the cues become less open and selective. We try to search for more cues that confirm the categorization of the target. We also actively ignore and even distort cues that violate our initial perceptions. Our perception becomes more selective and we finally paint a consistent picture of the target. Thus, students then pay much attention or selective to some forms of bullying which are prevalent and how they are likely to affect their learning behaviour. Example, how teasing and calling of unpleasant names can prevent students to interact with peers or teachers during teaching sessions.

Approaches to perception

The first approach under discussion is cognition which tends to

explain perception on the basis of cognitive processes. Most thinkers are convinced that the sources of cognition can be divided into basic groups, according to whether the sources that exist within the subject or outside it. Proponents of the first approach under this view are called internalists. The internalists are convinced that pieces of knowledge or their sources and principles can be found within the subject and cognition is nothing else but discovering them or developing already pieces of knowledge. For example, Descartes who believed in innate ideas is the proponent of this approach, as well as Plato, who asserted that knowledge is nothing else but recollecting already acquired contents.

In contrast to the internalism, some authors are convinced that all knowledge has an external source-experience. The externalists asserted that the mind is more or less blank sheet of paper (tabula rasa) and all knowledge is being imprinted in us from external reality. This was been pioneered by John Locke. These philosophers are actually convinced that the world is a sum of information surrounding the subject, this we call the world is nothing else but a set of various perceptions, feelings and ideas.

J. J. Gibson also gave his assertions concerning perception. He believed that our cognition apparatus was created and formed by a long evolutionary influence of external environment which is apparent in its structure and abilities. We learned to extract precisely the information which is necessary for our survival. His idea was in accordance with Darwin's assumption, the pressures of the environment can influence our perceptions to be created and formed so that they become sensitive to relevant stimulus from the environment and adapt to the environment.

Again, constructivist theories assume that perception is the end product of interaction between stimulus and internal hypothesis, expectations and knowledge of the observer, while motivation and emotions play important role in this process. Thus, perception is influenced by a wide range of individual factors that can lead to an inadequate interpretation (Eysenck and Keane, 2008).

The various approaches and its effect of students' perception on bullying

Cognitive aspect of perception gives overview of the study based on how students may perceive bullying through their ability to process bullying activity. Students' principles and ideas backing their activity are internal through the processing and giving meaning to it. It can be inferred that bullies may bully because they may perceive bullying in their mind to be something done for fun. With regards to the externalists who are convinced that perception is influenced by external source like experience. Students, especially fresh students who are innocent in relation to bullying, later tend to be bullies because their experiences of bullying situations in a way influences them to become bullies, especially when they believe peers or junior students can make you gain power and authority over them.

According to Gibson (1979) idea, its relevance to the study will help us know that the environment (community individual has stayed before coming to school) can influence student's to become bullies. Thus, a student who lived in aggressive or hostile community is likely to perceive bullying as normal or a tradition and transfer his or her beliefs to school and others become his or her victims.

The nature of bullying

Bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour directed at a person or group of people. Smith (1997, p. 1) states that bullying can be defined as "the systematic abuse of power –persistent and repeated actions which are intended to intimidate or hurt another person". Kowalski et al., (2008) indicate that sometimes the abuse of power involves differences in physical strength between individuals, and or groups but often it is characterized by differences in social power or status. Bullying also involves direct and indirect aggressive behaviour, discrimination and harassment (Smith and Ananiadou, 1997).

It is considered 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 becoming a social menace 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 performance, emotional and social development during the school period and some involve a gradual increase of violence that can bring about some fatalities (Kartal and Bilgin, 2009).

School bullying is a subcategory of bullying which is present in many classrooms. One definition of school bullying is that "a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (Olweus, 1999). Most research works that focuses on bullying in schools distinguish several types of bullying. Often they are divided into two categories. The first category refers to traditional or overt. This type of bullying is conducted face-to-face and includes physical and verbal aggression. The second category refers to non-traditional or covert bullying. This type is not easily seen by adults or others and includes: indirect (done via a third party), and relational aggression (conducted to damage someone's peer relationship) (Cross et al., 2009).

Norwegian researcher Dan Olweus defines bullying in his book, "Bullying at School": "A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself." This global phenomenon, has, over the years, attracted the attention of governmental and non-governmental organizations all over the world (Farmer, 2011). International studies that focused on the prevalence of bullying showed that students experience high rates of bullying in schools. For example, in the United States, the prevalence estimated of victimization in students aged 6- 10 years was 11% (Nansel et al., 2001). In the UK, (Smith et al.,

2008) found that that 19% of the pupils aged 11-16 years were bullied during that year.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes a child's right to a safe environment and protection from all forms of physical and emotional harm, including school bullying (*UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 1989). In the New Zealand context, the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) for school administration set out the following statements of desirable principles:

"Provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students (NAG5 a); comply in full with any legislation currently in force or that may be developed to ensure the safety of students and employees" (NAG5 in New Zealand's Bullying Guide).

Although schools are expected to provide a safe environment for students and school staff, indications are that schools are not always a safe place for students. According to Carroll-Lind (2009), violence and bullying-related incidents are a major threat to students' wellbeing and contribute to a significant number of school suspensions in New Zealand. Recent studies have revealed high levels of bullying in New Zealand schools compared to other countries. For instance, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (Martin, Mullis, & Foy, 2008) found that physical and emotional bullying in New Zealand schools are more than 50 percent above the international average (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 2012). Furthermore, in recent years, new forms of school bullying emerged in New Zealand and other developed countries.

There are peer risk factors that are likely to cause bullying; these factors are friends who bully, friends who have positive attitudes about violence, some aggressive children who take on high status roles may use bullying as a way to enhance their social power and protect their prestige with peers, some children also with low social status may use bullying as a way to deflect taunting and aggression that is directed towards them or to gain social recognition from higher status peers (Williams, 2013). Dan Olweus definition includes three (3) important components:

1. Bullying is aggressive behaviour that involves unwanted, negative actions.
2. Bullying involves a pattern of behaviour repeated over time.
3. Bullying involves an imbalance of power or strength.

In his writings, Dr. Olweus is very clear that bullying is peer abuse that should not be tolerated under any circumstances. Today, more than thirty states in the United States of America have adopted laws against bullying.

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 or her bullying activities. Bullying in school and workplace is also referred to as peer abuse. A bullying culture can develop in any context in which humans interact with each other. This includes schools, family, the workplace, home, and neighborhoods.

Bullying can take on many forms according to Olweus in his Bullying questionnaire, students were asked if they have been bullied in any of these nine ways:

- Verbal bullying including derogatory comments and bad names
- Bullying through social exclusive or isolation
- Physical bullying such as hitting, kicking, shoving, and spitting
- Bullying through lies and false rumors
- Having money or other things taken or damage by students who bully
- Being threatened or being forced to do things by students who bully
- Racial bullying
- Sexual bullying

Characteristics of bullying

The characteristics of bullies and victims are closely related to its risk factors (Rigby, 1999). Socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, religion and school environment have also been found to be related to bullying. While the young people within each of these groups share many similarities, each group can be further divided into subgroups of students with different personalities, motivations and behaviours. It is important to understand the nature and range of the young people who fall into each of these socio-demographic characteristics in order to effectively plan and deliver bullying prevention activities.

According to Andreou (2001), adolescents from lower socioeconomic status families are more likely to subject others to bullying.

Theories sway from bullies being popular' and confident planners (Sutton et a., 1999), through to anxious and depressed individuals (Salmon et al., 1998). Bullies have been found to possess personality defects, such as having an optimistic inclination for violence (Andreou, 2001) while lacking a positive perception of themselves (Olweus, 1999). They exhibit aggressive behavior in general, even towards adults, and seem to find comfort in dominance over others. Students who bully have strong needs for power and find satisfaction in bringing pain and suffering to other students. Most bullies come from homes where abusive way of doing things is permissive, where aggressive behaviors of the parents are viewed as a norm (Smokowski and Kopasz, 2005). Most often, some bullies attach themselves with their teachers and other adults. Due to this, it is usually not easy for adults to determine or even imagine that these students perpetrate bullying. (Sutton et al., 1999) indicated that bullies can be socially central members of the peer system.

Bullying in schools (Olweus, 1999; Smith and Brain, 2000)

is often conceptualized along a continuum across bully category recognizing that children may be involved in bullying with varied degrees as the victim, a bully/victim and uninvolved peer (Espelage and Swearer, 2008). The typical bully profile has been found to be less than consistent. Smokowski et al. (2005) describe victims as generally but always younger, smaller, less popular and physically weaker than their bullies. They tend not to be assertive in their responses or retaliate, and they are often not confident in their physical abilities and strength. Victims have also been found not to be particularly assertive.

Bullied students often lack social skills and friends and are often socially isolated (Banks, 1997). According to experts in the field Sudermann et al. (1996), victims of bullies tend to be quiet and shy in temperament. Surprisingly, physical characteristics like weight, dress, and wearing glasses are not significant factors associated with victimization. DeHaan (1997) provided some signs parents may want to look for in their child when assessing if there is the possibility of a bullying situation. She indicated the child may act moody, withdrawn, or become depressed. The victim may lose interest in schoolwork, lose his appetite, and find it difficult to get to sleep, or see a drop in grades. The victim may also come home with torn clothes, ask for extra money or refuse to even go to school.

Effects of bullying

Mona O'Moore of the Anti-Bullying centre at Trinity College in Dublin, has written, "there is a growing body of research which indicates that individuals, whether child or adult, who are persistently subjected to abusive behaviour are at risk of stress related illness which can sometimes lead to suicide. According to Juvonen and Graham (2001), those who have been the targets of bullying can suffer from long term emotional and behavioral problems. Bullying can cause loneliness, depression, anxiety, lead to low self-esteem and increase susceptibility to illness. Bullying has also been shown to cause maladjustment in young children and victims of bullying who were also bullies themselves exhibit even greater social difficulties.

According to Olweus (1993), bullying can affect everyone-those who are bullied, those who bully and those who are witnessing bullying. Bullying is linked to many negative outcomes including impacts on mental health, substance use, and suicide. It is important to talk to kids to determine whether bullying- or something else is a concern. According to him kids who are bullied can experience negative physical, school and mental health issues. Kids who are more likely to experience: Depression and anxiety, increased feeling of sadness, changes in sleep and eating patterns and loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy or school learning activities.

Sudermann et al. (1996), indicated that victims are typically unhappy children. After a while they tend to avoid school or social interactions. Some victims become so distressed that they commit or attempt to commit suicide. Victims later on

may become so angry that they retaliate with violent behaviors like frequent fighting or carrying and using a weapon against the bully. The effects of bullying last a lifetime. It causes misery for the bully's victim, and leaves a lasting impression on all those who witness repeated bullying incidents.

Age range

As children get older, the type and range of bullying behaviour increases. Most often physical, psychological and social bullying happens among children as young as four; other bullying behaviour emerges as children move toward adolescence. For example, sexual harassment and dating aggression typically begin in middle school. It usually occurs at age 12-17 (Makin-Byrd and Azar, 2011; Miller et al., 2013). In 2011, a study in the U.S indicated that the risk of bullying peaks at different ages for different types bulling. Physical intimidation was most commonly reported by children under 10 years: 18 percent among children ages 2 to 5, and16 percent among children ages 6 to 9, compared with 11 percent among children ages 10 to 13, and 10 percent among children ages 14 to 17.

Relational aggression according to this study peaks later, with 22 percent of children ages 2 to 5 reporting it in the past year compared with between 40 and 45 percent of older children.

Theoretical framework

Based on theoretical consideration, the social ecological theory and social cognitive theory was the framework examined to guide the study. Researches such as (Espelage and Swearer, 2008; Swearer and Doll, 2001; Swearer and Espelage, 2004a, b) are well known for the application of social ecological theory to research on bullying. These researchers indicated that bullying is not solely a personality-based phenomenon, but rather is rooted in environmental influences (Espelage et al., 2000; Swearer and Doll, 2001; Swearer and Espelage, 2004b). It is the interplay of individuals with each other and within a given environment that gives birth to bullying behaviors.

Social cognitive theory

The main tenets of social ecological theory have deep roots in Bandura's social cognitive theory, which advances the basic premise that there is interplay between behavior, cognition and environment, bidirectional forces with each one influencing the other (Bandura, 1986, 1989, 2001; Bandura et al., 1961). For example, it is a norm to a child who lives in a home with abusive ways to learn that abusing another is an acceptable way of dealing with frustration or getting what he or she wants. The abuse the child experiences within that environment and between individuals or groups in that environment influences how the child behaves in similar situations.

Learning happens as a result of these interacting influences. Bandura's theory explains the powerful influence of

observational learning whereby children imitate the models they observe and the feedback they receive either reinforces or inhibits their behaviors (Allen, 2010; O'Connell et al., 1999). As a learning theory, social cognition throws more light on how individuals learn and the influences that impact their learning and behavior. Bullying and victimization are learned behaviors that exist within a social context and as such influence and are influenced by many environmental and social factors.

Bandura (1989) theorizes that learning occurs through interactions with the environment and is dependent upon the reinforcement received as a result of the behavior. In some types of environments, children can actually dictate the climate of the environment by the behaviors they produce (Miller, 2011). Teachers have witnessed this when one child's behavior disrupts the work of an entire classroom. Teachers also have seen how one child's negative behavior can produce negative behaviors in others. This has much to do with the power of observational learning and the extent to which these behaviors are reinforced within the classroom, another important part of Bandura's (1989) theory. If bullying behaviors are not directly addressed and thus are indirectly tolerated, then students may imitate this behavior, especially if the action produces a favorable result for them. Favorable results for the bully could mean simply attention from other students or adults, or even getting something they want from the victim. If bullying behaviors produce a favorable result for the bully, then the bully's behavior is reinforced and therefore likely to be repeated. The more the bully's behavior is reinforced, the more power the bully may wield, and in turn, the more they influence the environment. To the extent that the bullying behavior is perpetuated other students quite possibly will imitate it.

Espelage et al. (2000) contend that, there are environmental factors that contribute to bullying and may sustain bullying behaviors. These include parental physical discipline, time spent without adult supervision, negative peer influences, and perception of neighborhood safety. These factors create opportunities for observational learning and modeling, a social cognitive learning process that contributes to the level of aggression a child may demonstrate. These contextual factors exist in varying levels in various environments. Therefore, bullying behaviors that result from these influences can be identified as occurring over a continuum.

Social ecological theory

Social Ecological Theory as it pertains to bullying, Swearer and Espelage (2004) posit that individual characteristics are considered jointly influenced by a variety of ecological contexts, including peers, families, schools, and community factors. Bullying, a type of aggressive behavior, is influenced by the complex interplay of these factors. Investigating how those who are involved in bullying situations perceive these contexts is the next logical step in applying this theoretical construct. In this respect, Rodkin's (2004) work in peer ecology, takes the work of social ecological theorists to a more

specific level by looking at just one element of the ecological system and the influence it holds. Rodkin (2004) posits, "The peer ecology is a proximal ecology that the child interacts with directly" (p. 87). Because of this, the peer group affiliation has a significant influence on a child's behavior, how he perceives others, and even how he perceives himself.

Rodkin (2004) speaks specifically of the power of the group. He believes that the group's power is exponentially stronger than the sum of the individuals who make up the group. School children can easily identify the various groups within their classroom and school, even those to which they do not belong. Grouping is a type of sorting process usually along the lines of similarity of beliefs or goals, similarity of race or ethnicity, or similarity of interests such as sports teams. In applying this concept to bullying, aggressive behavior is more likely to thrive in an environment where peers are supportive of those aggressive behaviors. So, according to Rodkin (2004), it is the group that helps to maintain aggressive bullying behaviors and the group that helps to identify targets as well. This concept of peer ecology within the larger social ecological context has significant implications for this study to the extent that interaction between individuals and the many and varied aspects of their environment influence the existence, amount, and degree of bullying and victimization that exist in any given social arena.

The theories mentioned above strengthened and defined this study by providing a lens through which one can view student perceptions of bullying and the social environment from which it arises. Within the school environment, policies and practices intended to address the negative impact of bullying have evolved, either purposefully through policy development, or inadvertently, through trial and error. Social ecological theory provided the framework through which investigated student perceptions that influence and are influenced by these policies and practices.

METHODOLOGY

The section covers the research methodology used in acquiring information from participants to embark on the study. It covers the research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, instrument, and data collection procedure and the data analysis. Purposive and stratified proportional sampling was employed.

Research design

This cross-sectional study employs a quantitative research approach. Pie charts, tables and graphs were used for systematic empirical investigation of this observable phenomenon.

Population description

For the purpose of the study, the target population comprises of

all students in the second cycle schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The accessible population however, was made up of all students (3499) in the three (3) second cycle schools in the Cape Coast metropolis. These schools are: St. Augustine College, Ghana National College and Holy Child Senior High School with student population of 1206, 1342 and 951 respectively.

The Cape Coast Metropolitan Assembly is the capital and the administrative district of the Central Region of Ghana. It is endowed with many schools across the length and breadth of the Metropolis ranging from the basic level to the tertiary level and are either academic or professional institutions. According to Cape Coast Composite Budget 2013, the assembly with a land area of 122km square and being the smallest metropolis in Ghana boasts of 258 educational institutions of which 15 are senior high schools.

Sample size and sampling technique

Fink (2001) explains sample to be a portion or subset of a group. It is representative of the population if important characteristics such as, age, gender, and status, are distributed similarly in both groups. The sample size was purposely obtained using the total population of 322 students. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula on deriving a sample size was used as shown in the appendix. To ensure fairness due to population differential in the schools chosen for the study, the researchers opted to use the stratified proportional sampling method in selecting the sample for the study. This procedure was used to determine the sample size for each school.

In St. Augustine's school the sample size was 119, 133 for Ghana National College and 94 for Holy Child School. After deriving the sample, simple random was used to select the respondents.

Data collection instrument

Data for this study were from primary and secondary sources. For the primary source data, a questionnaire was given to the sample population of which each unit was asked to respond to the same set of questions in a pre-determined order given the large number of the population under study. This instrument was chosen for the study because it was the most appropriate method for obtaining information from respondents considering the sampling size, resources available for the research and the ease of compiling data because of standardized answers. The items on the questionnaire were made of six (6) sections:

The A section covered the background information, the next section inquired on the perception of students on the prevalence of bullying followed by questions on students' perceptions on the types of bullying in section C. Section D and E covered the perception of students on motives for bullying and how bullying will affect learning behaviors respectively. The final section (E) covered perception of students on how bullying affects relationship with others in terms of learning.

Validity and reliability

Before the study was conducted, a pre-test was done to enable the researcher refine the questionnaires so that respondents will have no problems in answering the questions and there will be no problem in recording the data.

Data collection procedure

An introductory letter was collected from the Head of Department of Educational Foundations to the various schools where the researchers carried out the study. The data was in a quantitative form. A set of questionnaires on the perception of students about bullying was administered to three hundred and forty-six (346) respondents of the chosen schools. The researchers established a rapport with the students and assisted few who had difficulties with some aspects of the items.

Data analysis

The data collected was coded, organized, summarized, and interpreted to give a clear picture about the state of the problem: - "The perception of students on the influence bullying has on performance and personality in second cycle institutions of Cape Coast Metropolitan, Ghana. The researchers used the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 12.0 programmed software to analyse the data collected. Descriptive statistical method was used in analysing the data making extensive use of frequencies and percentages.

Delimitation

The scope of this study is limited to the perception of students on the influence bullying has on performance and personality in second cycle institutions of cape coast metropolitan, Ghana.

RESULTS

Background information of respondents

As captured earlier on the background information gives a brief interpretation of the respondents, their level in school, age, and sex, course of study and name of school. Figure 1 indicates that three schools were chosen for the study. St. Augustine College represented by 119 respondents indicating 34.4%., Ghana National College represented by 133 respondents indicating 38.4% and Holy Child Senior High representing 94 of the respondents indicating 27.2%. Figure 2 shows that the respondents for the study were made of 157 female respondents and 189 male respondents representing 45.4% and 54.6% respectively. This implies that there was unequal distribution of respondents in terms of their gender. Furthermore, 156 respondents representing 45% were in the ages of 14-16 years, 111 respondents representing 32% of the respondent whiles 79 of the respondents indicating 23% were above 20 years (Figure
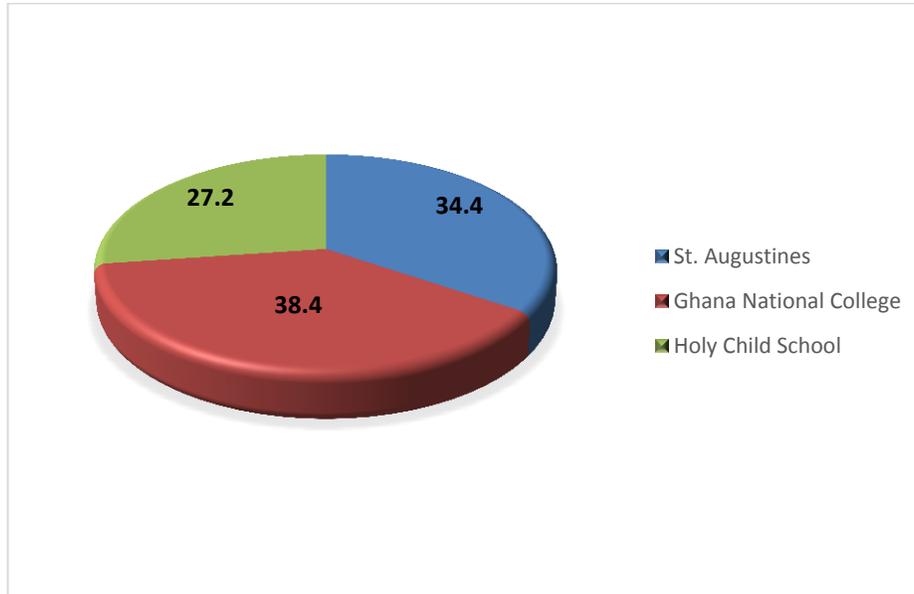
Figure 1. Demographic data of respondents (in percentages)
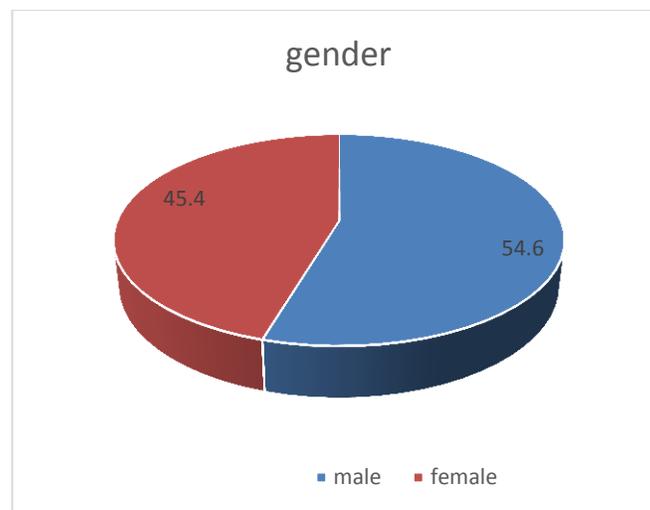

Figure 2. Gender of respondents

3).

In addition, Table 1 shows that 114 of the respondents representing 33% were 1st year students, 97 respondents representing 28% were in 2nd year, whiles the remaining 39% representing 135 respondents were in 3rd year. Also, with regards to their course of study 97 respondents representing 28% read science, 111 respondents representing 32% were Business students and the remaining 138 respondents representing 40% were Arts students. This implies that majority of the respondents were Arts students.

The findings on perceptions of students on prevalence of bullying in second cycle schools in Cape Coast metropolis as shown in Figure 4 revealed bullying by seniors was not in existence. 44% (152) of the respondents indicated that bullying of juniors by seniors exist whiles 56% (194) responded NO to the statement. Again, 339 respondents representing 98% of the respondents were in agreement that they have ever been teased by seniors or same peers before. Furthermore, 343 respondents (99%) indicated that they have been harassed in any way by seniors or same peers before. Also 138 respondents representing 40% indicated that bullying is common in the school whiles 208 respondents representing 60% indicated no to the statement. This implies that majority of the respondents do not see bullying as common in their schools.
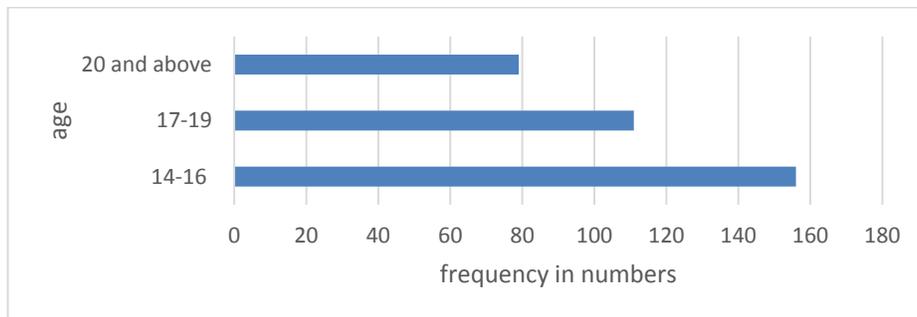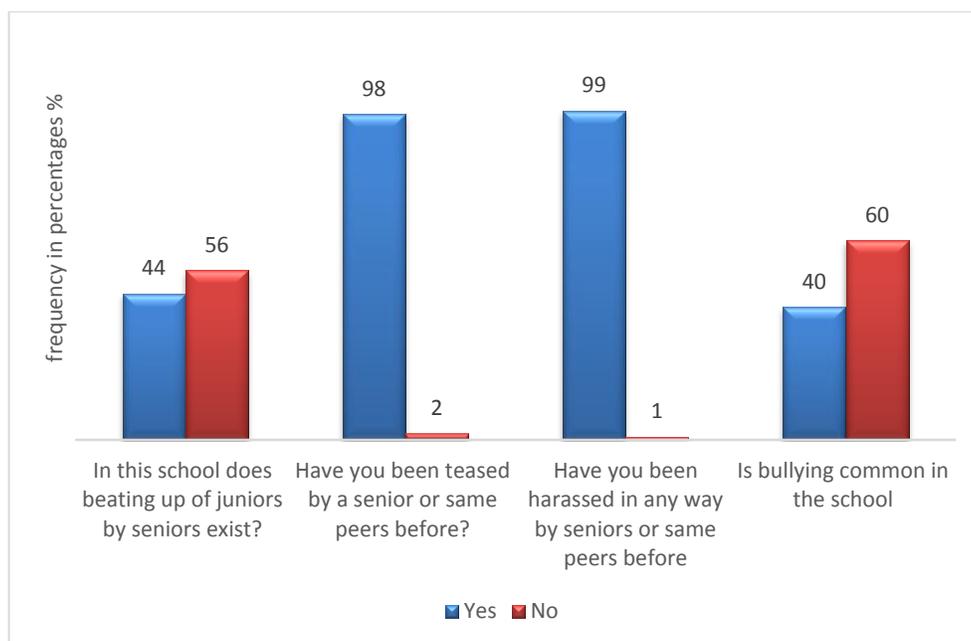
Figure 3. Age of respondents

Figure 4. Students' perception on the prevalence of bullying

Table 1. Level in school and course of study of respondents

Parameter	Frequency	Percentage
Level in school:		
1st year	114	33.0
2nd year	97	28.0
3rd year	135	39.0
Course of study:		
Science	97	28
Business	111	32
Art	138	40.0

In investigating the perceptions of students on the types of bullying students suffer in the second cycle schools, items were ranked from 1(highest) to 5 (the lowest). 35.0% of the respondents noted verbal insult was a dominant kind of bullying students suffer. On the other hand, being isolated from group activities was seen as the least form of bullying student
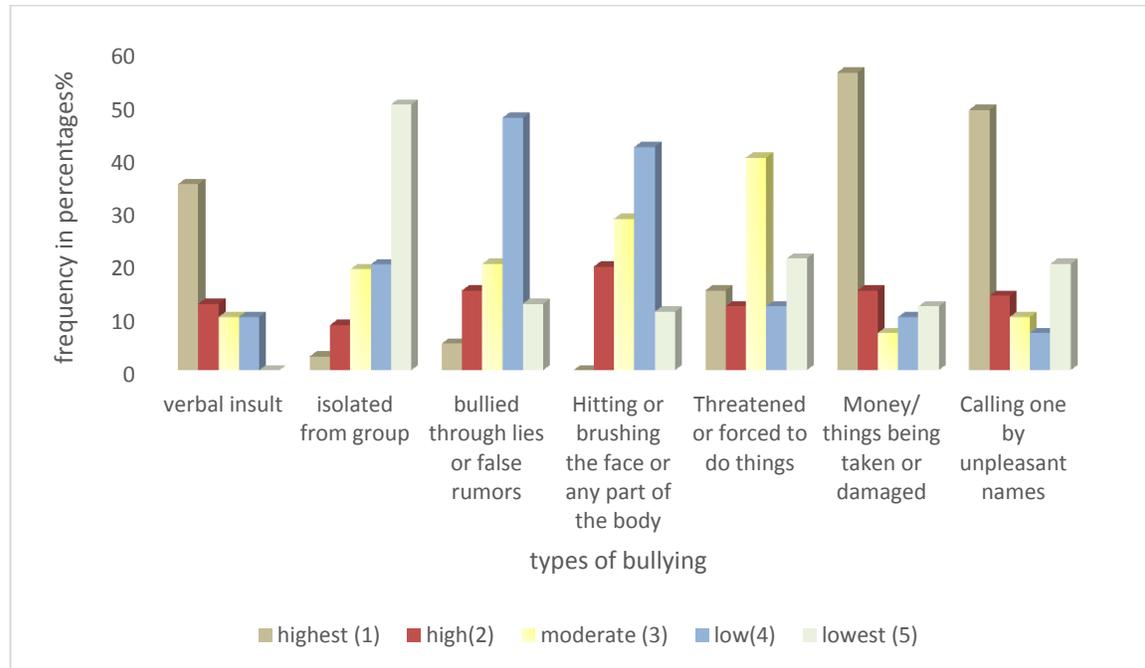
Figure 5. Perceptions on the types of bullying

suffer, this is indicated by 50% (173) of the respondents (Figure 5).

Being bullied through lies or false rumours as shown on the table is a low form of bullying according to 47.5% (164) of the respondents. Also, more respondents viewed hitting or brushing of one's face or any part of one's body as a least used form of bullying representing 145(42%). Furthermore, being threatened or being forced to do things by students was viewed as mild form of bullying representing 40.0% (138) of the respondents. Having money or other things being taken or damaged was also shown as one of the major bullying forms used on students 194(56.0%) of the respondents. In addition, calling one by unpleasant names was seen as a major bullying form used in second cycle institutions.

The third research question tried to elicit the students' perceptions on motives of bullies to bully by asking questions demanding a yes/no answer. From figure 6 below, 65.0% (225) of respondents pointed out that seniors bully for just the fun, whiles 121(35%) think otherwise (Figure 6). 44.0% (152) respondents indicated YES to the statement that "they bully because they annoyed me" whiles 51.0% (176) respondents responded NO to the statement. Also, 45% (156) of the respondents indicated YES to the statement that they bully because students proved difficult, whiles 190 respondents representing 55% says NO to the statement. This implies that most of the respondents disagreed that they were bullied because they proved difficult. Also, 87% (301) of the respondents indicated that bullying was a tradition, whiles 45(13%) respondents refuted the statement. This implies that majority of the students agreed that bullying was a tradition.

30% of the respondents agree that students were bullied because they are two knowing. On the contrary, a majority representing 70% do not support that assertion. Furthermore, 86.5% (299) of the respondents agreed to the statement that "because they want to gain power over others". Whiles 13.5% (47) were not in agreement by indicating NO against the statement.

From the Figure 7, it revealed 208(60%) of the respondents agreed to the statement that "there is decrease concentration level for victims of bullying as one of the factors affecting learning whiles 138(40%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement. This implies that majority of the respondents agreed to the statement that, there is decrease concentration levels for victims of bullying.

Again, 88(25.5%) of the respondents agreed to the statement that "Students who are bullied have low level of interest in school whiles 258(75%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement. This implies that majority of the respondents were in disagreement to the statement. Also the graph points out that, 173(50%) of the respondents agreed to the statement that "Victims of bullying are more likely to be truant and absent from school whiles 173(50%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement. This connotes that there was equal distribution of the respondents with regards to the statement. Furthermore, 242 (70%) of the respondents were in favor of the statement that "Bullying can affect desire to perform well whiles 104 (30%) of the respondents were not. This implies that majority of the respondents were agree to the statement.

From the Figure, it was shown that 294 (85%) of the respondents supported the statement that "Bullying can affect
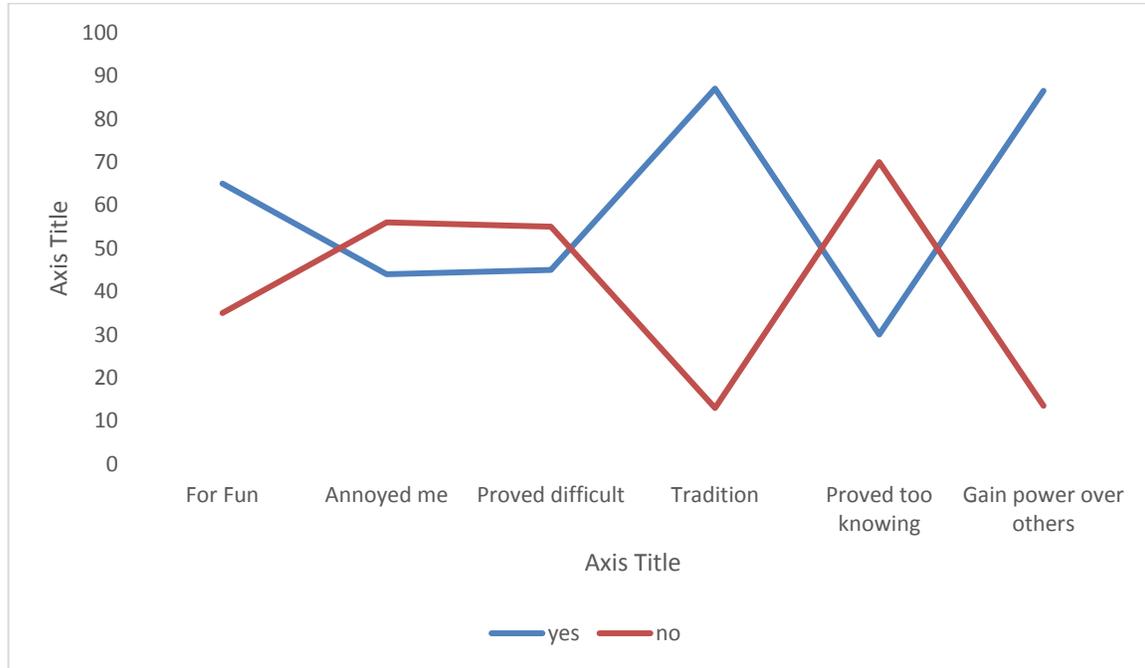
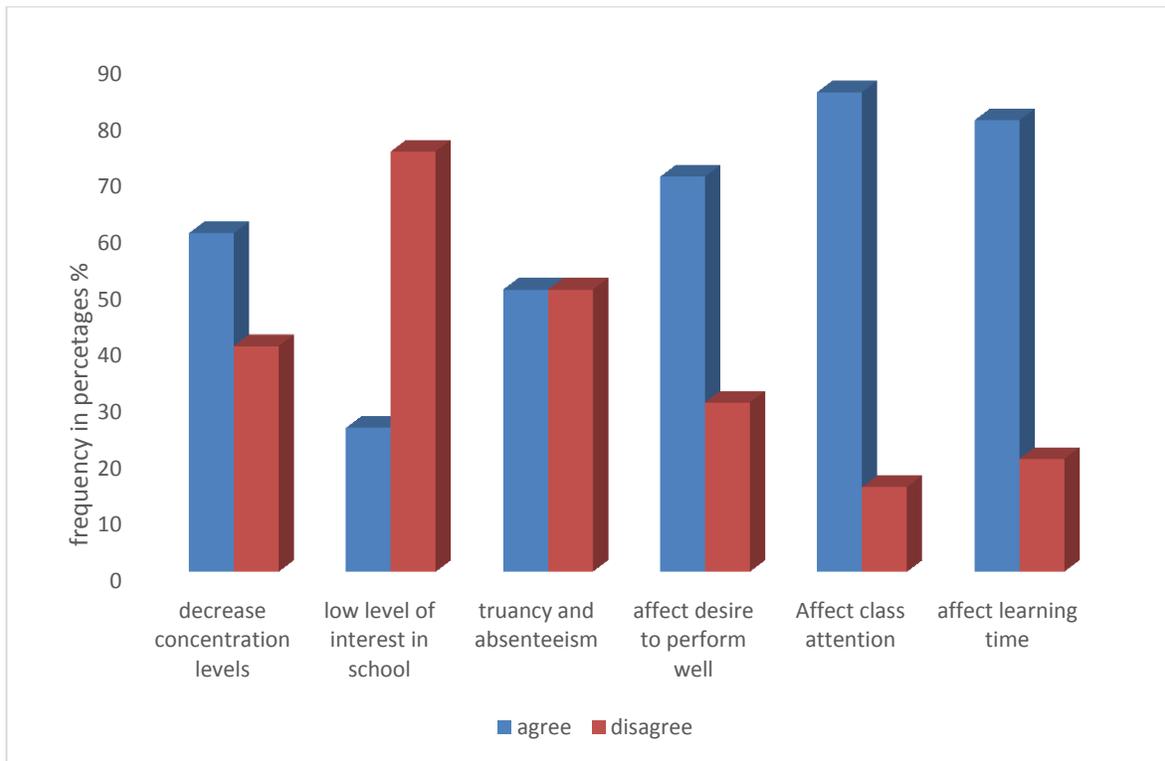**Figure 6.** The perceptions of students on motives of bullies to bully

Figure 7. The perceptions of students on motives of bullies to bully

attention in class whiles 52 (15%) of the respondents disagreed. This shows that majority of the respondents agreed to the statement that, Bullying can affect attention in class. Furthermore, 277(80.0%) of the respondents concur with the
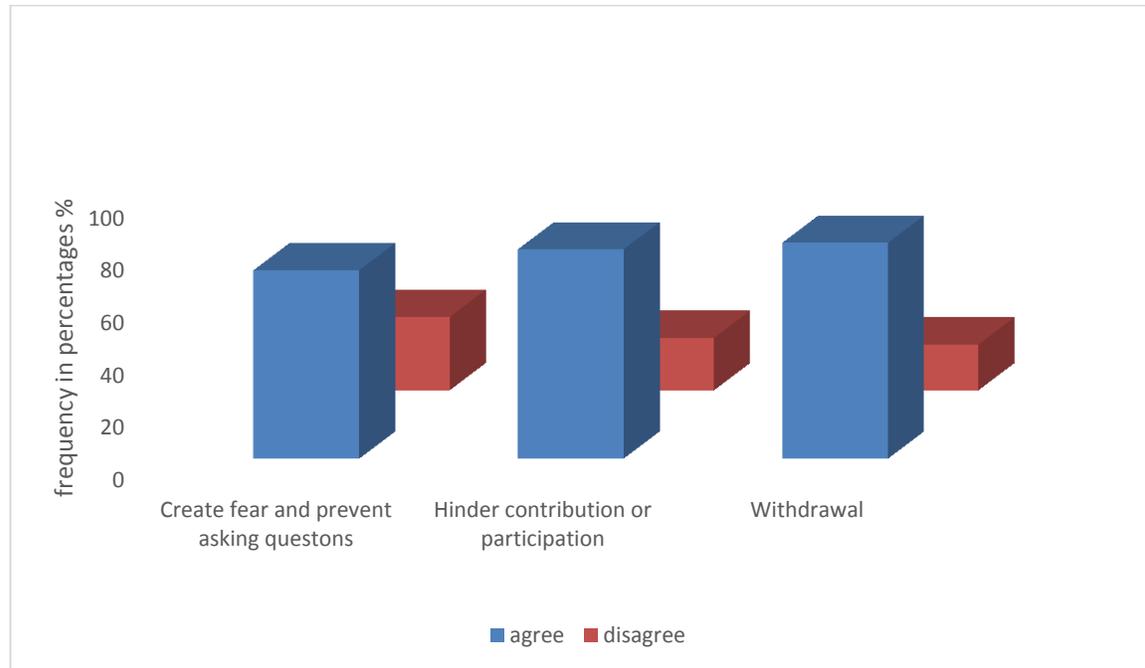
Figure 8. Perception of students on how bullying affects relationship with others in terms of learning

statement that bullying can affect learning time, whiles 69 (20.0%) of the respondent did not. This indicates that most of the respondents agreed to the statement that bullying can affect learning time.

From Figure 8, 249 (72.0%) respondents indicated that bullying can create fear in one and prevents one from asking questions during teaching, especially when one feels the peers will tease him or her, whiles 97 (28%) respondents disagreed to the statement. 277 (80.0%) respondents agreed to the statement "Bullying can hinder your ability to contribute or participate in group work or learning with your peers" whiles 69 (60.0%) respondents disagreed to the statement. Also, 285 (82.5%) of the respondents agreed to the statement that bullying can hinder your ability to contribute or participate in group work or learning with your peers, whiles respondents representing 17.5% disagreed to the statement. This implies that most of the respondents agreed to the statement.

SUMMARY

This part summarizes information obtained from the study, draws conclusions in the light of the findings and finally, puts forward recommendations based on the findings of the study.

Key findings

This present study tries to analyze the extent to which bullying affects students in terms of their learning behaviour relating to self, relationship with others or peers in terms of learning and learning in terms of relationship with teachers A number of significant issues were seen at the end of the study with regards to the perceptions of students on bullying in second cycle institutions in Cape Coast metropolis in general and its influence on learning behaviours and personality in specific.

From the research conducted, majority of the respondents (60%) indicated that the bullying of juniors by seniors does not exist. However, almost all respondents indicated that they have been teased and harassed by a senior or their peers. Also, the findings brought to light that verbal insult, name-calling, having money or other things being taken or damaged were seen as the major types of bullying. On the contrary, the most prevalent activities of bullying are "things stolen" and "being made fun of". Furthermore, bullying motives were viewed from different perspectives. Some respondents perceived it as a fun activity, others as a tradition, to gain power or as a retaliation measure for being annoyed. Consistent with another study in Ghana by Xu, Yu, & Shahriar, "being hurt by other students" and "forced to do things" are least prevalent activities of bullying.

Moreover, contrary to previous researches by Kaltiala-Heino et al (1999), Owusu et al. (2011), and Olweus, the findings revealed that students who are bullied do not necessarily have low interest in school but bullying does affect their learning behaviors: attention in class, concentration in class and the desire to perform well. Similarly, Xu et al. (2015) identifies bullying has a negative effect on academic performance. Again, bullying was seen to strain social relationships and create fear

among students and peers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of the study, reinforces the theories aforementioned in the literature review on the interplay of the environmental factors and group behaviors on bullying. The study provides evidence on the motives to bully being informed by factors such as tradition, bullying for fun and gaining power over others. Also, it attests to the fact peer groups champion bullying. The study shows that bullying in second cycle institutions exist to an extent buttressed with 99% of respondents indicating being harassed before and more than one third of respondents pointing to the occurrence of junior students being beaten by seniors. Despite the fact that, the students indicated that in some way it is being minimized. The researchers realized that its effects on students' learning behaviour relating to self, relationship with others or peers in terms of learning and learning in terms of relationship with teachers are devastating. Again the study indicates that most students (65%) take bullying to be fun which implies that they do not consider its effects.

It is therefore imperative for Ghana's Ministry of Education to put in measures to control the issue of bullying in schools such as introducing school interventions and anti- bullying guidelines. These can focus on improving peer-relations among students in order to prevent all forms of bullying in schools. In addition, if school staffs hold attitudes not supportive of bullying behaviour, the school becomes less tolerant of bullying. The individual may unlikely be involved in that behavior. Furthermore, educational stakeholders can help in organizing schools' campaigns to avoid these practices. Parent Teachers Associations must also do their best in educating the students on the traumatic effects of bullying and how it can impact on their learning behaviours.

Students should be made consciously aware of the effect of bullying on the various aspects of life of any individual being it social, emotional, psychological and the overall development of their learning performance.

Future research should concentrate on finding out how the opposite sex views the issue of bullying and make comparative study among schools. Also, a different research methodology can be adopted for future study on bullying.

Conflict of interest

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

The following questionnaires forms part of a study being undertaken on "Perception of students on the effect of bullying on their learning behaviour". We shall be grateful if you would answer them to the best of your ability. This is purely an academic exercise and your anonymity is guaranteed.

Tick [√] the appropriate responses to the questions, unless otherwise stated, responses range from YES, NO and responding to questions with A, SA, D, and SD. A stands for Agree, SA Strongly Agree, D Disagree and SD Strongly Disagree

SECTION A
Personal Background Information

1. Name of School _____
2. Gender
 Male [ ] Female [ ]
3. Age
14-16years [ ]
17-19years [ ]
20years above [ ]
4. Level in School
1st year [ ]
2nd year [ ]
3rd year [ ]
5. Course of study _____

SECTION B

Perception on the Prevalence of Bullying Statement	YES	NO
6. In this school does beating up of juniors by seniors exist?		
7. Have you been teased by a senior or same peers before?		
8. Have you been harassed in any way by seniors or same peers before?		
9. Is bullying common in the school?		

SECTION C
Perception of students on the Types of Bullying that occur in the school
(Items on this table have been ranked, 1 been the highest and 5 been the lowest.)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
10. Being insulted					
11. Being isolated from group activities					
12. Being bullied through lies or false rumours					
13. Hitting or brushing of your face or any part of your body					

14. Being threatened or being forced to do things by students					
15. Having money or other things being taken or damaged					
16. Calling one by unpleasant names					

Appendix 2:
Determining sample size
The size of the population and the amount of error the researcher is willing to tolerate is what determines the size of the sample. The table that follows was developed for situations where the researcher wants to come within 5 percentage points (with 95 % certainty) of what the results would have been if the entire population had been surveyed. A more flexible approach is to use a sample size calculator that allows you to enter your preferences.

Table for Determining Sample Size from A Given Population

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	181	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	180	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	190	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	200	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	210	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	373
65	56	220	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	230	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	240	144	550	225	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	250	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	260	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	270	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	256	2600	335	100000	384

Note:
"N" is population size
"S" is sample size.
(Source: Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 30, 607-610)