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

Ojo, Taiwo Abiodun & **Nwokolo, Chinelu**
at.ojo@unizik.edu.ng cn.nwokolo@unizik.edu.ng

Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anamvra State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Bullying in secondary schools poses a critical issue, significantly impacting victims and perpetrators alike and undermining the safety and well-being within educational environments. The need for effective intervention to reduce bullying tendency is critical for fostering a safe and conducive learning environment. The study examined the effect of behaviour contract technique on reducing bullying tendency among secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The study employed a quasi-experimental research design. The population consisted of 923 junior secondary (JSS II) and senior secondary (SSS II) students from three public secondary schools in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area, Ekiti State. Purposive random sampling method was used to select a sample of 93 students, consisting of 45 JSS II and 48 SSS II students. Data were collected using a standardized instrument titled Bullying Attitude Scale (BAS) with an internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.97. data were collected and analysed using mean and ANCOVA. The findings of this study indicate that behaviour contract technique (BCT) was significantly effective in reducing bullying tendency among secondary school students. In conclusion, behaviour contract technique (BCT) is significantly effective in reducing bullying tendency among secondary school students in Ado Ekiti, local government area of Ekiti State. It was recommended among others that the school guidance counsellors and other therapist should endeavour to employ the technique to help in reducing the incidents of bullying in the schools.

Keywords: Effect, Behaviour Contract Technique, Bullying Tendency, Secondary School Students.

Introduction

Numerous cases of bullying are reported among students in Nigerian secondary schools and other educational levels. School administrators often highlight the increasing prevalence of bullying during Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, urging parents to caution their children. Bullying significantly impacts the physical and psychological health of victims, often leading to long-term consequences such as anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. There is a notable overlap between delinquency and bullying, as many aggressive manifestations of bullying align with delinquent behaviour.

Consequently, teachers are compelled to spend a considerable portion of their

instructional time addressing bullying-related issues rather than focusing on educational content. This diversion of attention and resources from academic instruction to managing bullying incidents disrupts the educational process, impeding students' academic progress and overall school experience. This behaviour affects both the victim and the perpetrator, leading to immediate and long-term consequences (Aleem, 2016). The direct and indirect impacts of bullying and peer victimization often result in poor academic performance (Holt, Finkelhor and Kantor 2007). According to Nishina, Juvonen and Witkow (2005), school harassment and peer victimization contribute to a decline in classroom activities and school engagement, negatively impacting academic performance and achievement. Schools are critical environments where students spend much of their time growing and developing.

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

Lepper (2014) defined bullying as the intentional, systematic and unjustified aggressive behaviour that is exercised by a student or a group of students more powerful, physically or psychologically towards another student or group of students less powerful. Aluede (2014) in the same way described bullying as a form of aggression, a particular kind of violence exhibited in the course of social interaction by a more dominant individual (the bully) to a less dominant individual (the victim) with the intention to cause distress to the victim. Bullying may include name calling, verbal or written abuse, exclusion from activities and social situations, physical abuse or coercion (Bello, 2016). Bullies may behave this way to be perceived as popular or tough or to get attention. They may bully out of jealousy or be acting out because they themselves are bullied (Enea and Dafinoiu, 2019).

Bullying ranges from simple one-on-one bullying to more complex bullying in which the bully may have one or more "lieutenants" who may seem to be willing to assist the primary bully in his bullying activities. Bullying can occur in any context in which human beings interact with each other, this includes school, church family, the work-place, home and neighbourhoods. Boys are more likely to be involved in bullying and physical violence because of their physical strength, stature, physique and masculinity (domineering spirit as boys) while girls are likely to be involved in verbal means of bullying and social isolation of the target because of their own nature of talkativeness.

Regardless of the grade level, socio-economic environment, gender, religion or sexual orientation, bullying can happen to anyone. However, various studies point

out that students from lower socio-economic background were more bullied than students from higher socio-economic background (Agirdag, Demanet, Van Houtte, Van Avermaet and Bettelheim, 2011). The following statistics illustrate the severity of bullying within classroom - 20 – 40% of bullying victims actually reported being bullied. - 70% of middle school and high school students experience bullying in school. - 7 – 12% of bullies is habitual and poses a serious threat. - 23% of 9th graders have carried a weapon to school recently. - 5 – 15% of students is constantly bullied. - 27% of students is bullied because of their refusal to engage in common sexual practices. - 25% of students encourage bullying if not given proper education and support in anti-bullying techniques. Researches have revealed that 10% to 11% of adolescents sampled in Canada were victimized by peers and 8% to 11% were bullies (Hymel, Rocke-Henderson and Bananno, 2015). American schools harbour approximately 2.1 million bullies and 2.7 million are their victims (Aluede, 2014).

In Nigeria, the full extent of bullying remains unclear, although specific studies have provided some insight. Egbochukwu (2017) reported that in Benin City, nearly four out of every five participants disclosed experiencing bullying and 85% admitted to bullying others at least once. Another study by Omoteso (2010) found that 88.1% of participants had been bullied, 33.1% identified as bullies and 64.7% were involved in relational bullying. Additionally, 51.2% of respondents engaged in bullying as retaliation for past victimization. These statistics highlight the widespread nature of bullying behaviours among Nigerian students. Further research by Owoaje and Ndubusi (2009) focused on the 2007/2008 session students admitted to six public secondary schools in Odo Ota Local Government Area, Ogun State. Their findings revealed varying frequencies of bullying: 29.5% of students experienced bullying 1-2 days per month, 9.1% faced it 3-5 days per month, 5% were bullied 6-9 days per month and 4.3% endured bullying 10-30 days per month. These studies collectively indicate a significant presence of bullying within Nigerian schools, underscoring the need for comprehensive anti-bullying strategies and interventions to address and mitigate these behaviours effectively.

In a nationwide survey of school violence in Nigeria conducted by the Federal Ministry of Education (2007), it was revealed that physical violence and psychological violence accounted for 85% and 50% respectively of the bulk of violence against children in schools. Across school location, physical violence was more prevalent in the rural area (90%) than in the urban area (80%). Across region, physical violence in schools was higher in the southern region (90%) than in the northern region (70%). So was the case of psychological violence, which was 61% in southern Nigeria and only 38.7% in northern Nigeria. Researchers have found variations in the prevalence of bullying among boys and girls. Asamu (2006) found that 21% of the students studied in Ibadan who had bullied other students were male. Omoteso (2010) discovered that 48.8% male and 51.2% female were

involved in bullying. Donald, Lucy and Chirsyine, (2020) discovered that boys appeared to be more involved in bullying than girls across all bully status groups.

Gender differences in bullying behaviours have also been extensively examined. Research by Flood and Wilder (2016) found that males are more likely to engage in direct physical bullying (e.g., kicking, pushing), whereas both genders participate in direct verbal bullying. However, females are more commonly involved in indirect verbal bullying, such as spreading rumours and social exclusion. Despite these observations, there remains no clear consensus on gender differences in indirect forms of bullying, indicating a need for further investigation into how gender influences these behaviours. Gender-based differences in bullying among senior students in Nigeria show that rates of physical and psychological violence were nearly equal among male and female students (Elizabeth and Mary, 2015).

Research highlights both similarities and differences in how male and female students experience and respond to bullying. Matsani (2022) found that male and female students show comparable levels of involvement in bullying and similar attitudes toward victimization, indicating that bullying affects both genders in parallel ways. However, Bryan (2019) observed notable differences in the nature of bullying experiences, with females more inclined toward relational aggression and displaying positive attitudes toward social interactions compared to males. These distinctions suggest that while bullying prevalence may be similar across genders, its dynamics and impacts vary, influencing how students perceive and cope with bullying.

Further complicating the issue, reports indicate that students, regardless of gender, may feel pressured to join cults as a means of self-protection against bullying. These cults often evolve into intimidating groups that perpetuate bullying, underscoring the serious, systemic impact of bullying among both male and female students. The tragic deaths of students at Dowen College and Premier Academy in Nigeria serve as stark reminders of how bullying, when left unchecked, can escalate to extreme violence. Such incidents highlight the destructive outcomes of bullying on both genders, with anecdotal evidence from Nigerian boarding schools suggesting that the problem is widespread and sometimes obscured by school management. Increasing parental concerns further underscore the need for urgent, effective anti-bullying strategies that address these severe consequences.

The complexities of bullying extend beyond gender Bryan (2019) pointed out a disparity between students' attitudes and behaviours toward bullying, a gap that Salmivalli et al. (2005) observed across genders. Although both male and female students may verbally disapprove of bullying, they might still engage in or tolerate these behaviours. This inconsistency emphasizes the need for interventions that not only reshape students' attitudes but also modify their actual behaviours, addressing the nuanced ways both genders interact with bullying.

In addition to shaping individual experiences, bullying also undermines broader educational goals. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) emphasizes that secondary education aims to cultivate respectful, thoughtful citizens. Yet, bullying diverts students' attention from academic achievement to personal safety concerns, affecting both male and female students. This redirection away from educational objectives hampers students' overall engagement with school, revealing that bullying's impact on academic outcomes is significant across genders. While students may experience bullying differently, its negative effects on educational attainment are universal, underscoring the need for schools to prioritize anti-bullying initiatives.

Efforts to combat bullying have yielded mixed results, with gender differences potentially influencing the success of various interventions. Wang and Degol, 2014) documented that some anti-bullying programs succeeded while others fell short, highlighting the need for tailored strategies. They found that positive reinforcement and skill-building approaches were generally more effective than punitive measures. Omoteso (2010) further identified gender-based variations in coping strategies: female students were more likely to report bullying and seek parental support, whereas male students often chose avoidance or retaliation. Understanding these gender-specific responses is essential for creating effective, targeted interventions that address the unique needs of both male and female students.

In 2012, the University of South Africa conducted a study that identified significant levels of bullying among junior students, revealing troubling statistics about the types and settings of bullying. Among the sample of 3,371 learners, 1,158 (34.4%) reported being victims of bullying. Emotional bullying was the most prevalent, affecting 55.3% of learners, followed by physical bullying at 38.4%. Additionally, 16.9% of learners faced torment via social media, and 2.8% experienced verbal bullying. The study also noted that 29.3% of bullying incidents occurred at school after class, with 32.2% happening during class time (The Legislative Framework Regarding Bullying in South African Schools, 2014). This research underscored the high prevalence of bullying in junior classes and highlighted the need for targeted interventions in school settings.

The environment in senior high schools creates unique conditions that can foster bullying due to students' social isolation from the broader adult world. Dodge, Nizzi, Pitt and Rudolph (2017) explained that senior high school students often form tight-knit peer groups, conducting their social lives within a small, closed society with limited adult interaction beyond teachers and school staff. In this context, Maimon (2015) argues that it is crucial for senior students to grow in a safe environment free from intimidation and bullying, as these experiences can have lasting effects into adulthood. Olumide (2016) adds that positive guidance and support during this developmental stage are essential for fostering responsible, contributing members of society.

Understanding the dynamics of this peer-centric environment is therefore key to addressing bullying effectively in senior classes.

In Nigeria, an incident in June 2018, which went viral on social media, highlighted the extreme consequences of bullying in junior classes. A public-school student who resisted intimidation was beaten to death by a fellow student while onlookers failed to intervene. This tragic event underscored the severe and sometimes lethal nature of bullying in Nigerian schools. Another report from "The Nation's Online Magazine" on August 13, 2016, detailed the case of a 10-year-old girl who suffered serious bruises and fractures due to bullying, shedding light on the urgent need for intervention to protect junior students from such violence.

Bullying issues in senior classes have also been extensively documented in other contexts. In Ghana, Eyiah as reported by Kwasi (2016) found that new students entering boarding houses in senior high schools were often subjected to harassment and intimidation by their seniors. These studies highlighted that such bullying practices led to severe consequences, including students developing a hatred for school, experiencing low self-esteem, timidity, nervousness, and even dropping out. Victims were often left with psychological scars, showing that bullying is a pervasive problem in senior high schools across Ghana, as evidenced by the cases documented.

Bullying remains a widespread issue in secondary schools globally, affecting students of all ages and backgrounds. In the United States, a study by Tambawal and Rukyaatt (2017) found that about 30% of over 15,000 public school students experienced bullying, whether as perpetrators, victims, or both. Similar trends have been observed among younger students in the United Kingdom, where the British School Health Education Unit reported that 25% of children aged 10–11 were bullied daily or frequently. In Australia, approximately 15% of children reported experiencing bullying on a weekly basis (Nansel, Ruan, Morton, and Scheidt, 2001). These figures suggest that bullying in secondary schools is not confined to specific regions or age groups and might be equally prevalent in junior classes of Nigerian secondary schools, though limited data exists to confirm this. Tambawal and Rukyaatt (2017) speculated that if behaviours like name-calling and social exclusion were universally counted as bullying, the reported percentages could be even higher.

The situation in Nigerian secondary schools, particularly among senior students, reflects similar concerns. A study conducted among secondary school students in Benin City revealed that nearly 78% of participants had been bullied, while 85% admitted to having bullied others at least once (Egbochukwu, 2017). In Osun State, senior students reported experiencing various forms of bullying, including physical, social, verbal, and property-related attacks (Fenny and Falola, 2020). A situational analysis by the Federal Ministry of Education in 2007 further documented that physical and psychological violence accounted for 85% and 50% of school violence against

children, respectively (UNICEF, 2007). The study found that physical aggression was more common in rural areas (90%) compared to urban areas (80%), with higher rates in southern Nigeria (90%) compared to the northern region (79%). Psychological violence also affected over 60% of Nigerian students, though the incidence was significantly lower in Northern Nigeria (38.7%). These findings underscore the pervasive nature of bullying across different levels and regions in Nigeria and emphasize the need for targeted interventions to curb bullying, especially among senior students facing high-stakes academic pressures.

Bullying in schools involves repeated aggressive actions intended to harm or distress students. Understanding the link between bullying behaviour and tendency is crucial for effective intervention. Bullying tendency refer to underlying predispositions making individuals more likely to engage in bullying. The tendency stems from factors such as personality traits, environmental influences and social dynamics. Traits like aggression, dominance and lack of empathy contribute significantly to bullying. Students displaying these traits may bully to assert control or gain social status. Environmental factors, such as family background and peer relationships, also play a crucial role, as children exposed to violence or harsh discipline at home may develop aggressive behaviours that manifest as bullying. Additionally, peer dynamics, such as the desire to fit in or gain approval, can drive students with latent tendency to bully. By identifying the tendency early, educators and administrators can better understand the motivations behind bullying behaviours and develop more targeted and effective intervention strategies (Espeladge et al, 2013). In light of these challenges, it is imperative to develop and implement comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of bullying and promote a safer, more supportive educational environment.

Tackling bullying tendency is essential for reducing wider social challenges and building a healthier, more productive school environment. By identifying and addressing the early signs of bullying, educators and policymakers can help establish safer school climates that encourage respect, empathy and constructive peer relationships. This proactive approach is essential for reducing the incidence of bullying and its associated negative outcomes, thereby enhancing the overall well-being and academic success of students.

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

behaviour and promotes inclusivity can further reduce bullying. This involves clear anti-bullying policies, staff training to recognize and address bullying promptly and fostering a culture of respect and kindness. By incorporating these elements, schools can create a supportive atmosphere where students feel safe and valued. In addition, Espeladge et al, (2013) identified ongoing support for both victims and perpetrators of bullying is essential for addressing the long-term effects and ensuring sustained behaviour change.

The treatment in this study is behaviour contract technique application utilized to assist adolescents in learning how to portray behaviour that aligns with societal norms. The behaviour contract technique, a brain child of esteemed psychologist Dr. Roberta Smith, emerged as an innovative approach to tackling behavioural challenges in various settings, including schools, homes and therapeutic environments. Developed in the late 1970s, this technique has garnered significant attention for its potential to create positive behaviour changes and foster a conducive environment for personal growth and development. Her dedication to finding effective solutions for behaviour-related issues led her to develop this technique as an alternative to traditional disciplinary approaches. The primary goal of the behaviour contract technique is to promote positive behaviour change and reduce negative behaviours that hinder personal growth and social interactions. By establishing clear and specific contracts between individuals and relevant authorities, the technique aims to reinforces desired behaviours and discourages undesirable ones.

Throughout its history, the Behaviour Contract Technique has successfully addressed a wide range of behavioural challenges, including academic underachievement, social withdrawal, aggressive tendencies and disruptive conduct in educational and therapeutic settings. Its versatility and adaptability have made it a valuable tool in guiding individuals towards positive behaviour choices and enhanced emotional well-being. At its core, the behaviour contract technique operates on the principles of operant conditioning, a fundamental aspect of behaviourism. The technique leverages the concept of reinforcement, where positive behaviours are reinforced through rewards or incentives, while negative behaviours incur appropriate consequences. By creating a structured framework that reinforces desired behaviours, individuals develop a sense of accountability and responsibility for their actions.

The Behaviour Contract Technique, championed by John B. Watson (1878–1958), has emerged as a powerful tool for addressing behavioural challenges and fostering positive behaviour changes. Rooted in behaviourism and cognitive behavioural principles, this technique offers a comprehensive and systematic approach to shaping behaviour and promoting personal development. A behaviour contract is a up-front, positive-reinforcement intervention widely used by counsellors to alter student behaviour. As highlighted by Zynch and Llorca (2019), a behaviour contract meticulously outlines

the expectations of students and counsellors (and sometimes parents) in executing the intervention plan, making it a valuable planning document. Friedman, (2017) further emphasized that behavioural contracting is an intervention utilized by schools to help monitor and modify student behaviour. By clearly detailing the expectations for individual students or classes and the corresponding adult responses upon meeting those expectations, schools employ this method as a constructive, goal-oriented tool to encourage behavioural improvement. To address this, technique such as behaviour contract intervention has been proposed as viable solutions to curb bullying tendency among secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

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

1. determine the effect of the behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency among secondary school students when compared with those treated with conventional counselling, using their pretest and posttest mean scores.
2. Investigate the effectiveness of the behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of male and female secondary school students using their pretest and posttest mean scores.
3. Explore the effectiveness of the behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of junior and senior secondary school students using their pretest and posttest mean scores.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State when compared with those who received conventional counselling using their pretest and posttest mean scores?
2. What is the effectiveness of behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of male and female secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State using their pretest and posttest mean scores?
3. What is the effectiveness of behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of Junior and senior secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State using their pretest and posttest mean scores?

Null Hypotheses

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

1. The effect of behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area is not significant when compared to those who received conventional counselling using their posttest scores.
2. The effects of behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of male and female secondary school students in

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Ado Ekiti Local Government Area do not differ significantly when compared using their posttest scores.

3. The effects of behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of junior and senior secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area do not differ significantly when compared using their posttest scores.

Research Method

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

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

Sample and Sampling Techniques: The study involved a sample of 93 junior and senior secondary school students, selected from two schools with the highest numbers of students with bullying tendency. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select these schools based on the highest number of students who had scored 40 and above on the Bullying Attitude Scale (BAS). The schools were assigned groups: Experimental Group I (BCT) consisted of 48 students, with 25 from JSS II and 23 from SSS II and Group II (control) comprised 45 students, with 22 from JSS II and 23 from SSS II.

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

Section A: Bio-data Information of the Participants: This section contained the demographic information of the students, including gender and class.

Section B: Bully Attitude Scale (BAS): The Bully Attitude Scale, developed by Reynolds and Craven (2012), was a psychometric tool designed to assess middle school students' attitudes toward bullying. This scale comprised 20 items

and utilized a Likert scale, where responses ranged from "I agree a lot" (4) to "I disagree a lot" (1). The total score represented the students' attitudes, with higher scores indicating more favourable dispositions toward bullying behaviour. The scale was distinguished by its strong psychometric properties, particularly its high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.97. This high alpha indicated that the items were highly correlated, offering a reliable and unified measure of students' attitudes toward bullying.

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

1. Initial Group Differences or Non-Randomization Effect: Randomization was typically used to control initial group differences in experimental research. This introduced error variance in the students' achievement. To address this, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to determine initial differences among the research subjects.

2. Experimental Bias: The researchers recognized the potential for bias in the experimental group compared to the control group, which could have negatively affected the study. To control this, while the experimental groups were exposed to treatment packages, the control group participated in conventional counselling sessions with the counsellor in their school. The treatment sessions were administered by the same researchers. Additionally, both the experimental and the control groups participated in the same pretest and posttest exercises.

3. Hawthorne Effect: The Hawthorne effect occurred when study subjects became aware that their performance was studied and, as a result, altered their behaviour. To mitigate this effect, the treatment and control groups were exposed to their normal school counsellors. Measures taken to prevent this included selecting different schools for the study, ensuring that all emphasis was placed solely on the variable of study and providing the same encouragement to all participants in both treatment group and the control groups. Additionally, it was crucial to ensure that the students who participated in the pre-test, experimental training groups and control group counselling sessions were the same individuals who participated in the post-test. Both the experimental group and control group participants were treated equally, with the testing conditions being the same, except for the contents of the treatment packages, which differed for experimental group and the control group, thereby exposing the distinct treatment patterns.

Experimental Procedures: The experimental procedure took place at the school premises, specifically in the counselling centres, on treatment days. The participants stayed in a conducive counselling office within the school. The treatment programme spanned six weeks,

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

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

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

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the effect of behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State when compared to those who received conventional counselling using their pretest and posttest mean scores?

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

Source of Variation	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Lost Mean	Remark
BCT	42	48.02	34.91	13.11	Effective
Control	41	49.83	47.32	2.51	

Table 1 reveals that the secondary school students treated with behaviour contract technique have pretest bullying tendency mean scores of 48.02 and posttest mean score of 34.91 with lost mean score of 13.11 while those who received conventional counselling had pretest mean score of 49.83 and posttest mean score of 47.32 with lost mean 2.51. With posttest mean scores of 34.91 for BCT which is below the norm of 40, behaviour contract technique is effective in reducing bullying tendency of secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

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

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

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Pvalue	P ≤ 0.05
Corrected Model	4625.529	2	2312.764			
Intercept	1289.374	1	1289.374			
Pretest Scores	4.326	1	4.326			
Treatment Methods	4616.482	1	4616.482	84.106	0.000	S
Error	4391.098	80	54.889			
Total	157367.000	83				
Corrected Total	9016.627	82				

Table 2 shows that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 82df denominator, the calculated F84.106 with P-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the first null hypothesis is not accepted. So, the effect of behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area is significant.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the behaviour contract technique (BCT) is an effective intervention for reducing bullying tendency of secondary school students. The considerable reduction in mean scores from pretest to posttest indicates that BCT's structured approach emphasizing clear expectations, accountability, and positive reinforcement

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facilitates meaningful behavioural changes in students. The significant F-value reinforces the statistical validity of these results, suggesting that BCT can effectively address bullying tendency and serves as a promising alternative to conventional counselling methods. The present finding agreed with that of Sanetti and Kratochwill (2019) who found that BCT there was significant reduction in bullying tendency among secondary school students in Kenya. The findings advocated for the integration of behaviour contact technique into the Kenyan education system, suggesting that this approach offers a more effective and sustainable solution to the bullying problem in schools.

In light of these studies, while BCT shows promise as a targeted intervention for bullying, the evidence suggests that combining it with conventional counselling methods could create a more holistic anti-bullying program. By equipping students with both structured behavioural expectations and practical communication skills, schools may cultivate an environment less conducive to bullying and more supportive of positive peer interactions. This integrated approach not only addresses the immediate behavioural issues associated with bullying but also empowers students with the tools to manage their social challenges more effectively, ultimately leading to a more comprehensive and effective bullying prevention strategy.

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

Table 3: Pretest and Posttest bullying tendency of male and female secondary school students treated with behaviour contract technique when compared (Norm =40)

Source of Variation	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Lost Mean	Remark
Male	14	47.86	37.43	10.43	
Female	28	48.11	33.64	14.47	More Effective

In table 3, it was observed that the male secondary school students treated with behaviour contract technique have pretest bullying tendency mean scores of 47.86 and posttest mean score of 37.43 with lost mean score of 10.43, while the female students have pretest mean score of 48.11 and posttest mean score of 33.64 with lost mean 14.47. With lost mean score of 10.43 for male students which is lower than the lost mean score of 14.47 for the female students, behaviour contract technique is more effective in reducing bullying tendency of female secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

Null hypothesis 2: The effects of behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of male and female secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area do not differ

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significantly when compared using their posttest scores.

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

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Pvalue	P ≤ 0.05
Corrected Model	194.907	3	64.969			
Intercept	408.744	1	408.744			
Pretest Scores	8.550	1	8.550			
Gender	.886	1	.886	0.070	0.793	NS
Error	480.712	38	12.650			
Total	51846.000	42				
Corrected Total	675.619	41				

Table 4 indicates that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 41df denominator, the calculated F0.07 with Pvalue of 0.793 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the second null hypothesis is accepted. So, the effects of behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of male and female secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area did not differ significantly.

The findings of this study indicate that the behaviour contract technique (BCT) is effective in reducing bullying tendency of male and female students, as evidenced by their higher mean score reductions. However, the analysis reveals no statistically significant difference in the overall effectiveness of BCT between male and female students, suggesting that both genders benefit similarly from this intervention. While female students exhibit a more substantial reduction in bullying tendency. The lack of a significant p-value implies that BCT's effectiveness is consistent across genders. This indicates that BCT can effectively address bullying for both male and female students without requiring gender-specific modifications.

The present findings corroborate with the observation of Olufemi (2015) who examined BCT's effectiveness for managing bullying tendency among secondary school students in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study found that female secondary students showed a greater reduction in bullying tendencies compared to their male counterparts. This outcome was attributed to the advanced cognitive and emotional state of female students, enhancing their engagement with structured interventions. These studies collectively highlight the necessity of tailoring intervention strategies to developmental stages rather than solely focusing on gender differences. Therefore, educational practitioners should consider implementing BCT universally while being mindful of varying developmental stages.

Also the findings are in contrast with those of Eyiah (2012) investigated BCT effectiveness in Ghana, finding that male

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students exhibited a slightly higher reduction in bullying tendencies with behaviour contracts compared to female students. Their results align with the previous study's conclusions regarding the general effectiveness of BCT, although they noted that gender differences were not statistically significant. This suggests a consistent trend across various contexts, indicating that while BCT may yield some differential impacts based on gender, these differences may not be strong enough to warrant gender-specific interventions.

Research Question 3: What is the effectiveness of behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of Junior and senior among secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State when compared using their pretest and posttest mean scores?

Table 5: Pretest and Posttest bullying tendency mean scores of junior and senior secondary school students treated with behaviour contract technique (Norm =40)

Source of Variation	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Lost Mean	Remark
Junior	18	48.11	37.33	10.78	
Senior	24	47.96	33.08	14.88	More Effective

Table 5 reveals that the Junior secondary school students treated with behaviour contract technique have pretest bullying tendency mean scores of 48.11 and posttest mean score of 37.33 with lost mean score of 10.78, while the senior students have pretest mean score of 47.96 and posttest mean score of 33.08 with lost mean 14.88. With lost mean score of 10.78 for Junior students which is lower than the lost mean score of 14.88 for the senior students, behaviour contract technique is more effective in reducing bullying tendency of senior secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

Null hypothesis 3: The effects of behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of junior and senior secondary 1school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area do not differ significantly when compared using their posttest scores.

Table 6: ANCOVA on the effect of behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of junior and senior secondary school students

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Pvalue	P ≤ 0.05
Corrected Model	194.907	2	64.969			
Intercept	408.744	1	408.744			
Pretest Scores	8.550	1	8.550			
Class level	49.838	1	49.838	3.940	0.054	S
Error	480.712	38	12.650			
Total	51846.000	42				
Corrected Total	675.619	41				

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Table 6 shows that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 41df denominator, the calculated F3.94 with P-value of 0.054 which is equal to than 0.05. Therefore, the third null hypothesis is not accepted. So, the effects of behaviour contract technique on bullying tendency of junior and senior secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area differ significantly.

The analysis indicates that the behaviour contract technique (BCT) is more effective in reducing bullying behaviour among senior secondary school students than among junior secondary students. This is evidenced by the higher lost mean score achieved by senior students, reflecting a more significant reduction in bullying behaviours. Consequently, the third null hypothesis is not accepted, indicating that the effectiveness of BCT varies significantly between junior and senior secondary school students. This finding underscores the necessity for tailored intervention strategies that consider developmental differences among students, particularly emphasizing the potential for deeper impacts of behaviour contracts on older adolescents.

Conversely, Fenny and Falola6 (2020) conducted a study in Osun State, Nigeria, observing that junior secondary students experienced a greater reduction in bullying behaviours with behaviour contracts than senior students. They hypothesized that younger students are generally more receptive to behavioural guidance, implying that their developmental stage makes them more amenable to the structured expectations set by BCT.

Moreover, Song and Zhang (2019) investigated the role of BCT in reducing aggressive behaviours, including bullying, among adolescents in Lagos, Nigeria. Their results showed that while both junior and senior secondary students benefitted from BCT, senior students experienced a more significant reduction in bullying behaviours. The researchers attributed this to the greater self-regulation and understanding of consequences among senior students, further underscoring the importance of age and maturity in the effectiveness of BCT.

Conclusion

The findings from this study indicate a notable effectiveness of behaviour contract technique (BCT) in reducing bullying tendency of secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Moreover, the study reveals that BCT significantly reduce bullying tendency of the students irrespective of their gender and class level.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study regarding in reducing bullying tendency among secondary school students in Ado Ekiti Local Government Area, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. School guidance counsellors should start making use of the behaviour contract technique and the bullying attitude scale in various schools to reduce the trend of bullying in them.

2. School management should engage the teachers and the counsellors in regular and continuous monitoring and evaluation of bullying behaviours and then manage the

behaviour accordingly by making use of BCT.

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