



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BULLYING, VICTIMIZATION,  
PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND DEPRESSION AMONG  
TEENAGERS IN SELANGOR MALAYSIA**

**IKECHUKWU UZODINMA UBA**

**FEM 2009 6**



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**MASTER OF SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITY PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**2009**



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**By**

**IKECHUKWU UZODINMA UBA**

**Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Univeristi Putra Malaysia,  
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

**October 2009**



Abstract of thesis presented to the senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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**October 2009**

**Chairperson: Siti Nor Yaacob, Phd**

**Faculty: Human Ecology**

The current study examined the relationship between bullying, victimization and pro-social behaviour with depression among teenagers. The study also determined the moderation effect of pro-social behavior on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Ecological systems theory and social cognitive theory were used to highlight the assumptions of the study. The respondents of the study were 242 teenagers from selected secondary schools in Selangor, Malaysia, aged between 13-17 years (mean = 14.67 years; s.d = 1.27). Simple random sampling technique was used to identify the respondents. Peer Relationship Questionnaire (PRQ) by Rigley and Slee (1993) was used to assess bullying, victimization and pro-social behaviour among respondents of the study. The Children Depression Inventory (CDI) (Kovac, 1985) was used to measure depression. Descriptive statistics, t-test, regression and simple factorial ANOVA were used in data analysis. The findings of



the study indicated that there was a significant difference ( $t = 3.306, p \leq .05$ ) in bullying between male and female teenagers. The study also indicated that depression has a significant and positive correlation with both bullying ( $r = .296, p \leq .01$ ) and victimization ( $r = .432, p \leq .01$ ). Also, the study found significant and positive correlation between bullying and victimization ( $r = .422, p \leq .01$ ). Pro-social behaviour was found to have a positive correlation with victimization only ( $r = .148, p \leq .05$ ). Victimization was the only unique predictor of depression (Beta = .373,  $p \leq .0001$ ) in peer relationships. Findings of the study equally revealed that pro-social behaviour does not moderate the relationship between bullying, victimization and depression. The findings of the study lend support to the theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Bandura (1963) in that depression can be caused by the socio-environment, and that bullying, victimization and pro-social behaviour can all be learned from the environment. It also adds to the understanding of peer relationship among teenagers, by emphasizing the need for psychological treatment for identified bullies, victims and depressed teenagers. The study suggested that future research need to expand beyond the self report of internalizing and externalizing depression reported by the teenage respondents. The self report from parents and teachers should also be included as part of the assessment of teenagers.



Abstrak thesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Sarjana Sains

**HUBUNGAN ANTARA BULI, PEMANGSAAN, TINGKAH LAKU  
PRO-SOSIAL DAN KEMURUNGAN DALAM KALANGAN  
REMAJA DI SELANGOR, MALAYSIA**

Oleh

**IKECHUKWU UZODINMA UBA**

**October 2009**

**Pengerusi: Siti Nor Yaacob, Phd**

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Kajian ini meneliti perkaitan antara buli, pemangsaan dan tingkah laku pro-sosial dengan kemurungan dalam kalangan remaja. Kajian ini juga menentukan kesan moderasi tingkah laku pro-sosial terhadap perkaitan antara angkuh bebas dan angkuh sandar. Teori sistem ekologi dan teori kognitif digunakan untuk menerangkan andaian kajian. Responden kajian adalah 242 orang remaja dari sekolah menengah terpilih di Selangor, Malaysia, yang berumur antara 13-17 tahun (purata umur = 14.67 tahun, s.p. = 1.27). Teknik persampelan rawak mudah digunakan untuk memilih responden kajian. *Peer Relationship Questionnaire* (PRQ) by Rigley and Slee (1993) digunakan untuk menilai tahap buli, pemangsaan dan perilaku pro-sosial dalam kalangan responden. Skala *Children Depression Inventory* (CDI) oleh Kovacs (1985) digunakan untuk mengukur tahap kemurungan. Statistik diskriptif, ujian-*t*, regresi dan *simple factorial ANOVA* digunakan dalam analisis data. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan ( $t = 3.306, p \leq$



.05) tingkah laku buli antara remaja lelaki dan perempuan. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa kemurungan mempunyai perkaitan positif dan signifikan dengan buli ( $r = .296, p \leq .01$ ) dan pemangsaan ( $r = .432, p \leq .01$ ). Kajian juga mendapati wujud perkaitan signifikan dan positif antara buli dan pemangsaan ( $r = .422, p \leq .01$ ). Tingkah laku pro-sosial didapati mempunyai perkaitan positif dan signifikan dengan pemangsaan sahaja ( $r = .148, p \leq .05$ ). Pemangsaan adalah prediktor unik tunggal kemurungan ( $\text{Beta} = .373, p \leq .0001$ ) dalam hubungan antara rakan sebaya. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa tingkah laku pro-sosial tidak dapat memoderasi perkaitan antara buli, pemangsaan dan kemurungan. Hasil kajian menyokong teori Bronfenbrener (1979) dan Bandura (1963), bahawa kemurungan boleh disebabkan oleh persekitaran sosial dan tingkah laku buli, pemangsaan serta pro-sosial juga dapat dipelajari daripada persekitaran. Hasil kajian juga menambahkan lagi kefahaman tentang perhubungan antara remaja dengan menekankan keperluan intervensi psikologi kepada remaja yang dikenalpasti pembuli, mangsa dan yang mengalami kemurungan. Kajian ini juga mencadangkan supaya kajian akan datang dikembangkan supaya bukan sahaja melihat kepada kemurungan 'dalaman' dan 'luaran' yang dilaporkan oleh responden remaja. Laporan daripada ibu bapa dan guru juga perlu disertakan dalam penilaian remaja.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This education achievement was made possible by a host of influential and supportive people. I would like to thank my supervisory committee. These include Dr. Siti Nor Yaacob and Associate Professor Dr. Rumaya Juhari for their willingness to supervise me in the course of this research process. I will perpetually remain grateful for the mentorship that Dr. Siti Nor Yaacob provided me over the course of the programme. I would also extend my gratitude to Associate Professor Dr. Rumaya Juhari for giving me necessary guidance at very crucial moments of the research.

I am also heavily indebted to numerous faculty members who guided and tutored me over the duration of the programme. Also, I am equally indebted to Professor Rozumah Baharudin. Dear Prof, although I was not supervised by you, your wealth of knowledge looms so large in the faculty that am happy to note that, am also a beneficiary of your wealth of knowledge.

And lastly to all the friends I made in the course of the programme, some of whom very close to my heart. I am happy to note that you have all made immeasurable contribution to my life and for this I will always remain grateful. I will not also forget my parents for their love, attention and encouragement in the course of this programme. I thank you all for aiding me in achieving my age long dream of a Masters Degree. I am not able to completely express how all your sacrifices of love has helped in bringing me this far. Thank you.





I certify that an Examination Committee has met on **15<sup>th</sup> October 2009** to conduct the final examination of IKECHUKWU UZODINMA UBA on his **Master of Science** thesis entitled “**Relationship between Bullying, Victimization, Pro-Social Behaviour and Teenage Depression**” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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Date: 14 January 2010



## **DECLARATION**

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or any other institutions.

---

**UBA IKECHUKWU UZODINMA**

Date: 14 January 2010



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- 1 EDA: Exploratory Data Analysis
- 2 CDI: Children Depression Inventory
- 3 PRQ: Peer Relationship Questionnaire
- 4 MPA: Malaysian Psychiatric Association
- 5 NIMH: National Institute of Mental Health
- 6 WHO: World Health Organization
- 7 CAMH: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
- 8 NCCMH: National Collaborating Center for Mental Health
- 9 US: United States of America
- 10 OCD: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- 11 RUGS: Research University Grant Scheme
- 12 IQR: Inter-quartile Range



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Teenage years are very crucial periods in the life cycle of a child, particularly in the development of major depression (Harkness & Lumley, 2008). In the view of Stark, Hargrave, Hersh, Michelle, Herren and Fisher (2008), depression is caused by disturbances in cognitive, interpersonal, neuro-chemical and environmental functioning, as well as deficits in critical emotion regulation skill. Depression deals a fatal blow to sufferers, but most teenagers emerge from this turbulent period unscathed by depression or anxiety. However, there are also a significant number of teenagers who are affected and unfortunately they often go undiagnosed in medical care (Karnani & Pomm, 2006).

The inability of parents and practitioners in primary care to diagnose depression early among teenagers was largely due to the novelty of the phenomenon among teenagers. Even, when imminent signs remain, it is usually seen as a normal mood flings among teenagers. In the study conducted by Ryan (2003) approximately 20% of youth has one or more episode of major depression by the time they become adults. The number of teenagers with depression has maintained a steady growth, with an estimated 5% of teenagers affected at any one time (Rosenbaum & Covino, 2005). Kovac (1996) noted that youths who experienced major depression has high risk of reoccurrence within a few years.



An adolescent suffering from depression has many associated problems. Birmaher, Bridge, Williamson, Brent and Dahl (2004) reported that teenagers suffering from depression are more impaired in their social functioning, less popular, maintain shorter duration of friendship and are more often bullied and known to report low peer support and changes in peer acceptance. Depression among teenagers, a phenomenon relatively unknown until around the mid 80's was associated with the death of 15% of its victims (World Health Organization, 2007).

The high prevalence of depression among teenagers in the U.S. coupled with the evidence that the age of first depressive episode was increasing (Lewinsohn, Rohde, Seeley & Fischer, 1993) led scholars like Rigley and Slee (1993) into the examination of the nature of relationship that exist between adolescents and their peers. The association teenagers maintain with their peers became very important following studies conducted in the U.S within the last three decades which found bullying an important aspect of peer relations as significantly related to depression and a potential cause of violence mainly where the teenagers concerned are of equal strength (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

More so, victimization another component part of peer relations, has been equally found to be significantly related to depression (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2008; Benas & Gibb, 2007). High levels of victimization were associated with high levels of depression among the teenage samples of the studies (Storch, Nock, Masia-Warner & Barlas, 2004). Opinions remain divided on the role of pro-social behaviour in the relationship among peers. Some authors stressed that it moderated or reduced depression among teenagers, while others opined that it mediated or increased

depression among teenagers. However, irrespective of the position of scholars on the issue, the notion of pro-social behaviour among teenager was discovered to be significantly related to depression (Perren, Stadelmann, Wyl & Klitzing, 2007). In line with the above overview, the present study examined the relationships between bullying, victimization, pro-social behaviour and depression. The study also determined the moderation effect of pro-social behavior on the relationship between bullying, victimization and depression.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

In the face of bullying and victimization suffered by teenagers in the hands of their peers, teens need support to pull through the difficulty adolescence period portends in their lives. The issue of bullying and victimization in and outside of the school was likely to upset the relationship teenagers have with their peers. More so, several studies in peer relationship link bullying and victimization to depression, peer rejection, lack of close friendships, acceptance of deviance, less supportive and uninvolved parents, less optimal temperament, negative emotionality and reactive aggression (Marini, Dane, Bosacki & Ylc-cura, 2006). Pro-social behaviour another important aspect of peer relations has also been found to be related to depression (Perren et al., 2007). Studies reveal that both high and low levels of pro-social behaviour may expose teenagers to the inherent dangers of depression (Hay & Pawley, 2003; Perren et al., 2007).



Zaman and Nadchatram (2007) reiterated that being punched, kicked, beaten or hit can cause physical harm, while teasing and exclusion can cause emotional scars that may never go away. Also, Zaman and Nadchatram (2007) pointed out that watching others being bullied can be just as frightening. Consequently, some teenagers they noted live out their school lives feeling lonely, rejected, fearful, without any sense that things can change for them. Yaakub, Nagappan and Jusoh (2008) however explored the extent of bully-victim problems among 2528 primary school children in the state of Perak Darul Ridzuan. The children for the study were from Tamil schools, National schools and Chinese schools. The study found a higher proportion of indirect bullies compared to direct bullies. These indirect bullies were reported to be more involved in name-calling and teasing. On the other hand, direct or physical bullies were more engaged in fighting.

The above study also found that males had a higher proportion of both direct and indirect bullies, as well as being victims of both direct and indirect bullying. Only about 20 percent of females were reported to be bullies. About a third of the male respondents admitted bullying their female school mates. The scenario for bullying outside the school ground was found to be similar to what happens inside the school except with a slightly reduced percentage. In the view of Ireland (2003) the social and environmental factors associated with bullying, such as an “innate subculture” supportive of aggression is difficult to change. Therefore, the need to study the relationship between bullying, victimization, pro-social behavior and depression among teenagers arose. This is to emphasize the call for change in the innate subculture supportive of aggression among teenagers and their peers.