

Research Article

Effect of Bullying on Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Case of a Selected Special Unit at the Mainstream in Kabwe Zambia

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Abstract

This manuscript was a study which focused on the effects of bullying learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder in mainstream. The main objectives of the study were to assess the reasons of bullying learners with autism Spectrum Disorder, to establish how bullying affected learners with autism and to find out interventions the school had to put in place to stop bullying of learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The study was conducted at the special unit at the mainstream and homes for learners with autism because that is where these learners were found. The study was qualitative in nature. Thus the instruments for data collection were the focused group discussion for parents, special education teachers, regular teachers and school administrators, structured interview guide for regular and Guidance teacher and lastly observation checklist for parents. The study revealed that the reasons for bullying learners with autism were as a result of failing to socialize with peers, being violent towards friends and having an antisocial behavior, failing to speak properly when with friends and not looking at the person they were talking to. The study also established the negative effects bullying had on these learners such as increased violence, changing of antisocial behavior from bad to worse, they became more depressed and their low self-esteem became worse too. With regards interventions that were put in place by the school to stop bullying of learners with autism, the school plan helped learners develop and regain their loss of confidence by involving them in school activities such as academic work and giving them simpler work and reward them through praise or giving them something for doing something commendable, by helping them improve on their social interactions through encouraging them to interact more frequently with peers in order to correct their lost confidence. Suggested recommendations from the study includes, putting up a deliberate policy by the school to help autistic learners develop commutative skills, socialize frequently and positively with peers at least every day. Introduction of anti-bullying club at school to make other learners respect and accept these children's condition without segregation. It was also recommended that the future study on the effects of bullying learners with autism in the mainstream would be necessary to establish more challenges faced by these learners in the mainstream and the research concerning autistic learners should be included in all mainstream schools in central province of Zambia in order to help these learners fully.

Keywords

Autism Spectrum Disorder, Special Unit, Effect, Mainstream, Bullying

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1. Introduction

There is a lot of bullying going on towards learners with autism and it has a lot of effect on them in the mainstream. This is supported by Rex, (2018) who conducted a study on anti-bullying intervention for children with autism spectrum disorder and discovered that learners with autism are bullied in various ways such as physical, verbal and social [13].

In Australia out of 68 learners at least one child was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and support has been given to them by training more teachers and specialists who lend help to these learners who have been identified (Beth 2016). For instance in the Australian autism Educational Needs Analysis, the majority of teachers (89%) and specialists (97.5%) who participated had received professional learning or specific training related to students with Autism. Teachers working in the field were adequately supported to meet the needs of these students and support was ongoing. Despite this help at international level rendered to learners with autism, the researcher only diagnosed children but did not pay attention to the effect of bullying towards learners with autism in the mainstream which this study focused on.

In African countries learners with autism receive support for instance in countries according to Majoko, (2013) such as Zimbabwe it was stated that there is increase in the education of learners with Special Needs including Autism Spectrum Disorder in the mainstream [9]. Since the adoption of inclusion in most of the African countries there had been notable increase in the enrollment of learners with special needs as well as those with autism. According to Lindsay and Redmand, (2017) those fully included learners with autism have more social support, social networks and better educational targets [6]. Even though in Africa they support learners with autism socially and also better their educational targets, the effects of on bullying among these learners with autism in the mainstream has continued and was not focused on.

The Government of Zambia ensures that learners with autism receive support for example the policy of the Ministry of Education (1996) stated the need of inclusion of learners with special needs including autism [11]. Mandyata, (2002) stated that, the Zambian government has further continued to support inclusion of learners with autism by allowing them to be fully placed in ordinary classes and there are special unit classes that are attached to the mainstream school that cater for these learners [10]. Under this arrangement of inclusion learners with autism received specialized teaching from Special Teachers. Efforts have been made to support learners with autism through education but little has been done if any concerning the effects of bullying in the mainstream of these learners. This is supported by Humphrey and Symes, (2011). who stated that, learners with autism spectrum conditions are more vulnerable to bullying in institutions in comparison with their counterparts without developmental delays [20].

There have been various supports from the international

level such as Australia and in African countries such as Zimbabwe and Zambia. Despite all this support much has not been done towards the effects of bullying on learners with autism in the mainstream. Hence the study was administered to identify the effect of bullying on learners of autism spectrum disorder at a special unit in the mainstream.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

There is a lot of bullying going on towards learners with autism and it has a lot of effects on them in the mainstream. This is supported by Rex, (2018) who conducted a study on anti-bullying Intervention for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and discovered that learners with autism are bullied in various ways [13]. Similarly, Humphrey, (2008) stated that, learners with autism spectrum conditions were more vulnerable to bullying in institutions in comparison with their counterparts without autism [5]. Furthermore in African countries such as South Africa Naicker, (2009) reported that, bullying decreases the education of learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the mainstream [19]. There have been various supports from the international level such as Australia and in African countries such as Zimbabwe and Zambia. For instance, according to Beth, (2016) Australia teachers working in the field were adequately supported by being trained to meet the needs of these learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder and support was ongoing [1]. Despite all this support much has not been done towards identifying the effect of bullying on learners with autism in the mainstream. It was also not known how much bullying affects the learners with autism in the mainstream. Hence the study was administered to identify the effects of bullying on learners of autism spectrum disorder in the mainstream.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify the effect of bullying among learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the mainstream.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives;

- 1) To establish the reasons of bullying learners with autism spectrum disorder.
- 2) To determine how bullying affects learners with autism spectrum disorder.
- 3) To find out interventions the school has put in place to stop bullying of learners with autism spectrum disorder.

1.4. Research Questions of the Study

What are the reasons of bullying learners with autism spectrum disorder?

How does bullying affect learners with autism spectrum disorder?

What Interventions has the school put in place to stop bullying of learners with autism disorder?

2. Findings

The findings of the study are presented in line with the objectives of the study. The objectives of the study were to: establish the reasons of bullying learners with autism spectrum disorder; determine how bullying affected learners with autism spectrum disorder; and to find out interventions the school had put in place to stop bullying of learners with autism. The presentation of the findings was structured around the questions asked in a semi-structured interview guide, observation checklist and focus group discussion under each objective of this study.

2.1. Establishing the Reasons of Bullying Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder

The reasons of bullying learners with autism spectrum disorder was reached at during research basing on the two subthemes of social cognition difficulties and poor communication skills as presented below.

2.2. Social Cognition Difficulties and Poor Communicative Skills

In order to establish the reasons of bullying learners with autism spectrum disorder data was collected from teachers under the following subthemes arising from data that was collected namely social cognition difficulties and poor communicative skills.

2.2.1. Social Cognition Difficulties

During the interview a question was administered to find out the reasons for bullying learners with autism. Teacher "A" stated that, *"learners with autism were bullied due to the fact that, they were unable to talk when interacting with friends."* Teacher "B" added that, *"Friends do the talking and they just follow what their friends are doing and what they tell them to do and they are bullied when they don't do what their friends tell them to do."*

Teacher "C" echoed that, *"the reason why autistic learners were bullied was that their friends wanted to be with them but they would refuse because they were more of themselves than being with friends."* Teacher "D" explained that *"Yes they were able to make friends with those that had the same disability and so non autistic learners bullied them. Teacher "F"*

narrated that, *"normally they interacted without talking but instead friends did the talking most of the times and so friends were irritated and ended up bullying them."* Teacher "G" added to say that, *"those that did not understand them bull them for that."*

Teacher "H" explained that, *"the one I have in my class is very violent towards non-autistic learners and this makes others bull the learner as they want to defend themselves from the violence. Teacher "I" indicated that, "They are not very much into making friends. They rarely interact with friends because of difficulties in their speech and this makes their friends bull them a lot and laugh at them". Intimation from Teacher "J" showed that these learners were bullied because most of the time there were reports from parents complaining of their children refusing to go to school because of being billed for being autistic. Teacher "K" echoed that *"the complaints I have received from some autistic learners are that sometimes these learners were bullied by being laughed at by their friends for failure to speak in class when they were asked questions by the teacher."* Teacher "L" also indicated that, *"Some friends tend to bull them because they failed to socialize fully for example at the tuck-shop they failed to express themselves in the presence of the one selling and end up being laughing at by others."**

Using observation checklist, the researchers took time to visit a home of these learners and wanted to find out from home of parents why the autistic children were bullied. When the researcher reached one of the homes, it was observed that after some introductions by the researchers, the parents told the child to go and play with other non-autistic children but instead the child stayed around a few meters away from where we sat. The researchers also observed that this learner was unable to make friends because when the parent asked friends to pick their autistic friend to go and play, the learner became violent and pushed away the friends, in turn the friends also retaliated by pushing the autistic learner back harder so much that the researchers could see that the autistic child was really hurt and was bullied by the friends. In addition, Parent "A" also narrated that, *"most of the time my autistic child was bullied because most of the time was alone and so had no time for interaction. When other children interacted with him in most cases my child was not social but with violence behavior as this was the order of the day towards others including me."*

The researchers conducted a focus group discussion with teachers in order find out the reasons why learners with autism were bullied. Their responses were as follows; Focus Group Teacher "A" revealed that, these learners were bullied because they were normally very restless as compared to some of the non-autistic friends, and so at school friends bullied them because of not being in one place for a long period of time. Focus Group Teacher "B" stated that, *"their behavior is unusual and that's why they were bullied. Some are more energetic and others are on the quiet side and hence are made fun of by their friends."* Focus Group Teacher "C" revealed that, *"these learners were bullied because they were mostly aloof*

for fear of being laughed at by friends and so when friends wanted to play with them they had nothing in common for their friends to like them and mostly they seemed not to be interested in playing.” Focus Group Teacher “D” added that, “Their quietness bores most of the non-autistic learners and that’s why they were bullied”. Focus Group Teacher “E” narrated that, “these learners are bullied because they are more on the active side and cause a lot of havoc when with friends.” Focus Group Teacher “F” further added that, “the agitated ones are bullied because they are more violent and like fighting too much with non-autistic learners but very friendly with fellow autistic learners.” Focus Group Teacher “G” revealed that, “learners with autism are bullied because they like throwing a lot of tantrums towards others and they also like a lot of attention from the teacher handling them and that irritated their peers.”

The second focus group discussion was a group of administrators and their responses were as follows; Administrator “A” narrated that, “truthfully speaking learners with autism are bullied as a result of always failing to talk and failure to even express themselves freely with friends.” Administrator “B” echoed that, “autistic learners are bullied because of failing to interact with friends and when they interacted in most cases they were the ones who lacked social skills”. Yet Administrator “C” also revealed that, “autistic learners were bullied by peers because they were unable to make friends, because they were not social and were violent when they were forced by their friends to play or even talk to them.”

Basing on these empirical findings it was discovered that the reasons learners with autism spectrum disorder were bullied were as follows; they were unable to talk with friends, they also had difficulties expressing themselves, most of the time some of them would easily become violent when they were forced to speak by non-autistic learners, their quietness irritated their friends making them exposed to bullying. Learners with autism were more of themselves and mostly in isolation making it difficult to socialize with friends. They had antisocial behavior and it made them to be rough and not considerate about how others felt as they were playing as a result peers could not understand them and ended up bullying them.

2.2.2. Poor Communicative Skills

Responses from teachers during the interview were as follows; Teacher “A” explained that, “learners with autism were bullied because non autistic learners did not understand their unusual tone of voice which was robot like. They liked screaming a lot while talking” Teacher “B” added that, “Mostly they were bullied because they liked talking at length without giving chance to others which irritated their peers who in turn laughed at them.” Teacher “C” categorically indicated that, “apart from not understanding their unusual tone of voice, these learners were bullied because most of the time when friends were talking to them they didn’t show any interest in what they were saying and so most of the time peers

even pinched them for ignoring them.” Teacher “D” stated that, “learners with autism were bullied because when they were being talked to, they didn’t look at the person talking to them but instead were doing something contrary and friends got annoyed at this behavior.” Teacher “E” narrated that, “They had a kind of behavior where they wanted their friends to continue repeating themselves as they communicated to them which made them get irritated and hence bullied them in the long run.” Teacher “F” also had this to say, “Some learners with autism are bullied as a result of repeating what they were saying as they communicated with their friends so their friends laughed at them.” Teacher “G” added that they were bullied because “They liked screaming a lot as they talked.”

The researchers visited one home of these autistic learners. Whilst at the learner’s home, one of the researchers decided to talk to the learner by first asking what the name was, instead of the learner just telling the researcher the name, the learner was busy mumbling about something which was not even understood properly and the siblings who were at home started laughing and making funny of the autistic learner. The learner looked embarrassed and felt out of place. It was observed that this learner was bullied by peers because of failure to communicate properly.

In another home were the researchers made an observation, was when the researchers were speaking with this autistic learner who continued talking without giving chance to the researchers to speak. It was observed that this learner was bullied by both the mother and siblings because of talking at length without giving chance to others. It was observed that in trying to correct the learner, the mother became annoyed with the child as she was seen instructing the autistic child to stop talking alone and give chance to the researchers to also talk. The learner kept on talking and this made the mother and other siblings irritated and annoyed at an autistic child.

When focus group discussion for teachers was administered Focus Group Teacher “A” explained that, “autistic learners are bullied because non autistic learners find it difficult to understand their unusual tone of voice, for they like speaking on top of their voices and this irritates a lot of their friends. They are also bullied because they fail to understand their behavior of repeating words over and over again as they communicate with their friends.” Focus Group Teacher “E”. Furthermore Focus Group Teacher “B” narrated that “They are bullied because they don’t show interest in what others are saying even if someone is showing interest to them.”

The second focus group discussion administered was composed of school administrators and their responses were as follows; Administrator “A” narrated that, “mostly autistic children were bullied because of failure to speak properly whenever peers heard them talk using the high pitched voice it really came as a surprise to them because it was rarely done when some learner with autism talked with friends in class”. Administrator “B” pointed out that learners with autism were bullied by their friends because of echolalia; they kept on repeating themselves of what they were saying without giving

chance to others and it was also because of their unusual tone of voice which was not understood by some friends.” Administrator “C” response was that, learners with autism were bullied because of their poor communicative skills which were not easily understood by their peers. Administrator “B” echoed that, they were bullied because their friends failed to tolerate or understand their repetitive or unusual behavior in the way they communicated with them and even some of the teachers with unusual tone of voice.

Basing on these research findings it was revealed that learners with autism were bullied because of the following reasons; they failed to construct meaningful sentences, repeating themselves as they tried to communicate with others, they liked talking at length without giving chance to others to also speak, they showed no facial expression when talking to others indicating that they were not paying attention to what others were saying as they communicated with them. They exhibited an I don’t care attitude when being communicating to. They had back and forth conversation problem such as repeating what others were saying over and over again making it difficult to communicate with each other properly. Their high tone of voice irritated their friends most of the time making them being prone to bullying.

3. Determining How Bullying Effectuated Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder

It was cardinal for the researchers to determine how learners with autism spectrum disorder who were bullied were affected. This is reflected in the findings below;

During the interview Teachers “A” disclosed that, *“Some learners with autism for being bullied became violent or aggressive towards others in trying to defend themselves”*. Teachers “B” explained that, *“autistic learners for being bullied they showed lack of self-confidence when with others”*. Teachers “C” teacher echoed that, *“the effects of bullying were so bad that it made these autistic learners to be crying uncontrollably”*. Teachers “D” stipulated that, *“because of being bullied most of the time autistic learners showed signs of extreme fear and very uncomfortable when with non-autistic learners who bullied them, they were scared due to maltreatment such as being mocked by their friend”*. Teachers “E” explained that, *“autistic learners due to being bullied they were seen seeking love and attention from the teacher and not from fellow pupils which seemed to me as a way of wanting protection from the teacher.”* Teachers “F” said that, *“when friends bullied them most of the time they looked agitated, with low self-esteem, felt bad, embarrassed, lonely, depressed, emotional or having a bad mood”*.

The researchers had also time to visit one home of autistic learner and discovered that the learners was bullied when the learner was asked by one of the researcher to go and sit next to other siblings and the learner was scared of other siblings who

started bullying the child after the child was forced by the mother to be with the peers. The autistic learner ran away from them and went to hide behind the house but when the researcher followed the learner to the hiding place, the learner looked so scared.

During focus group one discussion Teachers “A” stated that *“when some learners were bullied they displayed extreme anger towards non-autistic learners’ siblings including their mothers”*. Teachers “B” explained that, *“the learner in my class did not like being laughed at especially upon doing something good and expected to be praised but other peers made funny of the child, the learner really got annoyed with everyone”*. Teachers “C” also narrated that *“learners who were bullied some of them became furious and could not talk to anyone”*. Teacher “D” mentioned that, *“learners with autism who were bullied some of them their academic performance at school was not very good as a result of being absent from school due to being bullied.”* Teacher “E” echoed that *“bullying made learners with autism to feel hurt, bitter and become arrogance and irritable to anyone who spoke to them”*. Teacher “F” narrated that, *“Due to bullying they exhibited anti-social behavior and opted to stay alone or away from peers.”* Teacher “G” echoed that, *“learners with autism felt shy to get closer to where friends were playing and those who tried to be near where friends were they were looking awkward and failed to express themselves in the presence of peers even later to teachers in the classroom.”*

During group two discussion administrator “A” stated that *“autistic learners who were bullied were upset and were not even interested in doing anything”*. Administrator “B” pointed out that, *“some autistic learners who were bullied didn’t look happy or excited at seeing non-autistic learners who bullied them even the following day and when peers were cracking jokes nothing cheered them”*. Administrator “C” narrated that, *“those who were bullied some of the were absent from school for a good number of days”*

Basing on these empirical findings it was revealed that learners with autism who were bullied were affected in the following manner; they became violent, aggressive, scared, bitter, arrogant, shy, hurt, upset, agitated, afraid, uncomfortable with bullies, embarrassed, sad, lonely, depressed, angry, annoyed, furious, cried, felt bad, had poor academic performance at school, lacked self-confidence, looked awkward, developed anti-social behavior, were seeking love and protection from the teacher and absented themselves from school.

Interventions The School Had Put In Place to Stop Bullying of Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

In order to find out interventions the school had put in place to stop bullying of learners with autism spectrum disorder, data was collected from teachers, school administrators and parents.

3.1. Social Cognition Difficulties

The school presented ways they used in order to curb the

problem of bullying learners with autism spectrum which was associated with social cognitive difficulties during data collection.

3.2. Interventions the School Had Put in Place to Stop Bulling of Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder

It was imperative for the researchers to find out interventions the school had put in place to stop bullying of learners with autism spectrum disorder as a result of their social cognition difficulties. The study discovered the following; Teacher "A" explained that, *"the school had put some measures in place such as involving learners in a lot of social activities and this made autistic learners to start making friends and reduce on others bullying them."* Yet Teacher "B" narrated that, *"the school has put in place interventions on those learners with autism whose lack confidence by putting them in charge of certain tasks just to improve their confidence."* Furthermore Teacher "C" stipulated that, the school has put in place measures of improving their academic performance by giving them class activities which are easy for them so that by getting these exercises correct they could feel good and perform well academically and expected a reduction on bullying them because some were bullied due poor performance. Teacher "D" narrated that, *"the school had put interventions in place to stop learners with autism being bullied by making them have enough time to socialize with their peers and with a view of making them form relationship with each other."* Teacher "E" echoed that, *the school has put in the measures of making learners with autism to sit with those they loved in classroom situation in order to be motivated and reduce on their anti-social behavior which contribute to being bullied."* Teacher "F" narrated that, the other measures the school had put in place *"is that of teachers praising autistic learners in any small thing they did correctly in front of others in order to achieve the desired targeted behavior and also not to scold them in front of their friends so that other learners could learn from the teacher on how to praise them and not bully them"*.

Responses from the parents were as follows; Parent "A" explained that, *"the school had put in place intervention of helping learners with autism to stop being alone most of the time. Parent "B" explained that, the school encouraged my child with autism to spend a lot of time with peers and doing different tasks which they usually avoided.*

The researchers administered a question to find out interventions the school had put in place to stop bullying of learners with autism during a focus group discussion of school administrators. Responses were as follows; Administrator "A" explained that, *"they are taught at school to speak in a low tone voice and not high tone voice which was irritating and led to being bullied by other learners without autism"*. Administrator "B" narrated that, *"to improve on the social interactions with their peers the school has to put intervention*

of allowing learners with autism to interact more frequently with their peers on a daily basis by doing tasks together with ultimate aim of reducing on bullying them." Administrator "C" echoed that *"those with temper tantrums the school gave them more time to play as a way of training themselves to be calm and remove the anxiety and other negative emotions in them and then relax themselves."* Administrator "A" stated that *"to improve on their attention in terms of speech problem the school encouraged the use of more functional communication such as gestures rather than speech when talking to some of these learners"*.

Basing on these research findings, the school had put in place interventions to stop bullying of learners with autism such as; involving them in a lot of activities and stop them from being alone, putting some of them in charge of certain activities, giving them simple and easy academic work, giving them enough time to socialize and play with non-autistic learners, doing activities they do not like, use of functional communication and training them to speak in a low tone voice.

4. Discussion of Findings

The discussion is based on the on the objectives and findings of the study.

Establishing the reasons of bullying learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

The study found the reasons for bullying learners with autism and this were due to the fact that, they were unable to talk with friends, they also had difficulties expressing themselves, most of the time they would easily become violent when they were forced to speak by non-autistic learners, their quietness irritated their friends as a reason for bullying them. Learners with autism were more of themselves and mostly in isolation making it difficult to socialize with friends. They had antisocial behavior and it made them to be rough and not considerate about how others felt as they were playing as a result peers could not understand them. They failed to construct meaningful sentences, due to the tendency of repeating themselves as they tried to communicate with others, they liked talking at length without giving chance to others to also speak, they showed no facial expression when talking to others indicating that they were not facing others and paying attention to what others were saying as they communicated with them, they exhibited an I don't care attitude when talking to others making them feel very embarrassed. They had back and forth conversation problem such as repeating what others were saying over and over again making it difficult to communicate with each other properly. Learners with autism spectrum disorder high tone of voice irritated their friends most of the time making them be prone to be bullied.

Some of the findings are similar to what was discovered by Weber, (2013) on teaching experience of teaching learners with (ASD) in the mainstream classroom. This was carried out in KwaZulu –Natal, South Africa and the findings on reasons

of bullying learners with autism where that these learners had social and communicative difficulties including lack of appropriate facial expressions and some common characteristics like lack of spontaneous interaction with others [24]. The other finding by Campbell et al. (2004) was said to be due to lack of awareness and understanding of autism spectrum disorder which led to reduced acceptance of difference as discovered by [14]. Morita, (2006) found that learners with autism were perceived as different by their peers [12]. Vailancourt et al. (2011) discovered that bullying was a subtype of circular of violence, a phenomenon that fed on itself and lied in the abuse of power [23]. However this study discovered more reasons as compared to the earlier studies.

4.1. Determining How Bullying Effected Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Effect of bullying on learners with autism spectrum disorder was determined through the characteristics these learners displayed after being bullied.

4.2. Characteristics Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder Portrayed After Being Bullied

The study found that learners with (ASD) were affected due to bullying going on in the following manner and had these characteristics; they became violent, aggressive, scared, bitter, arrogant, shy, hurt, upset, agitated, afraid, uncomfortable with bullies, embarrassed, sad, lonely, depressed, angry, annoyed, furious, cried a lot, felt bad, had poor academic performance at school, lacked self-confidence, looked awkward, developed anti-social behavior, were seeking love and protection from the teacher and absented themselves from school. In this way researchers argued that bullying was accepted as being a form of social aggression, as supported by Griffin and Gross, (2004) [17].

The study conducted by Serpell, (2017) on the impact of raising a child with autism which was carried out in Lusaka, Zambia. Findings on the effects of bullying towards learners with autism spectrum disorder were that children with this disorder had signs of fear, withdrawal from socializing, embarrassment and depression This led them to just remain inside the house and even stopped going to school because they feared to be laughed at [22]. Fekkes et al. (2005) also found that bullying affected learners with autism such as the inability to get along with peers [4]. Chen and Schwartz, (2012) found that there was increased crying when they were bullied [3]. However, the current study discovered not only what was found by (Fekkes et al. (2005); Chen and Schwartz, (2012); Serpell, (2017)) [4, 3] and [22] but more as mentioned above.

Interventions The School Had Put In Place to Stop Bullying of Learners with (ASD).

The study discovered that, in order to address the issue of bullying there is need of involving learners with autism

spectrum disorder in a lot of activities and stop them from being alone, putting some of them in charge of certain activities, giving them simple and easy academic work, giving them enough time to socialize and play with non-autistic learners, doing activities they do not like, use of functional communication and training them to speak in a low tone voice.

Bakare et al. (2014) conducted a study on the current situation of (ASD) in Africa. The study was carried out in Tunis, Tunisia and Egypt. The study found that, the interventions made in an effort to reduce social contact of learners with autism spectrum disorder was to provide enabling environment for training of different professionals that would be involved in multidisciplinary approaches of managing African children with (ASD) [2]. Nevertheless, this current study focused on the school efforts directed on learners with (ASD) when it comes to intervention for bullying children with autism as compared to Bakare et al. (2014) who brought out the issue of focusing on professionals to intervene into learners who are being bullied [2], Lindsay et al, (2014) also who observed providing adequate opportunities for the development of social and communicative skills [18] was important. Scitutto et al. (2000). found that children with autism needed to be careful not to set a tone that gave others a license to bull them [21]. Merrel et al (2008) discovered that there is need for multilevel strategy that addressed the issue of bullying and it has to involve bullies, victims, bystanders, families and communities [8]. Lindsay et al. (2014) and Debra and Mary, (2009) highlighted that learners with autism need more social support, social networks and better educational targets in comparison with their peers in classrooms [7] and [15]. The researchers argued in line with Hay, (2007) who stated that it was clear from current findings that peer relations posed special challenges to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and others who lacked the emotional, cognitive and behavioral skills that under lied harmonious interaction [16].

5. Conclusion

The findings of the study which was conducted at the special unit at the mainstream and homes for learners with autism started by finding out the reasons of bullying learners with autism spectrum disorder. The study highlighted that the learners with (ASD) were bullied because they had challenges in forming relationships and socializing with their peers because of being violent and due to poor communicative skills and lack of understanding of these learners by other peers as well as reduced frequency of interaction between peers and autistic learners. The study also discovered the effects of bullying these learners with (ASD) experienced which came out to be very negative towards their social life including their emotions. It further discusses interventions put in place by the school in order to prevent these learners from being bullied.

Abbreviations

ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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