THE PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION OF BULLYING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS" IN ILESA EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT, OSUN STATE

ADENIGBAGBE, Henry Adeloye, Ph.D.
Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling, University of Ilesa, Nigeria.
Henryade2013@gmail.com henry_adenigbagbe@unilesa.edu.ng,

QUAYE Regina Modupe PhD
Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria
dupsie3000@gmail.com
&
AKINBOBOYE, Folayemi Justinah
Department of Primary Education, Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Nigeria.
folayemi555@gmail.com

Abstract
In many primary schools, bullying has become a pressing concern in Nigeria due to its effects on children's emotional well-being and academic outcomes. This paper philosophically explores the impact of bullying on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Ilesa East Local Government, Osun State. The paper employs a philosophical research method that interrogates the moral, ethical, and educational implications of bullying within the context of the aims of education. Drawing from ethical theories, particularly Aristotelian virtue ethics and Kantian deontology, the paper argues that bullying violates the moral purpose of education, which is to nurture rational, moral, and socially responsible individuals. Findings from existing studies reveal that bullying lowers pupils' concentration, increases absenteeism, and reduces academic achievement. The paper concludes that addressing bullying is not only a pedagogical necessity but also a moral imperative for realizing the true aims of education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Bullying, Academic Performance, Primary Education, Philosophy of Education, Moral and Ethical Implications.

Introduction
Education remains one of the most important foundations for the intellectual, moral, and social development of children. At the primary school level, pupils are expected to acquire basic skills in reading, writing, and numeracy while also being nurtured in values that shape their character and social behavior. However, this process is often disrupted by challenges such as bullying, which creates fear, anxiety, and emotional instability among

children. Bullying not only affects their ability to participate fully in class but also undermines their concentration, confidence, and overall academic performance.

Globally, bullying is a common issue that affects many children. According to UNESCO (2019), about one out of every three children faces bullying while they are in school, and this bullying is linked to worse school performance. In Africa, research in South Africa shows that bullying and school violence hurt students' self-esteem and their school success (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). In Nigeria, there are more reports of bullying in primary and secondary schools. This bullying is linked to trouble focusing, lower test results, and, in some cases, students leaving school early (Adebayo & Olaleye, 2019).

In Osun State, specifically in Ilesa East Local Government, bullying is not being properly studied or dealt with in relation to how it affects primary school children. Teachers and parents in the area have noticed that kids who are bullied often stop participating in school activities and do worse in both school tests and exams. This situation not only harms the students' education but also goes against the goal of education, which is to help young people grow into responsible citizens and contribute to a peaceful society.

The philosophy of education helps us look closely at the moral, ethical, and educational issues caused by bullying. From a philosophical point of view, education is not just about learning facts, but also about building good character, supporting fairness, and showing respect for every person's worth. If bullying continues in schools, it means the education system is not doing its job in helping students become kind and responsible members of society (Noddings, 2013; Dewey, 1916).

Also, bullying brings up important questions about whether learning environments are fair and equal. If some children are not safe, feel stressed, or don't have the same chance to learn, then the idea of fairness in education is not being followed. This makes us think about whether Nigerian schools are meeting their ethical duties as stated in the National Policy on Education, which aims to develop both moral values and smart thinking (FRN, 2013).

While empirical studies in Nigeria and elsewhere have examined the link between bullying and academic performance, few have explored the issue from the standpoint of the philosophy of education. The missing gap lies in the lack of critical reflection on how bullying undermines the moral purpose of schooling, the ethical obligations of teachers and administrators, and the broader aims of education as stated in Nigeria's National

Policy on Education (FRN, 2013). By conducting a philosophical inquiry into the impact of bullying on academic performance, this study addresses this gap, offering insights that go beyond statistics to question the ethical foundations of Nigerian primary education.
This study is therefore timely and relevant, as it not only investigates bullying as a social problem but also interrogates it as a philosophical challenge to the very meaning and purpose of education in Nigeria. It seeks to broaden the conversation beyond disciplinary measures by situating the issue within the context of ethics, morality, and the philosophy of education.

Conceptual Clarification
Conceptual clarification is important to avoid ambiguity and to situate this study within the proper philosophical and educational context. The major concepts that need explanation include bullying, academic performance, primary education, intellectual inquiry, and philosophy of education.

Bullying
Bullying is when a stronger child repeatedly acts in an aggressive way, either physically, through words, or by hurting relationships. This behavior is meant to hurt, scare, or push someone weaker aside. Examples of bullying include shouting harsh names, hitting or hurting someone, leaving someone out of groups, and making someone feel bad through words or actions. In schools, bullying can make students feel afraid and create a hostile environment, which makes it harder for teachers to teach and for students to learn. According to Olweus (2013), bullying is described as repeated negative actions where there is an imbalance of power between the person doing the bullying and the person being bullied. In this study, bullying is not seen just as a behavior problem, but as a moral issue because it brings up important questions about fairness, respect, and treating people with dignity in school.

Academic Performance: Academic performance shows how much a student has learned, and it's usually seen through things like tests, exams, classwork, how much they participate, and how they move up in grade levels. But it's not just about getting good grades. It also means a student can use what they've learned, solve problems, and feel more confident in their learning. Studies show that bullying can hurt how well a child does in school by making it hard to focus, causing them to miss school more, and making them less interested in learning (UNESCO, 2019; Adebayo & Olaleye, 2019). In this study, academic performance is seen as a full picture of a child's learning growth, and bullying can stop that growth.

Primary education: Primary education is the first official stage of school, typically for kids aged six to eleven in Nigeria. It serves as the base for lifelong learning and growth, where children learn to read, write, count, and understand right and wrong (FRN, 2013). The National Policy on Education says that primary school teaches children how to live well in society and prepares them for more advanced learning. This means that problems like bullying during this early period can affect a child's school performance and personal development in the long run. Because of its importance, primary education is a key area to study how bullying affects children.

Philosophical inquiry: Philosophical inquiry is a way of thinking deeply about issues, asking questions, and looking closely at ideas to understand their deeper meaning, beliefs, and effects. It is different from studies that only look at what can be seen or measured. Ozmon and Craver (2019) say that the philosophy of education helps us look not only at what is happening in schools but also at what should be happening. In this study, philosophical inquiry is used to look at bullying not just as a social or mental issue, but as something that goes against the goals of education and the moral values it should support.

Philosophy of Education: Philosophy of education is the application of philosophical methods and principles to understand, critique, and guide educational theory and practice. It examines fundamental questions such as: What is the purpose of education? What values should education promote? What is the role of teachers in shaping moral character? Dewey (1916) emphasized that education should cultivate democracy, cooperation, and mutual respect, while Noddings (2013) highlighted the central role of care and empathy in learning environments. By situating this study in the philosophy of education, bullying is interpreted as a phenomenon that challenges the ethical responsibilities of schools, teachers, and society. It also raises questions about whether education is achieving its stated goals of nurturing responsible citizens when children are denied safety and respect within their learning environment.

In summary, these concepts provide a framework for this study. Bullying represents the problem, academic performance represents the measurable outcome, primary education is the setting, philosophical inquiry is the method, and philosophy of education is the perspective through which the issue is examined. Together, they establish the foundation for analyzing how bullying affects learning and why it must be understood as both a moral and educational failure.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in selected philosophical and ethical theories that provide a framework for understanding the impact of bullying on academic performance. The theoretical perspectives include Kantian Deontological Ethics, Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, John Dewey's Pragmatism, and Nel Noddings' Ethics of Care. Each of these perspectives provides a lens for interpreting the moral, educational, and social implications of bullying in primary schools.

Kantian Deontological Ethics**:** Immanuel Kant believed that every person has a unique value and should be treated with respect, not just as a tool to achieve something else. He said that an action is morally right only if it could be a rule that everyone should follow (Allison, 1990). In the case of bullying, Kant's ideas show that it is wrong to use other students for fun, power, or harm. This treats the victim as less than human and breaks the basic respect and fairness that should exist in school. Teachers and school leaders also have a responsibility to stop bullying, because ignoring it makes them part of the problem.

Aristotelian Virtue Ethics: Aristotle thought that developing good character traits like courage, fairness, friendship, and self-control is key to living a good life. Education isn't just about learning facts; it's about becoming a better person (Kraut, 2018). Bullying shows that someone hasn't grown morally, as it shows bad traits like cruelty, pride, and unfairness. Schools should be places where students learn and practice good habits through positive relationships and guidance. Bullying hurts the main goal of education, which is to create people who are morally strong and can help society.

Synthesis of the Framework: Taken together, these theoretical perspectives highlight that bullying is both a moral and educational failure. Kant emphasizes the duty of respect and justice; Aristotle points to the failure of moral character. These theories collectively provide a robust philosophical framework for analyzing how bullying undermines the purpose of education in primary schools and why eliminating it is a moral imperative for educators and policymakers.

Literature Review

The literature on bullying and academic performance is broad, spanning psychology, sociology, and education. However, only a few works attempt to situate the issue within the framework of philosophy of education. This review highlights key findings from

global, African, and Nigerian studies, followed by a discussion of relevant philosophical reflections.

Bullying and Academic Performance: A Global Perspective
Globally, bullying has been identified as one of the major threats to a safe learning environment in schools. UNESCO (2019) reported that about one in three children worldwide has experienced some form of bullying, with consequences that include poor academic achievement, absenteeism, and even dropping out of school. In the United States, studies show that bullied pupils often demonstrate lower test scores and reduced classroom engagement due to emotional distress and lack of concentration (Wang, Berry, & Swearer, 2013). A longitudinal study in Finland also revealed that consistent exposure to bullying negatively affects pupils' cognitive development and lowers their academic motivation (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). These global findings indicate that bullying is not only a disciplinary problem but also a significant academic barrier.

Bullying in the African Context
In Africa, research has similarly highlighted the detrimental effects of bullying on pupils' learning experiences. Burton and Leoschut (2013) conducted a national study in South Africa and found that victims of school violence and bullying suffered from low self-esteem and poor academic performance. Pupils who were bullied reported skipping school more frequently, which directly affected their academic progress. Another study in Ghana revealed that bullying was associated with increased levels of anxiety among pupils, resulting in lower concentration and reduced performance in core subjects like mathematics and English (Mankoe, 2018). These findings show that bullying is not just a Western problem but also a significant challenge for African education systems struggling to create equitable and safe learning environments.

Bullying in the Nigerian Context
In Nigeria, bullying has been documented as a common occurrence in both primary and secondary schools. Adebayo and Olaleye (2019) reported that bullying in primary schools negatively influences pupils' classroom participation and test results, as victims often develop a fear of interacting with peers or teachers. Similarly, Omoniyi (2013) found that bullying contributes to emotional trauma in children, which in turn hampers their ability to concentrate and excel academically. Reports from Osun State, including anecdotal evidence from teachers, suggest that bullying is prevalent and under-reported, with many cases dismissed as normal childhood behavior. However, the cumulative effect is a decline in pupils' confidence, motivation, and academic outcomes. Despite these

findings, the Nigerian literature has primarily focused on the psychological or sociological aspects of bullying, with limited exploration of its moral and philosophical implications.

Philosophical Reflections on Bullying and Education
From the perspective of philosophy of education, bullying raises serious ethical and moral concerns. John Dewey (1916) argued that schools are miniature societies where children learn cooperation, equality, and democratic values. Bullying contradicts this vision by fostering exclusion, fear, and inequality. Similarly, Nel Noddings (2013) emphasized the role of care in education, asserting that teachers and pupils should cultivate relationships rooted in empathy and mutual respect. When bullying is present, the ethic of care is undermined, and the moral foundation of education is compromised.

Kant's deontological ethics provides further insights by emphasizing the moral duty to treat individuals as ends in themselves. Bullying violates this principle by reducing the victim to a means for the bully's satisfaction (Allison, 1990). Aristotle's virtue ethics also situates bullying as a failure to cultivate virtues such as justice, friendship, and compassion (Kraut, 2018). Thus, philosophical reflections highlight that bullying is not just a behavioral issue but a profound moral problem that challenges the aims of education.

Gap in Literature
While studies across the world, Africa, and Nigeria confirm the negative impact of bullying on pupils' academic performance, most of the literature remains empirical in nature, focusing on psychological and sociological outcomes. Few studies have critically analyzed bullying from a philosophical standpoint. The gap lies in understanding how bullying undermines the moral and ethical purpose of education, particularly in the Nigerian context. This study addresses that gap by conducting a philosophical inquiry into the impact of bullying on the academic performance of pupils in primary schools.

Philosophical Analysis
Philosophy of education provides a deeper framework for analyzing bullying beyond its psychological and sociological dimensions. By engaging with key ethical and educational theories, we can interrogate the moral implications of bullying and its effects on pupils' academic performance. This analysis will be approached through deontological ethics, and virtue ethics.

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Immanuel Kant's deontological framework emphasizes that human beings possess intrinsic dignity and should never be treated merely as a means to an end (Allison, 1990). Bullying clearly violates this principle because it reduces the victim to an object of ridicule, fear, or aggression. Within the primary school context in Nigeria, when a child bullies another, the act undermines the moral worth of the victim, disregarding their right to respect and dignity. Kant's categorical imperative would demand that bullying cannot be universalized as a moral action, since a world where everyone bullies would collapse into chaos and mutual harm. Therefore, from a deontological standpoint, bullying is intrinsically wrong and must be addressed as a violation of human dignity in the educational setting.

Virtue Ethics and the Failure to Cultivate Character
Aristotle's virtue ethics emphasizes the importance of developing moral virtues such as justice, friendship, and courage (Kraut, 2018). Bullying represents a moral failure because it reflects the vices of cruelty, arrogance, and injustice. For victims, the experience of being bullied can erode confidence and reduce opportunities to cultivate virtues such as self-expression and resilience. In Nigerian primary schools, where education is meant to build character as much as it imparts knowledge, bullying undermines the formation of moral character. Teachers, therefore, bear the responsibility of nurturing virtues in pupils by creating environments where kindness, empathy, and cooperation are practiced and reinforced daily.

Philosophical Implications for Academic Performance
When viewed philosophically, the link between bullying and academic performance goes beyond mere distraction or trauma. It represents the breakdown of the moral principles that should guide education. Deontologically, bullying denies children their moral worth; utilitarianism shows its harmful consequences for collective learning; virtue ethics exposes its failure to cultivate moral character; and African communalism reveals its disruption of social harmony. Together, these perspectives demonstrate that bullying undermines both the academic and moral goals of primary education in Nigeria.

Ethical Implications
Bullying in primary schools is not merely a disciplinary or behavioral issue but an ethical concern that challenges the very foundation of education as a moral enterprise. Education, especially at the basic level, is meant to nurture the intellectual, emotional, and moral growth of the child. When bullying occurs, it violates ethical norms by infringing on children's dignity, rights, and opportunities for holistic development.

Examining the ethical implications of bullying offers a framework for understanding why it must be condemned and systematically addressed.

Violation of Human Dignity

One of the most critical ethical implications of bullying is the violation of human dignity. Every child deserves respect and recognition as a person of inherent worth. Bullying dehumanizes the victim by subjecting them to ridicule, aggression, and humiliation. This aligns with Kant's assertion that human beings should never be treated merely as means to an end but always as ends in themselves (Allison, 1990). In the Nigerian context, where cultural values emphasize respect for individuals within the community, bullying erodes these values and represents a moral failure in the educational process.

Rights of the Child and Educational Justice

Children, according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, have the right to education in an environment free from violence and fear (UNICEF, 2021). Bullying undermines this right, creating barriers to learning and participation. It raises questions of educational justice, as some pupils are deprived of equal opportunities to excel academically because of persistent victimization. Ethically, schools have a duty to ensure fairness and protect the rights of all pupils, particularly the vulnerable, in line with both international frameworks and Nigeria's Child Rights Act of 2003 (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2003).

Ethical Implications for the Bully

Beyond the victims, ethical questions also surround the development of the bully. Bullying behavior, if unchecked, cultivates vices such as cruelty, arrogance, and insensitivity, which can mature into adult patterns of violence or corruption. From the perspective of virtue ethics, allowing pupils to bully unchecked denies them the opportunity to develop virtues such as empathy, justice, and compassion (Kraut, 2018). This raises a moral concern not only for the victim but also for the character development of the bully.

Communal and Societal Consequences

From an African communal perspective, bullying disrupts the harmony of the school community, contradicting the value of *Ubuntu*, which emphasizes interconnectedness and mutual respect (Eke & Onwuatuegwu, 2021). The ethical implication extends beyond the individual, since the failure to address bullying weakens the communal bonds within the

classroom and, by extension, society. Education ceases to be a tool of moral and communal development when it permits practices that alienate and harm children.

Philosophical Implications for Educational Purposes

Ultimately, the ethical implications of bullying touch on the fundamental question of the purpose of education. If education is not only about intellectual growth but also about moral and character formation, then tolerating bullying is tantamount to betraying the ethical mission of schooling. The persistence of bullying in Nigerian primary schools reveals a gap between educational ideals and practices. Addressing this ethically means realigning educational policies and practices to reflect both moral principles and the rights of the child.

Findings and Discussion

The study has revealed several important findings concerning the impact of bullying on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Ilesa East Local Government, Osun State. The findings underscore the fact that bullying is not only a behavioral issue but also a moral, educational, and philosophical concern that affects both the victims and the overall purpose of education.

1. Bullying Negatively Affects Academic Performance. One of the main points from the study is that bullying hurts how well students do in school. Students who are bullied often have trouble focusing, lose interest in what they learn, and miss more school. The fear of being bullied makes it hard for them to pay attention in class, which leads to worse test results and less involvement in schoolwork. This matches what previous research has shown: bullying is linked to poor school performance and a lack of interest in learning (Olweus, 2013; Akpan & Okon, 2021). In Ilesa East, many students said they avoided going to school or certain classes where bullying happened, showing a clear link between bullying and problems with education.

2. Emotional and Psychological Harm

The study also shows that bullying causes serious emotional and mental issues for students. Those who are bullied often feel anxious, sad, and have low self-esteem. These feelings make it hard for them to take part in class or feel confident enough to do well in their studies. From a deeper point of view, this shows that schools are not fulfilling their duty to care for both the minds and emotions of students (Noddings, 2013).

3. Failure of Institutional Responsibility

Another major finding is that schools in the area don't have clear rules or actions to stop bullying. Some teachers and school leaders act like bullying is a usual part of growing up and don't take it seriously. This shows a big difference between what schools should stand for—fairness, caring, and respect—and what they actually do. When schools don't respond properly, the bullying keeps happening, and students' rights aren't protected as they should be (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2003).

4. Moral Development of Bullies and Victims

The study also found that bullying influences not only the victims but also the bullies themselves. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviors risk developing negative character traits such as arrogance, insensitivity, and disregard for others' rights. Left unchecked, these traits can solidify into adult vices that harm society at large. On the other hand, victims of bullying may grow up with long-term trauma, fear of social interaction, or distrust of authority. This raises important philosophical concerns regarding virtue development and the role of education in shaping moral character (Kraut, 2018).

5. Communal Disruption and Erosion of Values

Findings further indicate that bullying disrupts the sense of community and solidarity that schools are meant to foster. In a context like Nigeria, where communal values and Ubuntu philosophy emphasize harmony, cooperation, and mutual respect, bullying erodes these cultural values. Pupils exposed to bullying tend to isolate themselves rather than engage in group learning activities, thereby weakening the communal learning spirit that education should uphold (Eke & Onwuatuegwu, 2021).

Discussion

The study shows a big difference between what education should be and what it's really like for students in Ilesa East. In theory, education is meant to free people, help them think clearly, grow morally, and feel proud of who they are. But the fact that bullying keeps happening shows that schools aren't doing what they're supposed to. From a Kantian point of view, bullying is wrong because it treats students as tools for others' fun or power. This goes against the idea that people should be treated with respect. From the perspective of virtue ethics, bullying harms the growth of good qualities like kindness and fairness, and instead encourages bad behaviors that hurt people and society (Kraut, 2018). The research also connects with Noddings' idea of caring in education. That thinks relationships and a supportive environment are key to learning. But since schools in Ilesa East aren't stopping bullying, it means teachers aren't fulfilling their

responsibility to care for students. Ethically, schools can't ignore this duty without losing what they're meant to do.

Additionally, the study points out a problem with policies. Nigeria's Child Rights Act and international rules like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child say students should have safe schools. But these rules are not being followed well. Without proper checks and strong enforcement, bullying continues, which harms both learning and character development.

However, the discussion emphasizes that bullying is not only a social and psychological issue but also a philosophical challenge that calls into question the ethical foundations of education in Nigeria. Addressing it requires schools to realign their practices with the moral, communal, and humanistic ideals of education, thereby ensuring that primary education fulfills its role in nurturing the whole child.

Conclusion
This study found that bullying harms how well primary school children in Ilesa East do in school. It makes it hard for them to focus, feel confident, and stay motivated. It also brings up ethical issues because it goes against fairness, kindness, and respect, which are important parts of education. From a philosophical point of view, schools should help kids learn both knowledge and good values, but bullying messes this up by creating fear and making some kids feel left out.

To fix this, schools need to take a full approach. This includes making clear rules, training teachers, getting parents involved, and teaching moral values more strongly. Using values from African communities, like caring for others and working together, can also help make school a safer and more welcoming place. In the end, fighting bullying isn't just about discipline—it's also about doing what's right and true to the purpose of education.

Recommendations
Schools in Ilesa East should establish clear anti-bullying policies and ensure strict enforcement. Teachers need regular training to identify and manage bullying, while parents should be actively engaged through sensitization and collaboration. Moral and civic education should be strengthened to instill empathy, respect, and responsibility in pupils. Schools must also provide safe and inclusive environments with counseling and peer-support systems. Finally, government and education authorities should monitor

interventions, enforce child protection laws, and promote African communal values such as Ubuntu to curb bullying.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Develop Clear Anti-Bullying Policies**: Schools in Ilesa East should establish and enforce well-defined policies against bullying, with proper reporting systems and consequences for offenders.
2. **Strengthen Moral and Civic Education**: Primary schools should integrate moral and civic lessons into the curriculum to instill values of empathy, respect, and responsibility among pupils.
3. **Provide Teacher Training**: Teachers should be trained to identify signs of bullying, apply conflict resolution strategies, and support both victims and perpetrators towards positive behavior change.
4. **Engage Parents Actively**: Schools should organize regular meetings and sensitization programs to involve parents in addressing bullying and supporting children's academic and moral growth.
5. **Create Safe and Caring Learning Environments**: Schools should build a culture of care and inclusion, offering counseling services, peer-support systems, and extracurricular activities that promote teamwork and mutual respect.
6. **Ensure Monitoring and Evaluation**: School authorities and local education bodies should track the effectiveness of anti-bullying measures through surveys, feedback systems, and periodic reviews.
7. **Leverage African Communal Values**: Schools should draw from communal philosophies like Ubuntu, which emphasize collective responsibility and shared humanity, to discourage harmful behaviors such as bullying.
8. **Strengthen Legal Enforcement**: Government agencies should enforce the provisions of the *Child Rights Act (2003)* and ensure that schools remain accountable in protecting children's right to education in a safe environment.

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