

The nature of bullying among pupils with visual impairments in Zambia: A case of selected special schools for the visually impaired

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the nature of bullying among the visually impaired pupils at Magwero School in Chipata District, Eastern province, St Mulumba School in Choma District, Southern Province and Ndola Lions School in Copperbelt Province.

The objectives of the study were to assess the nature of bullying among the visually impaired pupils in special schools and determine whether the rate of bullying varies with grade and gender. A survey approach was used in conducting this research. Data was collected through a checklist, focus group discussion sessions and questionnaires were administered to specialist teachers to complement the data from the checklist. The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods in the collection of data.

The target population comprised of lower and middle grades 1 to 6 special school pupils who were visually impaired and special education teachers who handled them. The sample size comprised of 75 boys and 75 girls who were visually impaired pupils and 15 special education teachers. The study used a total number of 165 respondents. The statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data from which frequencies, percentages and graphs were generated.

The study revealed that bullying in residential special schools does exist and that the levels vary among boys and girls. All the grades were affected by bullying but that it was more eminent in the lower grades (1- 5). This scenario could be attributed to the fact that these pupils are new in the school and have very little experience of the school environment.

The study showed that both girls and boys were victims of bullying. In grades 1, 3 and 5 the rate of bullying was higher among boys than girls. From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were suggested:

- The Ministry of General Education to introduce new programmes in residential special schools to specifically sensitize parents, teachers and school administrators on the evils of bullying.
- School head teachers should embark on routine checks in school and dormitories to apprehend the culprits who should be sensitized on the effects of bullying.
- Schools should strengthen the position of the house masters in special residential schools by giving them an incentive in form of an allowance. This would motivate them to reduce bullying in schools.
- Schools should introduce stickers in Braille for pupils with visual impairments on their styluses and budges as a way of sensitisation against bullying in special residential schools.

Keywords: bullying, residential school, visual impairment

Introduction

In 1904 a missionary by the name of Holfmeyer Issie of the Dutch Reformed Church taught the blind to read and write. This is when formal education started for the blind in Zambia. In 1914 Ella Botes taught a class of 12 boys at Nyanje before the school moved to Madzimoyo. Later she started teaching at Magwero whose main emphasis was on practical skills such as basket making and pottery. Magwero School for the blind became popular through publicity by the missionaries. Parents were encouraged by chiefs, headmen, District Commissioners, police and messengers to take their children that were blind to school. Braille was introduced and as the most important taught subjects were Braille, Religion and simple Handcrafts. Formal subjects were introduced at a later stage. By 1930 – 40 progress was seen which encouraged the increase to the grades or standards as they were known.

The information spread about education for the blind at Magwero. This attracted many missionaries especially in

Luapula Province to assist the blind. Many centres were opened which received and enrolled many blind pupils. The second school for the blind was Mambilima in Mwense (Luapula Province). This was established in 1940 by a missionary from England of the Christian Missions in Many Lands (CMML) church.

The next school to be opened was Lwela in 1942 North-East of Mansa in Luapula Province. Later in 1953 Bwana Mkubwa School was opened. In 1956 Sefula School for the blind was opened in Western province by the Paris Evangelical Missionaries Society. In Kawambwa another school, St. Mary's School for the Blind was opened by the Roman Catholic Mission in 1961. Between 1962 and 1963, the Roman Catholic Sisters of Young Jesus opened Mporokoso School for the Blind in Northern Province. In 1974 Ndola Lions School for the Blind was built and opened by the Lions Club. Later, many more schools for the blind were opened. Some schools offered more than one disability such as St. Mulumba Residential Special School

for the visually and hearing impaired in Choma, Southern province.

In 1970, the government of Zambia through the Ministry of Education joined hands with the missionaries in sharing responsibilities in the education of the children with disabilities. In the same year, it was recommended that special classes be introduced in secondary schools. Therefore, in 1971, the recommendation was implemented and special units were opened. As a result of this development, in 1972, there were about 318 blind pupils in schools all over the country. By 1974, there was a total number of 365 blind pupils in special residential schools and 3 at the University of Zambia (UNZA).

Visually impaired pupils or persons are those whose visual impairment is so severe that senses other than vision must be used to function adequately. Braille and or auditory media are needed in reading. On the other hand, a person may have low vision whose visual impairment is such that vision can still be used as a primary sense to function adequately. Print materials can still be used in reading through the use of large print, optical aids and environmental adaptations (Randall *et al.*, 1977). The visually impaired pupils may be vulnerable to bullying in special residential schools in Zambia. Sharp and Smith (1994) ^[18-19] defined bullying as, aggressive behaviour which is usually harmful and deliberate, it is often persistent,it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. Underlying the most bullying behaviour is an abuse of power and a desire to intimidate and dominate. Bullying takes many forms it can be physical or verbal, direct or indirect.

Statement of the problem

The bullying phenomenon is a problem of international significance. There has been extensive research in countries such as Norway, UK, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden, England and Ireland. It exists among the pupils in the mainstreams and special schools for pupils with disabilities. In Zambia, research has shown that bullying exists among pupils in the main stream (Phiri, 2002). However, research has not been done in this country to investigate the nature and rate of bullying among the visually impaired pupils.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to find out the nature of bullying among visually impaired pupils in residential special schools at Magwero (Chipata), Ndola Lions (Ndola) and St. Mulumba (Choma).

Research objectives

1. To assess the nature of bullying among the visually impaired pupils in special residential schools.
2. To determine whether the rate of bullying varies with grade and gender.

Research questions

1. What is the nature of bullying among the visually impaired pupils in special residential schools?
2. Does the rate of bullying vary with grade and gender?

Literature Review

The nature and bullying among children with disabilities
Research has shown that children with disabilities are more susceptible to bullying and are likely to be sociometrically

rejected (Marlew and Hodson; Nabuzoka and Smith; O' Moore; Hillery; Whitney, Smith and Thompson, 1994). The nature of bullying varies among pupils with disabilities. Bullying can take a variety of forms. Some are direct such as, physical hitting, tripping up, taking belongings, name calling and taunting sometimes about ethnicity, race or disability. Some are indirect such as passing nasty stories or rumours about someone behind their back or excluding someone from a social group (Sharp and Smith, 1994) ^[18, 19]. In addition, O' Moore and Hillery (199) reported forms of bullying such as name calling, teasing, physical attacks, severe verbal bullying, verbal aggression, threats, taking belongings and making fun of the pupils with disabilities. Drake and Telljohn (2003) agreed with O' Moore and Hillery on these forms of bullying among pupils with disabilities. Similar findings were obtained by Dawkins (1996) ^[4] who identified name-calling as the most common form of bullying. Most research shows that name-calling can be one of the most distressing teasing behaviours that children must cope with (Besag, 1991).

A survey conducted by Yates and Smith (1998) and Whitney and Smith (1993) ^[20] in the United Kingdom showed that about half the incidents of bullying were one-to-one and about half involved larger group. Children with disabilities were the most vulnerable. The Mencap Report (2005) ^[11] of the United Kingdom revealed that it was shocking that so many children with learning disabilities were being subjected to physical forms of bullying in their neighbourhoods. This included being punched and slapped, spat on, knocked over and in some cases, attacked with such violence that hospital treatment was needed. It reported that 77% were verbally abused. This meant calling a child with learning disability hurtful and insulting names related to their disability. Some were called discriminating. Eight out of 10 children with learning disabilities were scared to go out. Some were scared to leave home because of bullying. They were scared to go to school. Some of the children who have been bullied had stopped going to the places where the bullying happened. It was further reported that, 50% of children with learning disability said they cried because of bullying and 33% hid away from their bedrooms.

The Mencap report further revealed that eight out of 10 children with learning disabilities were bullied, and six out of 10 were involved in physical abuse, with 40% of the children saying that the bullying continued even though they told someone. The report raised concerns that the children's plight was not taken seriously enough. This may have been partly because children with learning disabilities found it hard to understand what was happening to them to give clear account of events. They could take everything literally and have problems reading facial expression and social cues. This could mean that it is very easy for other children to manipulate them and get them into trouble.

Results from various studies indicate pupils with disabilities, both visible and non-visible, experienced bullying more than their general education peers. For studies which reported statistical findings, results indicated that the frequency of pupils with disabilities were being bullied was statistically significant compared to pupils without disabilities. The findings were also supported by studies in the United Kingdom by the Charity Mencap (2007) ^[12] which carried out the first extensive research on bullying among children and young people with learning disabilities. The research was carried out in 46 schools across England,

Wales and Northern Ireland to find out more about experiences of bullying in and out of school. It involved 507 children and young people with learning disabilities aged between eight (8) and (19) years. Of this number 60% of respondents were boys and 6% were from black or minority ethnic backgrounds.

The research was carried out in special schools and special units within mainstream schools. All were asked about their experiences of bullying in all areas of their lives including at school, on the street, in the park, on the bus and at youth clubs and leisure centres. The research explored not just the incidence of bullying, but the way the bullying makes children and young people with learning disabilities feel, and the impact it has on their lives. The survey was accessible for children with learning disabilities, using easy words and symbols. This was the first time that so many children and young people with learning disability had been asked about their experiences of bullying. It revealed that 82% of children and young people with a learning disability had experienced bullying. They had twice as likely to be bullied as other children. This research is similar to the research by Mencap (2005) ^[11] which revealed that, children with learning disabilities were bullied everywhere they went. It revealed that 3 out of 10 children and young people with learning disability who had been bullied were bullied on the street, with the same number experiencing bullying at youth clubs and in leisure centres. It also revealed that children with a learning disability had been bullied in more than one place.

Olweus (1993) found out that 19 students who were visually or hearing impaired or with speech deficit, obesity or personal hygiene problems were bullied. Contrary to these findings, La Fontaine (1991) ^[9] found that victims were less attractive and older and with mannerisms or physical disabilities than non bullies.

In a study in Canada, Jesen *et al.*, (2004) ^[7] examined the association between bullying behaviours with overweight and obesity status in a sample of 11 to 18 years pupils. The findings showed that there was a relationship between victimization and adiposity level was observed in all ages studied (11 to 16 years old), but relationship between bully perpetrating and adiposity level was observed only in order (15 to 16 year olds). These observations highlighted the increased vulnerability to bully behaviours among overweight and obese children. Among boys and girls there were positive associations between Body Mass Index (BMI) category and physical victimisation were limited to being called names, made fun of or teased. Among girls there were significant trends between BMI category and physical victimisation increased with increasingly BMI category. Among boys there were no significant associations between BMI category and relational victimization did not include lies and false rumour in boys. Overweight and obesity were not associated with sexual harassment victimization in boys or girls.

Phiri carried out a study to assess the nature of bullying and established the extent in basic schools in North-Western province of Zambia. The findings showed that 20% of pupils interviewed reported being bullied. The results also revealed that it was the younger and weaker pupils who were mostly bullied and that being bullied frequently decreased with higher grades.

Plessis (2007) ^[17] revealed that bullying among pupils in South Africa comprised of direct behaviours such as teasing,

taunting, threatening, hitting and stealing initiated by one or more perpetrators against a victim.

Varying rates of bullying with grade and gender among pupils with disabilities

A study by Whitney, Smith and Thompson (1994), linked to the Sheffield intervention project in United Kingdom, carefully matched children with special needs to mainstream children of the same school, year group and gender. The results confirmed that children with special needs were two to three times more at risk of being bullied they were also more at risk of taking part in bullying others. Based on the results of sociometric measures, Nabuzoka and Smith (1993) ^[14] reported that girls were more at risk than boys for being victims of bullying and having problems decoding social situations.

Nansel *et al.* (2001) ^[15] researched on gender differences in bullying and found out that boys bullied more than girls. Boys reported being bullied by boys. Boys were more likely than girls to be physically bullied by their peers. Girls were more likely to be bullied through rumour spreading, sexual comments and social exclusion.

In a related study, Duncan, (1999) found that girls and boys experienced being called names that were undesirable, inappropriate touching and other forms of bullying based on gender. To verify this assertion, Smith (2002) found that more males than females were bullies and that same grade peers often perpetrated bullying. Bullies were more likely to come from unsafe neighbourhoods which increased the chance that they would model negative peer behaviour. There was a great likelihood that a bully would drink, use tobacco, abuse other drugs, cheat of tests and bring and bring weapons to school. Bullies usually accost others in common areas such as playgrounds, hallways or bathrooms where adult supervision may be lacking.

Dake *et al.* (2003) investigated bullying behaviour among disabled children and adolescents. The findings revealed that boys were more likely to be involved in direct physical bullying and that boys and girls aged between 14 and 17 years were equally likely to be involved in direct verbal bullying. Regarding to who bullied whom, several gender differences existed. Boys generally were bullied by boys but not girls. However, 15% per cent of the disabled children reported being bullied by both gender equally.

Research by Lagerspetz and Kaukainen (1992) has recent clarified that sex differences in aggression were not so much physical/verbal, as direct/indirect. Boys tended to use more direct methods while girls used more indirect/methods.

Dawkins (1996) ^[4] compared the rates and types of bullying in two groups of paediatrics out patients seen at a Child Development Centre (CDC) in London. The comparisons were made between one group of children with medical conditions that resulted in visible physical disabilities and a control group of children without visible physical disabilities. Results indicated that the increased frequency with which the CDC children reported being bullied was statistically significant compared to the Out Patient Development (OPD). Fifty percent of the CD Cchildren were bullied at school at least once during the school term in comparison to 21% of the OPD children. Moreover, CDC children were twice as likely to be bullied regularly with 30% of the CDC children being bullied regularly as compared to 14% of the OPD children. Boys in both groups were more likely to be bullied than girls, although the

difference was not statistically significantly interesting, name-calling was the most common form of bullying.

Dawkins (1996) ^[4] conducted a research the results of which showed that bullying decreased with age, with 47 per cent of young people reporting being bullied at age 14 a figure with decreased to 29 per cent by age 16. Vulnerable pupils and girls were more likely to be bullied with the main risk factors for being bullied at ages 14-16 including having a special educational need, having a caring responsibility, being disabled or having spent a period of time in social services care. Name calling and cyber-bullying was most common. The majority of students that conducted gender analysis revealed that boys were bullied more often than girls (Dawkins, 1996; O' Moore and Hillery 1989) ^[4, 16]. The exception was Nabuzoka and Smith (1993) ^[14], who found that girls with learning disabilities were more at risk for being bullied than boys with learning disabilities. Nabuzoka (2003) ^[13] compared experiences of behaviour associated with bullying between England and Zambia primary and secondary school pupils. Findings showed different patterns in the incidence of various types of behaviour for English and Zambia overall and across age, school level and gender. Significant differences between English and Zambia were obtained from three different categories; kicking them, being threatened and 'someone trying to hurt them'. Overall, the findings indicated that English pupils experienced more incidences of bully behaviours than Zambian pupils. There were also differences in patterns of various behaviours reported across gender and various age levels. Behavioural indices of bullying were reported to occur most frequently at 13 years of age and somewhat less frequent at 11 or 12 years especially among Zambian pupils. This is the age at which pupils would generally be preparing for secondary school entry examinations and high incidences of bullying could reflect heightened social and emotional pressures associated with academic life (Mwanalushi, 1979). Differences in patterns of behaviour were also reflected when gender was considered. The target behaviours were overall reported proportionally more by boys than girls, though the differences were only significant for English and not Zambian pupils.

Plessis (2007) ^[17] observed that, in South Africa boys and girls used different methods to bully fellow pupils. Boys were likely to engage in direct bullying in a physical manner, girls took for spreading rumours or reinforcing social isolation.

Methodology

Research design

The study used a survey.

Population

The target population comprised of all lower and middle grades 1 to 6 special residential school pupils in three schools Magwelo (Chipata), Ndola Lions (Ndola) and St. Mulumba (Choma) who were visually impaired and all specialist teachers who handled the visually impaired pupils in these schools.

Sample Size

The sample consisted of 150 pupils with visual impairments

(75 boys and 75 girls) and 15 specialist teachers including the Head teachers and Deputy Head teachers. The sample consisted of 165 respondents.

Sampling procedures

Three special schools were selected on the basis of being easier for the researcher to gather information. Purposive sampling was used to select pupils by the special school Head teachers and special teachers. One hundred and fifty (150) visually impaired pupils were selected from three special residential schools. These were from grades one (1) to six (6) special classes. Five (5) specialist teachers were picked because the Head teachers recommended them to the researcher. Head teachers and Deputies were selected as part of specialist teachers.

Data Collection Instruments

Collection of data was done by administering questionnaires and a checklist. A checklist was administered to pupils with visual impairments while stated. The visually impaired pupils used checklists while specialist teachers, Head teachers and Deputy Heads filled in questionnaires.

Checklist

The 'Life in school checklist' has 39 items developed by Tiny Arora (Sheffield University in the United Kingdom) designed to measure the incidence of bullying behaviour in schools (Arora and Thompson, Wolverhampton Education Department, 1992) was adapted for use in the study. The checklist was chosen because, rather than focus on general definition of bullying, it allows the examination of incidences of specific types of behaviour which constitute bullying. The checklist was administered to pupils with visual impairments in 3 residential special schools.

The checklist is a collection of things which might happen to a pupil in school during any one week. About half of the things are nice or neutral things and about half are more unpleasant. The mixture is deliberate. It draws attention away from bullying. The checklist is flexible, an indirect but more precise measurement of bullying and it refers to the immediate past.

Questionnaire

Questionnaires were used for specialist teachers because the teachers were able to read and write ink print. It was also more economical in terms of resources and time to use questionnaires because the schools are spread in the country (in three provinces). In addition, questionnaires allowed the specialist teachers to express their views freely.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed qualitatively and to a lesser extent quantitatively. The responses from the respondents were recorded and interpreted logically so as to establish themes and sub themes in the data collected. This made it easier to come up with tables and graphs. The views of the respondents were analysed qualitatively and a comprehensive, meaningful explanation of data was made. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer techniques was used to analyse data. Data was coded according to the variables under investigation and the total scores were calculated.

Findings and Presentations

Findings from the pupils

Nature of bullying among the visually impaired pupils

Pupils were asked to indicate the nature of bullying that existed among the visually impaired pupils in special residential schools. Table 1 shows their responses. The table shows that the common nature of bullying cited by pupils was 'tried to kick me' (26), followed by 'tried to hurt me' (25) and 'said they would beat me up' (24).

Table1: Nature of bullying

Nature	Girls	Boys	Total
Called me names	6	12	18
Was very nasty about my family	5	11	16
Tried to kick me	10	16	26
Was unkind because am different	7	11	18
Said they would beat me up	10	14	24
Tried to hurt me	12	13	25
Tried to make me give the money	0	0	0
Was unkind about something I did	10	13	23
Got a gang on me	11	12	23
Tried to break something of mine	9	8	17
Tried to hit me	10	13	23
Total	90	123	213

Rate of bullying by grade and gender

The study also sought to find out if there was any variation in the rate of bullying taking into account the grade level and gender of the respondents. Table two below shows the responses from the pupils. The table shows that there was more bullying at grade 1 followed by grade 3 and grade 5. The table also shows that more boys (94) than girls (59) were bullied in grade 1 while more boys (79) than girls (47) were bullied in grade 3. At grade 5 again more boys (73) than girls (43) were bullied. The above statistics shows that bullying was more common among the boys and that bullying was more at grade 1 level of education among the visually impaired pupils in special residential schools.

Table 2: Rate of bullying by grade and gender

Grade	Gender	Gender	Total
	Girls	Boys	
Grade 1	59	94	153
Grade 2	32	75	107
Grade 3	47	79	126
Grade 4	42	60	102
Grade 5	43	73	116
Grade 6	34	69	103
Total	257	450	707

Findings from teachers

Existence of bullying in special schools

Teachers were asked to indicate if bullying existed in their respective schools. Their responses are shown in Table 3 below. The table shows all the teachers (14) agreed that bullying existed in their respective schools.

Table 3: Existence of bullying at school

Response	St. Mulumba	Magwero	Ndola Lion	Total
Yes	5	4	5	14
No	-	-	-	-
Total	5	4	5	14

Occurrence of bullying in special schools

The study sought to find out from the teachers the frequency at which bullying occurred in special schools under study. Figure 1 below shows their responses. All the five (5) teachers at St. Mulumba indicated that it happened 'sometimes' while at Magwero two (2) teachers each said 'frequently' and 'sometimes' respectively. At Ndola lion most of them (4) said 'sometimes' while one (1) of the teachers said 'frequently'

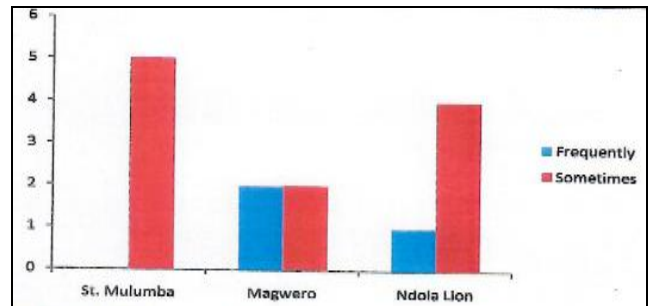


Fig 1: Incidence of bullying

Place where bullying is mainly done

Teachers were asked to indicate the where bullying is mainly done. Table 4 below shows their responses. The table shows that most of the respondents were of the view that bullying in special schools is mainly done at the dormitories. (7) followed by those who said outside the class (6). Only one (1) only one respondent who said anywhere. From the above it is evident that bullying is mainly done in dormitories and outside the classrooms.

Table 4: Places where bullying is done

Respondents	St. Mulumba	Magwero	Ndola Lion	Total
Outside the class	3	1	2	6
In class	-	-	-	-
At the dormitories	1	3	3	7
Anywhere	1	-	-	1
Total	5	4	5	14

Type of bullying common in special schools

Further the teachers were asked to indicate the form of bullying that was common among the visually impaired pupils in special residential schools. Figure 2 below shows the responses. The figure shows that the most teachers from St. Mulumba (4), Magwero (2) and Ndola Lion (2) indicated that both verbal bullying were common in special schools.

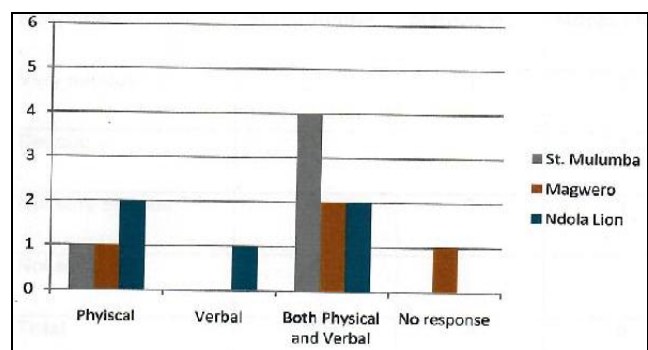


Fig 2: Common type of bullying

Table 5: Grades mostly affected by bullying

Response	St. Mulumba	Magwero	Ndola Lion	Total
All grades	4	-	3	7
Lower grades	1	2	2	5
Upper grades	-	2	-	2
Total	5	4	5	14

Sex most affected by bullying

Teachers were asked to indicate the sex they believed was most affected. Their responses are as shown in Table 7 below. The majority (6) of the respondents said both girls and boys, while (2) teachers each said ‘girls’ and ‘boys’ respectively. The rest (4) respondents did not respond to this issue.

Table 6: Sex most affected by bullying

Responses	St. Mulumba	Magwero	Ndola Lion	Total
Girls	1	-	1	2
Boys	1	-	1	2
Both girls and boys	2	1	3	6
No response	1	3	-	4
Total	5	4	5	14

Whether boys bully fellow boys only

Teachers were asked to indicate whether boys bullied fellow boys only. Figure 3 below shows their responses. Most of the teachers from Ndola Lion said ‘no’ while one (1) teacher said ‘yes’. Those from St. Mulumba most of them (3) said ‘yes’ while two (2) of them said ‘no’. At Magwero two (2) teachers said ‘no’ while one (1) of them said ‘yes’.

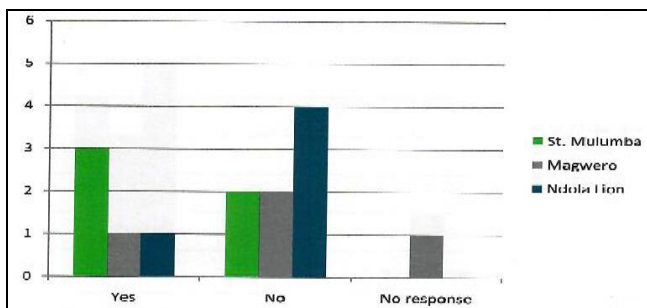


Fig 3: Whether boys bully fellow boys only

Whether boys bully girls

Another aspect the study also sought to find out from the teachers was whether boys bullied girls. The responses are shown in Figure 4. All the teachers from the three schools in the study indicated that boys bullied girls, except for one (1) from St. Mulumba.

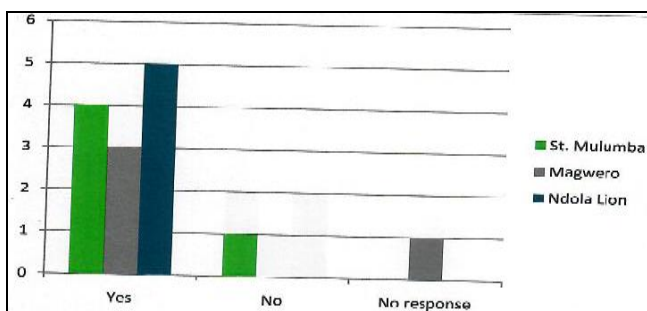


Fig 4: Whether boys bully girls

Whether girls bully boys

As regards to girls bullying boys, Figure 5 shows that three (3) teachers each from St. Mulumba and Ndola Lion and two (2) teachers from Magwero agreed that girls bullied boys while two (2) teachers each from St. Mulumba and Ndola Lion one (1) teacher from Magwero were of the view that girls did not bully boys at all. Overall from the responses of the respondents it appears that girls bullied boys as well.

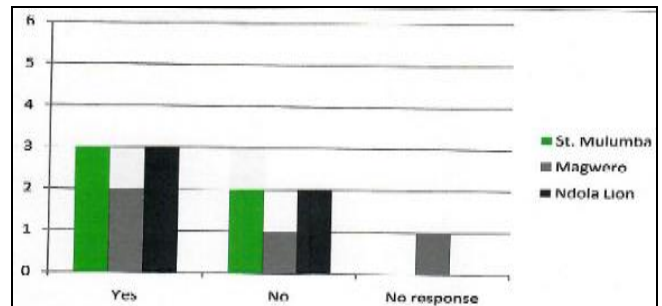


Fig 5: Whether girls bully boys

Whether girls bully fellow girls only

As regards bullying, the study also sought to find out if girls bullied fellow girls only. Figure 6 shows that at St. Mulumba, three (3) teachers said ‘no’ while two (2) of them said ‘yes’ whereas at Ndola Lion and Magwero three (3) teachers each said ‘yes’. The rest of the responses are shown in the figure below.

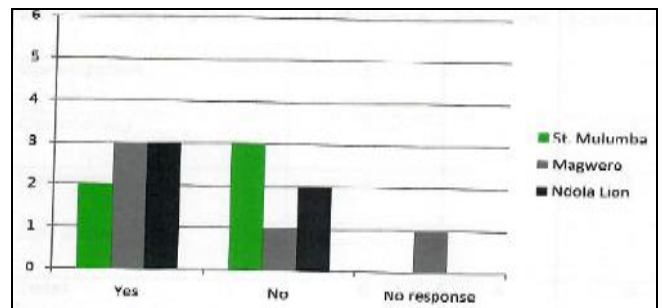


Fig 6: Whether girls bully fellow girls only

Discussion of Findings

The nature of bullying among children with disabilities

The study revealed that teachers from the three special schools stated that the most common form of bullying found in special residential schools for the visually impaired is both physical and verbal. Pupils in this study also reported physical bullying as being the major one. However, some pupils also reported name calling, taking belongings, lack of empathy by some pupils were other forms of bullying. The above finding was in line with what Sharp and Smith (1994) [18, 19] found. They found that the nature of bullying varies among the victims and those who victimize others. They found that school bullying takes a variety of forms. Some are physical hitting, tripping up, taking belongings, name calling and sometimes unkind taunting about race or disability. Indirect such as passing undesirable stories or rumours about someone behind their back or excluding someone from social groups. Dawkins (1996) [4] also identified name calling as the most common forms of bullying. Similarly Plessis (2007) [17] revealed that bullying comprised of direct behaviours such as teasing, taunting,

threatening, hitting and stealing. O' Moore and Hillery (1989) ^[16] reported forms of bullying such as name calling, teasing, physical attacks severe verbal bullying, verbal aggression and taking belongings. Research by other scholars such as Besag (1991) have also shown that name-calling can be one of the most distressing teasing behaviours that children must cope with. Furthermore, a report by the Mencap (2001) ^[10] revealed that eight out of 10 children with learning disabilities have been bullied and six out of 10 were involved in physical abuse. The report raised concerns that the children's plight was not being taken seriously enough. This could partly be because of the fact that children with learning disabilities found it hard to understand what is happening to them and to give clear account of events All these and other forms of bullying had to an extent impacted negatively on the wellbeing of some pupils in these schools. The immediate effects of bullying are extremely debilitating to victims. The academic performance of victims decreased significantly. In addition, the low morale and acute despair experienced by victims led to truancy. Other effects included chronic illness, running away, depression, poor- esteem, impaired concentration and avoidant behaviour.

The above findings were similar to the current research study. Pupils reported having experienced both physical and verbal bullying. Physical bullying such as kicking and slapping. Severe verbal bullying such as name-calling, teasing, taking belongings and verbal aggression, pupils complained of having been teased severely because of their appearance. They indicated that they had their belongings taken away, imitated them and excluded from social groups.

Finally most research findings have confirmed that the nature of bullying among disabled pupils were similar to the findings of this study. This could be attributed to their disabilities.

Varying rate of bullying with grade and gender among the disabled.

The study also sought to find out if there was any variation in the rate of bullying into account the grade level and gender of the respondents. According to the findings of this study pupils reported that there was more bullying at lower grades (1-5). It was also reported that more boys than girls were bullied in all grades an indication that bullying was more prominent among boys in special residential schools. However, the majority of the teachers in this study were of the view that both girls and boys were victims of bullying.

The above findings are in line with those reported by Dawkins (1996) ^[4] and O' Moore and Hillery (1989) ^[16] who found that boys were bullied more often than girls. However, Nabuzoka and Smith (1993) ^[14], to the contrary found that girls with learning disabilities were more at risk of being bullied than boys. As regards boys bullying fellow boys only, most of the teachers in the study indicated that boys did not only bully their fellow boys but also some girls to some extent. However, generally, the study showed that boys bullied fellow boys much more. The above agreement is in agreement with findings by Nansel *et al.* (2001) ^[15] who found that boys bully more than girls and that boys report being bullied by boys and they are more likely than girls and that boys report being bullied by boys and they are more likely than girls to be physically bullied by their peers. Regarding possibilities of boys bullying girls, all the teachers in the study were in agreement that boys bullied

girls. This finding conforms to that of Nansel *et al.* (2001) ^[15] who stated that girls are more likely to be bullied through rumour –spreading, sexual comments and social exclusion. As regards girls bullying boys, most of the teachers in the study agreed that girls too bullied boys although a few of them, were of the view that girls did not bully boys at all. However, from the overall responses of the respondents it appears that girls bullied boys as well.

As regards to girls bullying fellow girls only, the study showed that girls do actually bully their peers considering eight teachers against three who responded in affirmative. Studied by scholars like Largegerspetz and Kaukinen (1992) have recently clarified that sex differences in aggression are not so much physical/verbal, as direct/indirect. Boys tend to use more direct methods while girls use more indirect. Nansel *et al.* (2001) ^[15] also states that girls are more likely to be bullied through rumour-spreading, sexual comments and social exclusion. Duncan, (1999) has also found that girls and boys can experience names that are undesirable, inappropriate touching and other forms based on gender. From the foregoing, one could safely say that bullying does exist among girls in special residential schools. Though not much pronounced as that of the boys. However, it has been observed that the findings of this study on the rate of bullying with grade and gender confirmed to other research findings discussed.

Conclusion

The study has shown that bullying in special residential schools does exist. The study revealed that teachers from the three schools stated that the most common form of bullying found in special residential schools for the visually impaired is both physical and verbal. Pupils in this study also reported physical bullying as being the major one. However, some pupils also reported name calling, taking belonging and lack of empathy by some pupils were other forms of bullying. The study showed that the levels of bullying vary between the girls and boys. It also showed that bullying was more eminent among the boys than the girls and that bullying was mainly done in the dormitories and outside the classrooms.

As regards the most affected grades, most of the teachers in the study reported that all grades were affected by bullying but that it was more eminent in the lower grades (1-5). This scenario could be attributed to the fact that these pupils are new to the school and have very little experience of the school environment. Generally boys bullied fellow boys much more and to some extent the girls and vice versa.

Recommendations

- School head teachers together with special teachers in special residential schools for the visually impaired pupils should embark on routine checks in dormitories and outside the classrooms to apprehend the culprits who should be sensitized on the effects of bullying.
- The Ministry of Education to introduce programmes in schools to specifically sensitize parents, teachers and school administrators on the evils of bullying.
- Visually impaired pupils should be encouraged to tell members of staff if they are being bullied or if they are know that someone is being bullied. This could encourage peer group culture that can value co-operation and tolerance. Therefore, special teachers should always find time to listen to visually impaired pupil's concerns.

- Curriculum Development Specialists should include bullying in the school curriculum for pupils with visual impairments in special residential schools.

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