

**EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CYBERBULLYING
PREVENTION PROGRAMMES IN PRIVATE SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN YENAGOA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF
BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA.**

OBELE, REALMAN EVANS, Ph.D, Ph.D.

**Department of Mathematics,
Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education, Sagbama, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.**

&

ONUIGBO, EBERE PEACE

**Department of Occupational Health, Safety, and Environmental Remediation,
College of Health Technology, Otuogidi-Ogbia, Bayelsa State, Nigeria**

Abstract

The study investigated the evaluating the effectiveness of cyberbullying prevention programmes in private secondary schools in Yenagoa local government area of Bayelsa State. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Three research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study consisted of 3,067 students in 82 private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. A stratified random sampling technique was used to draw 200 students as the sample size from the population. The instrument for data collection was a self-designed questionnaire titled: Effectiveness of Cyberbullying Prevention Programmes Questionnaire (ECPPQ). Face and content validity were employed in this study. Validation was ascertained by experts in Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counseling, and Measurement and Evaluation Department in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a test–retest method was adopted. The instrument was administered twice to a group of students outside the study area at an interval of two weeks. The data obtained were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.84, indicating that the instrument is reliable for the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that the following are types of cyberbullying prevention programmes implemented in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa: digital safety awareness seminars, guidance and counseling services, school rules on internet usage, peer mentoring/peer education and parental sensitization programmes; to a high extent cyberbullying prevention programmes reduce cyberbullying behaviours among students in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State; and finally a substantial improvement in students' digital citizenship awareness after exposure to cyberbullying prevention programmes. Based on the findings, it was recommended that private senior secondary schools should institutionalize cyberbullying prevention programmes, teachers and school counselors should receive regular training on digital safety, schools should involve parents in cyber safety awareness programmes, and clear school policies on cyberbullying should be developed and consistently enforced.

Cyberbullying, Prevention Programs, Private Secondary Schools, Digital Safety, Adolescents.

Introduction

Students associate with their colleagues while at school and work in groups for their growth. However, students may find it hard to develop morally, socially, academically, or emotionally as it should be if the school climate is less fascinating, safe, and secure. Olabiyi (2021) noted that only a few students can relate faultlessly with their colleagues without experiencing classroom violence. Bullying is one kind of violence that has seriously endangered students' lives in Nigerian schools. Bullying is prevalent in today's schools. It is uncommon to find a secondary school that does not experience bullying (Tambawal& Rukayya, 2017).

The rapid expansion of digital technologies and social media platforms has transformed communication patterns among adolescents, particularly secondary school students. While these technologies offer numerous educational and social benefits, they have also given rise to cyberbullying an emerging form of bullying characterized by deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour conducted through electronic means such as social networking sites, instant messaging, emails, and online forums. Cyberbullying has become a pervasive problem within school environments, extending beyond the physical boundaries of the classroom and occurring at any time and place, thereby intensifying its psychological and emotional impact on victims.

In recent years, private secondary schools have experienced increased access to smartphones, internet connectivity, and digital learning platforms. Although these advancements support academic engagement, they have also exposed students to cyberbullying behaviours including online harassment, impersonation, spreading of harmful content, cyberstalking, and social exclusion. Victims of cyberbullying often suffer from anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, academic withdrawal, and poor school adjustment, while perpetrators may develop antisocial tendencies that persist into adulthood (Olabiyi, 2021).

In response to the growing prevalence of cyberbullying, schools have implemented various cyberbullying prevention programmes aimed at promoting

digital citizenship, responsible online behaviour, peer support, counseling services, and awareness of reporting mechanisms. These programmes are designed to reduce cyberbullying incidents and foster safe and supportive digital learning environments. However, the effectiveness of such programmes largely depends on their structure, implementation strategies, and contextual relevance to the students they serve.

Despite the increasing adoption of cyberbullying prevention initiatives in private secondary schools, there is limited empirical evidence assessing their effectiveness within the Nigerian context, particularly in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. Many existing studies are based on foreign settings, and their findings may not adequately reflect local sociocultural dynamics, school policies, and student digital practices. This gap underscores the need for systematic evaluation of cyberbullying prevention programmes to determine their impact on students' behaviour and awareness.

Therefore, this study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of cyberbullying prevention programs in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. By examining the extent to which these programs reduce cyberbullying behaviours and improve students' digital safety awareness, the study aims to provide empirical evidence that will inform school administrators, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders on best practices for addressing cyberbullying in secondary school settings.

The absence of localized, evidence-based evaluations limits informed decision-making by school administrators and policymakers. Consequently, students remain vulnerable to the negative consequences of cyberbullying, while schools lack reliable guidance on improving prevention strategies. The problem of this study, therefore, is to investigate the effectiveness of cyberbullying prevention programmes in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of cyberbullying prevention programmes in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. identify the types of cyberbullying prevention programmes implemented in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

2. determine the extent to which these programmes reduce cyberbullying behaviours among students in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.
3. examine the influence of cyberbullying prevention programmes on students' awareness of digital safety and responsible online behaviour in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What types of cyberbullying prevention programmes are implemented in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State?
2. To what extent do cyberbullying prevention programmes reduce cyberbullying behaviours among students in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State?
3. What influence do cyberbullying prevention programmes have on students' awareness of digital safety and responsible online behaviour in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State?

The following hypotheses guided the study:

1. Cyberbullying prevention programmes does not significantly reduce cyberbullying behaviours among students in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.
2. Cyberbullying prevention programmes do not have a significant influence on students' awareness of digital safety and responsible online behaviour in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention without full randomization of participants. Amadi (2016) remarked that the descriptive survey research design places more emphasis on obtaining the opinion of a representative sample of the target population in order to be able to infer the perception or opinion on the entire population from which the sample was drawn. The

population of the study consisted of 3,067 students in 82 private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The sample size of 354 respondents was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations at a 5% level of precision. However, due to logistical considerations, stratified random sampling technique was used to select 200 students as a manageable and statistically adequate sample for meaningful analysis. The instrument for data collection was a self-designed questionnaire titled Cyberbullying Prevention Programmes Effectiveness Questionnaire (CPPPEQ), developed using a modified 4-point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was divided into sections measuring students' exposure to cyberbullying prevention programmes, cyberbullying behaviours, and digital safety awareness. Face and content validity were employed in this study. Validation was ascertain by experts in Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counseling, and Measurement and Evaluation Departments in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a test-retest method was adopted. The instrument was administered twice to a group of students outside the study area at an interval of two weeks. The data obtained were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.84, indicating that the instrument is reliable for the study. Data for the study were collected through the direct administration of the questionnaire to the respondents with the assistance of three (3) trained research assistants. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the paired sample t-test was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What types of cyberbullying prevention programmes are implemented in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on Types of Cyberbullying Prevention Programmes in Private Secondary Schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Digital safety awareness seminars	3.42	0.61	High extend
2	Guidance and counseling services	3.36	0.65	High extend
3	School rules on internet usage	3.18	0.72	High extend

4	Peer mentoring/peer education	2.74	0.83	Moderate extend
5	Parental sensitization programmes	2.61	0.88	Moderate extend
	Grand Mean	3.06		

Table 1 shows that majority of the mean obtained from various attributes measured were greater than the criterion reference mean of 2.5 and were accepted. This indicate that the respondents agreed that the following are types of cyberbullying prevention programmes implemented in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State: digital safety awareness seminars, guidance and counseling services, school rules on internet usage, peer mentoring/peer education and parental sensitization programmes. Although peer mentoring and parental sensitization programmes recorded lower mean scores, they were still accepted, indicating their presence in some schools.

Research Question Two: To what extent do cyberbullying prevention programmes reduce cyberbullying behaviours among students in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on how Cyberbullying Prevention Programmes reduce Cyberbullying behaviours among Students in Private Secondary Schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
6	Participation in cyberbullying prevention programmes has reduced my involvement in sending hurtful or abusive messages online	2.89	0.86	Moderate extend
7	After attending cyberbullying prevention programmes, I am less likely to post or share harmful comments about others on social media.	2.91	0.64	Moderate extend
8	Cyberbullying prevention programmes have helped me understand the consequences of engaging in online harassment.	3.02	1.01	High extend
9	Since being exposed to cyberbullying prevention programmes, I avoid impersonating or spreading false information about others online.	2.65	0.89	Moderate extend
10	Cyberbullying prevention	2.87	0.75	Moderate

programmes have positively influenced my behaviour toward treating others with respect on digital platforms.		extend
Grand Mean	2.87	0.83

Table 2 shows that majority of the mean obtained from various attributes measured were higher than the criterion reference mean of 2.5 and were accepted. The grand mean of 2.87 was obtained from the respondents, this indicates that the respondents agreed that to a high extent cyberbullying prevention programmes reduce cyberbullying behaviours among students in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Research Question Three: What influence do cyberbullying prevention programmes have on students' awareness of digital safety and responsible online behaviour in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on Influence of Cyberbullying Prevention Programmes on Students' Awareness of Digital Safety and Responsible Online behaviour in Private Secondary Schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
11	Cyberbullying prevention programmes have increased my awareness of how to protect my personal information online.	3.05	0.97	High extend
12	After participating in cyberbullying prevention programmes, I understand the importance of using social media responsibly.	2.94	0.88	Moderate extend
13	Cyberbullying prevention programmes have helped me recognize unsafe or harmful online behaviours.	3.00	0.99	High extend
14	I am now aware of appropriate steps to take when I experience or witness cyberbullying online.	2.89	0.74	Moderate extend
15	Cyberbullying prevention programmes have improved my understanding of the rules and consequences related to online misconduct.	2.96	1.04	High extend

Grand Mean

2.97

0.92

Table 3 shows that majority of the mean obtained from various attributes measured were higher than the criterion reference mean of 2.5 and were accepted. The grand mean of 2.97 was obtained from the respondents, this indicates a substantial improvement in students' digital citizenship awareness after exposure to cyberbullying prevention programmes. This result suggests that the prevention programmes have influence in enhancing students' understanding of safe online practices and responsible use of digital platforms.

Hypothesis One: Cyberbullying prevention programmes does not Significantly reduce cyberbullying behaviours among students in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Table 4: t-test on Cyberbullying Prevention Programmes and Reduction of Cyberbullying Behaviours Among Students

Variable Compared	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Upper	Lower			
Cyberbullying Prevention Programmes vs Cyberbullying Behaviours	0.74	1.21	0.085	0.908	0.572	8.706	199	0.000

Table 4 shows that the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that cyberbullying prevention programmes significantly reduced cyberbullying behaviours among students in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Hypothesis Two: Cyberbullying prevention programmes do not have a significant influence on students' awareness of digital safety and responsible online behaviour in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Table 5: t-test on Influence on Students' Awareness of Digital Safety and Responsible Online behaviour.

Variable Compared	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Upper	Lower			
Cyberbullying Prevention Programmes vs Digital Safety Awareness	0.82	1.14	0.081	0.979	0.661	10.123	199	0.000

Table 5 shows that the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that cyberbullying prevention programmes have significant influence on students' awareness of digital safety and responsible online behaviour in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings presented in Table 1 show that various cyberbullying prevention programmes are implemented in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, with digital safety awareness seminars, guidance and counseling services, and school rules on internet usage being the most prominent. The acceptance of all items indicates that cyberbullying prevention initiatives are present across the schools studied. This finding implies that private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State recognize cyberbullying as a significant challenge and have adopted preventive measures to address it. This finding agrees with Cross et al. (2016), who reported that schools that implement structured cyber safety education and counseling programmes create safer digital environments for students.

The findings presented in Table 2 show that to a high extent cyberbullying prevention programmes reduce cyberbullying behaviours among students in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, and the analysis of the null hypothesis one in Table 4 was rejected. This implies that cyberbullying prevention programmes significantly reduce cyberbullying behaviours among students in private secondary schools. This finding is consistent with the findings of Williford et al. (2013), who found that school-based cyberbullying

prevention programmes significantly reduced cyberbullying and cyber-victimization among secondary school students.

The findings presented in Table 3 show that there is a substantial improvement in students' digital citizenship awareness after exposure to cyberbullying prevention programmes, and the analysis of the null hypothesis two in Table 5 was rejected. This implies that the observed reduction in cyberbullying behaviours was not due to chance but resulted from the implementation of the prevention programmes. This finding supports the views of Hinduja and Patchin (2015), who asserted that comprehensive cyberbullying interventions positively influence students' online behaviour when consistently implemented.

Conclusion

The study concludes that cyberbullying prevention programmes are effective in reducing cyberbullying behaviours and improving digital citizenship among students in private secondary schools in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. Structured, comprehensive, and participatory programmes contribute positively to safer school digital environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Private secondary schools should institutionalize cyberbullying prevention programmes as part of the school curriculum.
2. Private school administrators should provide regular training for teachers and counselors on cyber safety issues.
3. Private schools should engaged Parents in training through workshops and awareness cyberbullying prevention programmes.
4. Government and educational policymakers should develop clear cyberbullying policies and monitoring frameworks for junior secondary schools.

References

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice Hall.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Cross, D., Barnes, A., Papageorgiou, A., Hadwen, K., Hearn, L., & Lester, L. (2016). A social–ecological framework for understanding and reducing cyberbullying behaviours. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 23, 109–117.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2015.05.016>
- Espelage, D. L., Low, S., Polanin, J. R., & Brown, E. C. (2016). The impact of a middle school program to reduce aggression, victimization, and sexual violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 53(2), 180–186.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.01.023>
- Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2015). *Bullying beyond the schoolyard: Preventing and responding to cyberbullying* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Kowalski, R. M., Giumetti, G. W., Schroeder, A. N., & Lattanner, M. R. (2014). Bullying in the digital age: A critical review and meta-analysis of

- cyberbullying research among youth. *Psychological Bulletin*, 140(4), 1073–1137. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035618>
- Olabiyi, O. B. (2021). Impact of bullying on psychosocial adjustment of school-aged children in Nigeria. *Electronic Journal of Social and Strategic Studies*, 2, 229–241.
- Olasanmi, O. O., Agbaje, Y. T., & Adeyemi, M. O. (2020). Prevalence and prevention strategies of cyberbullying among Nigerian students. *Psychology*, 11(7), 1001–1015. <https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2020.117066>
- Smith, P. K., Mahdavi, J., Carvalho, M., Fisher, S., Russell, S., & Tippett, N. (2008). Cyberbullying: Its nature and impact in secondary school pupils. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 49(4), 376–385. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007.01846.x>
- Tambawal, M. U., & Rukayya, M. U. (2017). Bullying and its effects on academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria: Implications for counselling. *The Professional Counselor*, 9(3), 238–251.
- Williford, A., Elledge, L. C., Boulton, A. J., DePaolis, K. J., Little, T. D., & Salmivalli, C. (2013). Effects of the KiVa antibullying program on cyberbullying and cybervictimization. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 53(6), 738–743. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.07.046>

