Gender and Personality as Predictors of Bullying in Primary Schools: Evidence from Some Schools in Sekota Town, Amhara National Regional State

Tilahun Gidey[1] and Kifle Kassaw[2]

Abstract: Bullying is a recent subject of study in Ethiopia. The present study investigated if gender and the big five personality traits independently, jointly, and their interaction predict bullying among primary school students. The study followed a correlational design and involved 204 students drawn from three randomly selected primary schools in Sekota town, Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia. These 204 students were identified as perpetrators of bullying with different roles (bullies, assistants, and reinforcers) based on nominations from peers. Data on respondents' personality and level of bullying were collected using close ended questionnaires. Multiple linear regression was used to analyze data. Results revealed that gender and personality and their interaction taken together explained 34.4% of the variance in bullying. Except for agreeableness all the big five personality traits predicted bullying. However, there were gender differences in the role of conscientiousness in predicting bullying. Thus, based on the findings it can be concluded that gender and personality are important precursors of bullying. Following the conclusion several recommendations were forwarded among which is initiating conversations with students about the nature of bullying, its consequences, and how to tackle bullying behavior.

Key terms: assistants, big five, bullies, reinforcers

---

[1]Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Bahir Dar University, Email: tilahung2000@yahoo.com
[2] Lecturer, Department of Educational Psychology, Woldia College of Teacher Education

Introduction

Bullying is widely studied in the Western world with the earliest work done in Norway by Dan Olweus in the 70s (Bosworth, Espelage, and Simon, 1999). However, it is a recent subject of study in Ethiopia. Bullying is different from other forms of aggression in that it involves power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim (Olweus 2011). According to Olweus, bullying is an act of repetitive harmful behavior incited to inflict harm on a less powerful person. To date two perspectives seem to dominate the bullying literature. Led by Dan Olweus, the first perspective expounds forms of bullying, whereas the second perspective led by Salmivalli et al. (1996) argues bullying occurs in a social context and people in this context assume different roles.

The spearheading figure in the first line of research, Olweus (1993) distinguishes between direct and indirect forms of bullying. According to him the direct form of bullying is characterized by open attack on victims and involves physical and verbal bullying. On the other hand, indirect bullying involves harming others through social relation and is thus referred to often as relational bullying. Though cyber-bullying is on the agenda among studies dealing with forms of bullying elsewhere, it is not a significant issue in Ethiopia due to limited access of the youth to such electronic devices and the associated call, text, and internet costs. The present study thus focuses on traditional bullying.

The other line of research, which focuses on different roles in bullying, builds on Olweus conception of bullying. But it identifies five roles people assume in bullying situation. Salmivalli et al. (1996) list the roles as bully, assistant, reinforcer, defender, and outsider and characterize them as follows. The bully role involves active, initiative-taking, leader like bullying behavior. The assistant role is characterized by active, but more follower than leader like bullying behavior. The reinforcer role encompasses behaviors which reinforce the bullying

behavior. The defender role takes form of the actions to support, to console, to be by the side of the victim as well as efforts to make others stop bullying. Finally, the outsider role refers to doing nothing or keeping outside of the bullying situations.

In the study of Olweus (1993) typical bullies were found to have discernible characteristics. To mention, typical bullies were generally aggressive towards their peers, teachers, parents and others. They tended to be impulsive and had strong urge to dominate others. They were hot-tempered and easily angered. They had little empathy towards victims of bullying. In junior school years, bullies tended to have poor academic performance and negative attitude towards school. Olweus also observed that bullies were physically strong while the victims were physically weak. In the same vein, in their study on school violence in schools of Addis Ababa- Ethiopia, Terefe and Mengistu (1997) reported that victimization in schools happens to smaller children and girls by older children who are physically stronger.

Numerous studies have pointed out the connection between personal factors such as gender (Khamis, 2015; Raskauskas, Gregory, Harvey, Rifshana, and Evans, 2010; Wu et al., 2015), personality (Book, Volk, and Hoske, 2012; Mensini, Camodeca, and Nocentini, 2010), empathy (Caravita, Di Blasio, and Salmivalli, 2009), and self-esteem (Yang et al., 2013). Studies that investigated the role of contextual factors on the other hand have underscored the roles of school climate (Khamis, 2015) and familial factors (Zottis, Salum, Isolan, Manfro, and Heldt, 2014). The present study however specifically focused on personality traits and gender.

In adolescent years most stable characteristics such as personality exert an important impact on behaviors (Caspi and Moffit, 1993). Though there are several competing models of personality the big five factor model has been utilized to assess the relationship between personality and aggressive behavior (Jensen- Campbell and Graziano, 2001). The big five factors represent the traits most commonly used in

natural languages and in psychological questionnaires to describe people (John and Srivastava, 1999).

These Big Five factors of personality are identified as Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness to Experience (O), Agreeableness (A), and Conscientiousness (C). John and Srivastara (1999) argued that the labels given to the five factors may be misunderstood and gave the following definitions. Neuroticism contrasts emotional stability and even-temperedness with negative emotionality. Extraversion refers to energetic approach to the social and material world. Openness to experience involves the breadth, depth, originality, and complexity of an individual's mental and experiential life. Agreeableness contrasts a prosocial and communal orientation toward others with antagonism. Whereas, conscientiousness is part of personality that facilitates task- and goal-directed behavior, such as thinking before acting, delaying gratification, following norms and rules, as well as planning, organizing, and prioritizing tasks.

Studies have unraveled the link between aspects of the big five personality and antisocial behaviors including bullying. One such study (Mitsopoulou and Giovazolias 2015) examined the link between personality traits and bullying behavior and showed that bullying was associated with higher levels of neuroticism. Similarly, Teng and Liu, (2013), and Barlett and Anderson (2012) showed a positive relationship between neuroticism and aggressive behavior.

The literature on the relationship between extraversion and bullying suggests positive relationship. An Italian based study by Tani *et al* (2003), for instance, showed that bulling behavior is linked to low level of extraversion. This has been replicated in recent studies. For example, Fossati, (2012) and Mitsopoulou and Giovazolias, (2015) identified a positive association between bullying and extraversion. Thus, it might be expected that perpetrators of bullying would have discernible personality characteristics.

Findings on the links between openness to experience and bullying are inconclusive, as some studies showed no links between the variables (Bollmer et al., 2006; Van Geel, Goemans, Toprak, Vedder, 2017; Colovic *et al*, 2015) while others obtained negative links (Mitsopoulou and Giovazolias, 2015). Similarly, the literature on aggression seems to be mixed. For example a US based study showed that openness to experience positively predicts aggression (Barthelemy and Lounsbury, 2009). Recently another study (Barlett and Anderson, 2012) also showed that openness to experience predicts physical aggression and aggressive attitudes. Contrary to these findings, other studies (for example Kokkinos, Karagianni, and Voulgaridou, 2017) showed that openness to experience is a negative predictor of aggression.

A wealth of literature exists on the relationship between agreeableness and bullying. A study involving American school age children showed a negative association between bullying and agreeableness (Bollmer, Harris, and Milich, 2006). Similarly, among Canadian adolescents in Book, Volk, and Hoske (2012) study agreeableness was a negative predictor of bullying. An Italian based study done by Mensini, Camodeca, and Nocentini (2010) on bullying between siblings obtained replicating results. Previous studies have also linked low level of agreeableness to tendency in conducting problems (Ehrler et al, 1999; Heaven, 1996).

Finally, with respect to the links between conscientiousness and bullying, the literature seems to be consistently demonstrating negative relationship. For instance, the Italian-based study (Tani et al., 2003) showed that adolescents who are identified as bullies have lower scores on conscientiousness. Another Italian-based study (Fossati, 2012) and American-based study (Ehrler, et al., 1999) found similar results. Additional support for this association is found in Georgesen *et al* (1999), who showed that adults who teased their peers in childhood score lower in a measure of conscientiousness. Confirming these results another study (Heaven, 1996) had reported that delinquents tend to be low on conscientiousness.

Among personal characteristics gender of children has been found to be an important correlate of school bullying. The existing literature has consistently confirmed that boys are more involved in bullying as perpetrators than girls are (Chapell et al, 2006; Colovic et al., 2015; Craig and Pepler, 1998; Hoertel et al, 2011). An Ethiopian study (Plan Ethiopia, 2008) similarly showed that bullying is perpetrated more by boys. However, there is evidence that gender may interact with personality traits in predicting bullying. Menesini et al. (2010) found out that, for males, dimension of emotional instability, which parallels the big five's neuroticism was associated with both bullying and victimization. Idemudia (2013), on the other hand, observed that extravert females have higher bullying scores than their male counterparts. Similarly, Mitsopoulou and Giovazolias (2015) showed that gender moderated the relationship of extraversion and bullying with the relationship being stronger for boys than for girls. Thus, the present researchers felt that it would be necessary to see if gender moderates the relationship between personality traits and bullying.

Bullying leads to anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression problems (Juvonen and Graham, 2001; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1991) and low school achievement (Olweus, 1991) among the victims. The psychological scars left by bullying remain salient for years. Evidence for example indicates that feelings of isolation and the loss of self-esteem that victims experience seem to last into adulthood (Clarke and Kiselica, 1997). Thus, bullying is worth investigating topic. In the Ethiopian context, little has been done to examine the precursors or correlates of bullying. To the best knowledge of the researchers no study has assessed the role of the big five personality traits.

The literature about bullying is dominated by studies conducted in the developed world. Thus, the present study is hoped to add up to our knowledge of correlates of bullying using Ethiopian sample. It specifically adds up to our knowledge of which personality traits are risk factors to bullying and which gender group involves more in perpetration of bullying. Knowledge of personal traits, in this case

gender and personality, is important in school settings in an effort to curb bullying. Professional development programs targeting school teachers and counselors may consider helping teachers and school counselors gain an understanding of the role gender and personality traits play in perpetrating bullying. The present study may sensitize the entire community of schools and parents in getting involved to build safe and effective schools. It also serves as a springboard for further studies on the bullying behavior of students. With the overall intent of investigating if gender and personality predict bullying, the present study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- How do gender and personality predict bullying?
- How does the relationship of personality to bullying vary as a function of gender?

Definition of Operational Terms

Bullying - scores of respondents on bully, reinforcer, and assistant subscales of bullying Participant Role Scale (Salmivalli et al, 1996).

Personality - scores of respondents on each of the traits on NEO's personality scale for children (Caspi et al, 1994).

Methodology

Design of the study

This study employed a correlational design. Correlational design investigates the relationships between variables as well as the level at which scores from one measure can be predicted from scores of another measure. Thus, since the focus of the present study is to predict bullying from gender and personality traits, correlational design fits very well.

Population, sample and sampling

The participants of the study were 204 eighth grade students (whose age ranged from 13 to15) identified as perpetrators of bullying in Sekota Town, Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia. The procedure in selecting the participants is described as follows. From the six public schools located in urban centers of Sekota town, three of them were selected using a lottery method. These schools had 16 sections with a total of 888 students. In all the sections, to identify students involved in bullying, one of the researchers read aloud to all of the 888 students Olweus' (2011) definition of bullying and the characteristics of different roles in bullying (bullies, reinforcers, and assistants) as described by Salmivalli et al., (1996). Then, the students wrote on a piece of paper the names of students in their classes whom they thought were bullies, reinforcers, and assistants. Using this procedure, the total number of students nominated was 312. Considering the frequency of nominations, a student was categorized into the bullying roles (bully, reinforcer, assistant) when his/her Z score on the role was greater or equal to 1 (Z≥1). Since 108 students had Z values of less than one, the researchers identified only 204 (118 males and 86 females) as being involved in bullying among whom 74 were bullies, 80 reinforcers and 50 assistants. This role assignment method was adopted from Tani et al., (2003) and Sutton, Smith, and Sweetenham (1999). Among the participants of this study, 75 were from Medhanialem primary school, 65 from Hailu Kebede primary school, and 64 from Aziba primary school. Table 1 presents the characteristics of respondents.

Table 1: Bullying roles identified from different schools across gender

Sample School	Total Number of Students			Nominated students from each school as :											
	M	F	T	Bullies			Reinforcers			Assistants			Total		
				M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Medhanialem	163	161	324	18	11	29	17	13	30	9	7	16	44	31	75
Hailu Kebede	123	131	254	12	9	21	15	9	24	13	7	20	40	25	65
Aziba	157	153	310	16	8	24	13	13	26	5	9	14	34	30	64
Total	**443**	**445**	**888**	**46**	**28**	**74**	**45**	**35**	**80**	**27**	**23**	**50**	**118**	**86**	**204**

Legend: M=male   F=Female   T=Total

Tools of Data Collection

In the present study two questionnaires were used. The first questionnaire, depicting a measure of personality, was adapted from John, Caspi et al., and (1994) NEO's personality scale for children and consisted of 29 items. The questionnaire taps data on five dimensions of personality: neuroticism, extraversion openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Sample items in this scale were *I am nervous and fearful* (from neuroticism sub-scale), *I am energetic and full of life* (from extraversion sub-scale), *I am curious and exploring; I like to learn and experience new things* (from openness sub-scale), *I get along well with other people* (from agreeableness sub-scale), and *I find ways to make things happen and get things done* (from conscientiousness sub-scale). This questionnaire had five alternative responses: "strongly agree", "agree", "partially agree", "disagree", and "strongly disagree" scored 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. John et al. (1994) reported the reliabilities of the subscales as $\alpha= .71$ for neuroticism, $\alpha= .73$ for extraversion, $\alpha= .53$ for openness, $\alpha= .83$ for agreeableness, and $\alpha=.78$ for conscientiousness.

The second questionnaire consisting of nine items that measured the extent to which study participants perpetrated bullying was taken from Salmivalli et al (1996). Bullying Participant Role Scale is a popular measure of bullying behavior. The questionnaire had five alternative

responses: "Always," "Frequently," "Sometimes," "Rarely," and "Never" scored 4, 3, 2, 1, and 0 respectively. This scale had five subscales: bully, assistant, reinforcer, defender and outsider. For the present study, however, the first three subscales were used because people involved only in these roles perpetrated bullying. Sample items in the scale included *I start bullying* (from bully sub-scale), *I assist the bully* (from assistant sub-scale), and *I laugh at the bullied child* (from reinforcer sub-scale). Salmivalli et al. (1996) found reliability indices of the subscales as estimated by Cronbach alpha for bully, assistant, and reinforcer respectively .93, .81, and .91.

In order to minimize language barrier on the part of respondents, in the present study the items in all the questionnaires were originally prepared in English and then translated into Amharic. Forward and backward translation procedures were followed in the translation. While a native Amharic speaker who taught English at Sekota College of Teacher Education translated the questionnaire from English to Amharic, a native Amharic speaker who taught Amharic language in the same college did the backward translation.

Validation and Piloting of the instruments

Before they were administered for data collection, the scales were evaluated for ambiguity and face validity by five Bahir Dar University graduating class of educational psychology masters' program students. Then based on their evaluations, the statements in the scales were modified and the final scales were developed and administered to 65 students (nominated by 250 randomly selected students) from Aba Yohanis primary school, a school at Sekota, which was not included in the main study. Among the 65 respondents, 20 were bullies, 25 reinforcers, and 20 assistants. Depending on pilot respondents' data, the Cronbach alpha reliability indices for personality dimensions, neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness subscales respectively were .77, .80, .69, .79, and .75. Whereas, the bully, assistant, and reinforcer subscales

respectively were found to have an alpha coefficient reliability of .77, .88, and .84 which were all satisfactory.

In the main data collection phase, the internal consistency estimates (using Cronbach alpha) for the personality traits in the order presented above were .78, .79, .71, .75, and .76. On the other hand, the Cronbach alpha internal consistency estimates for the bully, assistant, and reinforcer subscales respectively were .76, .90, and .84. The bullying scale that comprised of the bully, the assistant and the reinforcer sub-scales had internal consistency estimate (using Cronbach alpha) of .73. The data obtained in the main phase of data collection were subjected to exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to determine the construct validity of the instruments.

Personality Scale

Maximum likelihood method of extraction was conducted on the 29 items of personality with oblique rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure proved the sample size was adequate for exploratory factor analysis, KMO = .757. Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (406) = 1540.578, p < .001, also showed that correlations between items were sufficiently large for factor analysis. It was shown that five factors were extracted. Table 2 shows the results of the exploratory factor analysis.

Table 2: Factor loadings of items of personality scale

Item	Factor						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Item1			.728				
item2			.729				
Item3			.748				
Item4			.611				
Item5				.433			
Item6				.305		-.630	
Item7				.439			
Item8				.551			
Item9				.701			
Item10				.513			
Item11				.526			
Item12		.473					
Item13		.336					
Item14		.543					
Item15		.645					
Item16		.651					
Item17		.689					
Item18		.456					
Item19	.441						
Item20	.393						
Item21	.807						
Item22	.640						
Item23	.572						.316
Item24	.531						
Item25					-.414		
Item26					-.542		
Item27					-.491		
Item28					-.543		
Item29					-.650		

Table 2 shows that items 1, 2, 3, and 4 loaded onto extraversion, items 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 loaded onto agreeableness, items 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 loaded onto conscientiousness, items 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24 loaded onto neuroticism, and items 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29 loaded onto openness. Nonetheless items 6, and 23 cross-loaded to other factors. But to be consistent with the definitions of the big five

personality traits, while item 6 was retained in extraversion, item 2 was retained in openness factor.

Following the exploratory factor analysis, the items of the personality scale were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis. The maximum likelihood estimation method was used to test the covariance matrix to determine how well the five factors model of personality fit the data. Results support that the five-factor model fit well (χ^2 = 382.533, df = 366, p > .05). Other fit indices also reveal similar results (GFI= .891, TLI= .985, CFI=.986, RMSEA= .015).

Bullying Scale

Maximum likelihood method of extraction was conducted on the 9 items of bullying with oblique rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure proved the sample size was adequate for exploratory factor analysis, KMO = .691. Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (36) = 852.498, p < .001, showed that correlations between items were sufficiently large for factor analysis. It was shown that three factors were extracted. Table 3 below shows the results of the exploratory factor analysis.

Table 3: Factor loadings of items of bullying scale

		Factor	
Item	1	2	3
Bu1			.703
Bu2			.796
Bu3			.668
Bu4	.902		
Bu5	.936		
Bu6	.748		
Bu7		.733	
Bu8		.959	
Bu9		.724	

Table 3 shows that items 1, 2, and 3 loaded onto factor 3(bully), items 4, 5, and 6 loaded onto factor 1(assistant), whereas, items 7, 8, and 9 loaded onto factor 2 (reinforce). To examine if the three factors identified in EFA remain valid, confirmatory factor analysis was run following the EFA. The maximum likelihood estimation method was used to test the covariance matrix to determine how well the two five factors model of personality fit the data. Even though the chi square results do not the three-factor model l (χ^2 = 37.804, df = 24, p < .05), other fit indices confirm that the three-factor model fit the data well (GFI= .962, TLI= .975, CFI=.983, RMSEA= .053).

To see if all the nine items load on to one factor, principal axis factoring method of extraction was conducted. After specifying the number of factors to be extracted to one, it was indicated that the nine items clustered in to the specified factor well.

Table 4: Factor Loadings of Bullying Items

Item	Factor
	1
Bu1	.441
Bu2	.382
Bu3	.340
Bu4	.543
Bu5	.487
Bu6	.474
Bu7	.472
Bu8	.550
Bu9	.632

Table 4 shows factor loadings of the items onto the bullying scale. Thus, we can add up the scores of respondents on the nine items to determine bullying score.

Data Collection Procedures

Before administering the finalized forms of the questionnaires, a short orientation was given to two data collectors on how to conduct the questionnaire survey. After they were informed about the purpose of the study and how to complete the questionnaire, respondents agreed to fill the questionnaire. Data were collected in June 2012 and during the administration clarifications were made on any question raised by respondents.

Methods of Data Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the combined, the independent, and the interactive effect of gender and personality on bullying.

Results and Discussion

Results

Independent Variables (Personality, Gender) That Predict Bullying

Given that the first objective of the present study was to examine the extent to which personality and gender predict bullying, a multiple linear regression was run. Table 5 shows the results.

Table 5: Predictors of bullying

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t
(Constant)	20.206	.306		65.935
Gender	2.297	.629	.239	3.654*
Neuroticism	.427	.116	.258	3.696*
Extraversion	-.355	.138	-.159	-2.573**
Openness	.367	.150	.238	2.448**
Agreeableness	.160	.136	.073	1.176
Conscientiousness	.584	.258	.189	2.266**
Gender*neuroticism	-.241	.235	-.069	-1.029
Gender*Extraversion	.330	.289	.070	1.144
Gender*openness	.225	.336	.064	.671
Gender*Agreeableness	-.203	.274	-.047	-.742
Gender*conscientiousness	-1.748	.562	-.260	-3.109*

Adjusted R^2=.344
F= 8.744**
*p < .01   ** p < .05

Table 5 shows that all the independent variables taken together predicted bullying significantly ($F_{11, 192}$= 8.744, p < .01). The coefficient of determination (R^2 = .344) indicates that 34.4 % of the variance in bullying is explained by the combined impact of the independent variables (gender and personality) as well as their interaction. Table 5 also indicates that among the independent variables, gender, neuroticism, extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, and the

interaction between gender and conscientiousness significantly predicted bullying.

Gender as a Moderator of The Relationship Between Personality and Bullying

Because the interaction between gender and conscientiousness in predicting bullying was statistically significant, regression lines of the relationship between conscientiousness and bullying as moderated by gender were examined (Figure1).
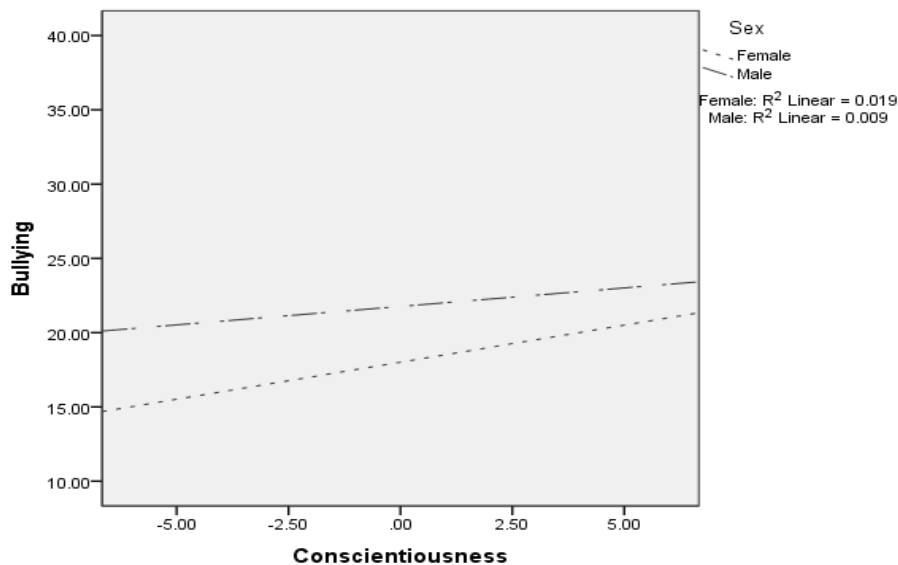

Figure 1. *Regression Lines of the Relationship between Conscientiousness and Bullying as Moderated by Gender*

Figure 1 shows that the relationship between conscientiousness and bullying is stronger among males than females. This means for every unit of increase in conscientiousness there is an increase in bullying score which is higher in males than in females.

Discussion

Multiple regression results have shown that gender predicted perpetration of bullying in favor of males. This agrees with previous studies (Craig and Pepler, 1998; Hokoda, Lu, and Angeles, 2006; Whitney and Smith, 1993). Similar results were obtained by a study sponsored by plan Ethiopia (Plan Ethiopia, 2008) where predominantly boys were found to be perpetrators of bullying. This result is in line with the Ethiopian culture that tends to encourage girls to be passive and submissive. On the contrary, boys are expected to be more active, and aggression by boys is tolerated if not encouraged.

With respect to personality, results revealed that agreeableness failed to predict bullying. Neuroticism was found to be a positive predictor of bullying. Consistent to this finding previous studies (for example, Mitsopoulou and Giovazolias, 2015; Mynard and Joseph, 1997; Tani et al., 2003) have reported positive links between neuroticism and bullying. Similarly, a distant support for the positive link between neuroticism and bullying also comes from Eysenk (1977) who proposes that people high in neuroticism are likely to engage in antisocial behavior. The present study has also revealed that lower level of extraversion is associated with higher level of bullying. In contrast, other studies (for example, Mitsopoulou and Giovazolias, 2015; Tani et al., 2003) documented a positive link between extraversion and bullying while another study (Ehrler et al., 1999) found no links between conduct problem and extraversion. The apparently surprising finding in the present study with respect to extraversion can be explicated in the following way. The study participants who were low in extraversion might have poor skills for peaceful social interaction. Hence, they might engage in violent interactions with their peers. In the present study, openness has been found to positively predict bullying. This finding agrees with Barlett and Anderson (2012) and Barthelemy and Lounsbury (2009) findings that openness to experience predicts aggressive behavior positively. This positive relationship in the present study might have resulted from the fact that people who are high in

openness are adventurous. Hence, the researchers surmise that bullying perpetrators who are found to be high in openness might have gotten involved themselves in bullying as a way of adventure. Conscientiousness was found to be a positive predictor of bullying which contrasts with previous studies (for example Ehrler et al., 1999). A study (Seigne, Coyne, Randall and Parker, 2007) on a work place bullying also found no association between conscientiousness and bullying.   We can explain the positive link obtained between conscientiousness and bullying. People high in conscientiousness tend to be high achievers (Ćolović, Kodžopeljić, Mitrović, Dinić, and Smederevac, 2015) and this might have encapsulated their bullying behavior from being recognized and acted against which might encourage them to keep bullying others.

Finally, gender was found to moderate the relationship between conscientiousness and bullying. Though gender was found to be an important moderator, the scarce existing literature found only extraversion to be a significant moderator. One such study (Mitsopoulou and Giovazolias, 2015) showed that gender moderated only the relationship between extraversion and bullying with extravert boys perpetrating bullying more than their female counterparts. Idemudia (2013), on the other hand, observed that extravert females have higher bullying scores than their male counterparts.

The line graph (Figure 1) that was constructed to probe into the interaction of gender and conscientiousness in predicting bullying shows that conscientiousness predicted bullying more strongly among males than females. People high in conscientiousness are characterized by following norms and rules, (John and Srivastava, 1999) but if bullying remains as something not in the list of rules, and where anti-bullying measures are not contained in educational or other policies and laws in Ethiopia are non-existent (Pells, Portela and Revollo, 2016) even those with high level of conscientiousness may not consider bullying as transgression. Thus, due to gendered socialization, we would normally expect boys in high conscientiousness

category to perpetrate bullying more than girls with high conscientiousness scores.

Conclusion

From the findings of the present study, one may possibly conclude the following. Both gender and personality are important determinants of bullying and that the role of personality trait, conscientiousness in predicting bullying varies as a function of gender.

Given that it is one of the most persistent and destructive forms of aggression in the continuum of violence, bullying deserves the attention of everyone. Thus, for bullying to be reduced to its minimum level, the following points can be considered. Schools should initiate conversations with students about the nature of bullying, its consequences and how to tackle it. Surprisingly, conscientiousness which is characterized by respecting rules has positively predicted bullying. Thus, schools should set rules that ban bullying and make it punishable. Parents should be invited to get involved in the program planning, implementation, and evaluation to reduce bullying behavior. Schools should also make increased supervision in such places as school grounds during break and lunch times where bullying is more likely to occur. In general, schools should device programs to minimize bullying. In many countries anti-bullying programs, introduced in schools, have proved successful in diminishing bullying (Olweus 1994; Pearce and Thompson, 1998; Twemlow, Fogany, Sacco, Gies, Evans and Ewbank 2001).

The strength of the present study is that it has treated an issue that is not given due attention. But the following limitations can be noted. First given that the present study is cross-sectional, it is not possible to be completely certain as to whether gender and personality factors are behind bullying. Thus, future studies should adopt a longitudinal research design in order to establish cause effect relationship between bullying and its precursors. In addition, variables that may be

confounding such as parental behavior and socioeconomic status were not considered in the study. Hence future studies can consider potentially confounding variables in their designs. Researchers are also advised to focus on the psycho-educational consequences of being bullied and best coping mechanisms to deal with bullying.

References

Barthelemy, J. J. and Lounsbury, J. W. (2009). *The Relationship Between Aggression and the Big Five Personality Factors in Predicting Academic Success.* **Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment.** 19(2), 159-170, DOI:10.1080/10911350802687125

Barlett, C. P., and Anderson, C. A. (2012). *Direct and Indirect Relations between the Big 5 Personality Traits and Aggressive and Violent Behaviour.* **Personality and Individual Differences**, *52*, 870-875. DOI: 10.1016/j.paid.2012.01.029

Bosworth, K., Espelage, D. L. and Simon, T. R. (1999). *Factors Associated with Bullying Behavior in Middle School Students.* **Journal of Early Adolescence**, 19(3), 341-362

Book, A. S., Volk, A. A., and Hoske, A. (2012). *Adolescent Bullying and Personality: An Adaptive Approach.* **Personality and Individual Differences**, 52, 218–223

Caravita, S. C. S., Di Blasio, P., and Salmivalli, C. (2009). *Unique and Interactive Effects of Empathy and Social Status on Involvement in Bullying.* **Social Development,** 18 (1), 140-163. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9507.2008.00465. x.

Caspi, A., and Moffitt, T. E. (1993). *When Do Individual Differences Matter? A Paradoxical Theory of Personality Coherence*. **Psychological Inquiry**, 4, 247-271. DOI: 10.1207/s15327965pli0404_1

Chapell, M. S. et al (2006). *Bullying in Elementary School, High School, and College.* **Adolescence**, *41*(164), 633-647

Clarke, E. A. and Kiselica, M. S. (1997). *A Systematic Counseling to the Problem of Bullying.* **Elementary School Guidance and Counseling**. 31, 310-324.

Čolović, P., Kodžopeljić, J., Mitrović, D. Dinić, B. and Smederevac,2S. (2015). *Roles in Violent Interactions in Early Adolescence: Relations with Personality Traits, Friendship and Gender*, **PSIHOLOGIJA**, 48(2), 119–133.

Craig, W. M., and Pepler, D. J. (1998). *Observations of Bullying and Victimization in the School Yard.* **Canadian Journal of School Psychology**, 13(2), 41–59. DOI: 10.1177/ 082957359801300205

Ehrler, D.J. et al.(1999). *Extending Big-Five Theory into Childhood: A Preliminary Investigation into the Relationship between Big-Five Personality Traits and Behavior Problems in Children.* **Psychology in the Schools**, 36, 451–58.

Eysenck, H. (1977). **Crime and Personality**. London: Routledge and Kegan Pau.

Georgesen, J. C., Harris, M. J., Milich, R., and Young, J. (1999). *"Just teasing": Personality Effects on Perceptions and Life Narratives of Childhood Teasing.* **Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin**, *25*, 1254–1267.

Heaven, P.C.L. (1996). *Personality and Self-Reported Delinquency: Analysis of the 'Big Five' Personality Dimensions.* **Personality and Individual Differences***,* 20, 47–54.

Hoertel, N., et al. (2011). *Gender Effects in Bullying: Results from a National Sample*. **Psychiatry Research***, 200* (2-3), 921-927

Hokoda, A., Lu, H. A.and Angeles, M. (2006). *School Bullying in Taiwanese Adolescents.* **Journal of Emotional Abuse**, 6:4, 69-90

John, O. P., and Srivastava, S. (1999). *The Big Five Trait Taxonomy: History, Measurement, and Theoretical Perspectives*. In L. A. Pervin and O. P. John (eds.). **Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research** (pp. 102–138). New York: Guilford Press.

John, O. P. et al. (1994). *The "Little Five": Exploring the Nomological Network of the Five-Factor Model of Personality in Adolescent Boys.* **Child Development**, 65, 160-178.

Juvonen, J. and Graham, S. (eds.) (200).**Peer Harassment in School: The Plight of the Vulnerable and Victimized.** New York: Guildford.

Khamis, V. (2015). *Bullying among School-Age Children in the Greater Beirut Area: Risk and Protective Factors.* **Child Abuse and Neglect***,* 39, 137–146

Kokkinos, C.M., , Karagianni,K., and Voulgaridou, I.(2017). *Relational Aggression, Big five and Hostile Attribution Bias in Adolescents*. **Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology***,* 52, 101–113

Menesini, E., Camodeca, M., and Nocentini, A. (2010). *Bullying among Siblings: The Role of Personality and Relational Variables.* **British Journal of Developmental Psychology**, 28, 921-939. DOI: 10.1348/026151009X479402

Mitsopoulou, E., and Giovazolias, T. (2015). *Personality Traits, Empathy And Bullying Behavior: A Meta-Analytic Approach.* **Aggression and Violent Behavior**, 21, 61–72.

Mynard, H. and Joseph, S. (1997). *Bully/Victim Problems and Their Association with Eysenck's Personality Dimensions in 8 to 13 Year-Olds.* **British Journal of Educational Psychology**, 67, 51-54

Nansel, T. R. Overpeck, M., Pilla, R. S., Ruan, W. J., Simons-Morton, B., and Schdild, P. (2001). *Bullying Behaviour among U.S Youth: Prevalence and Association with Psychosocial Adjustment.* ***Journal of American Medical Association,*** 285(16), 2094-2100.

Olweus, D. (1991) *Bully/Victim Problems among School Children: Basic Facts and Effects of a School-Based Intervention Program.* In Pepler D. and Rubin K (eds.), **The Development and Treatment of Childhood Aggression** (pp 441–448). Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ.

Olweus, D. (1993). **Bullying at School. What We Know and What We Can Do?** Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Olweus, D. (1994). *Bullying at School: Basic Facts and Effects of a School Based Intervention Program.* **J Child Psychol Psychiatry**, 35, 1171–90.

Olweus, D. (2011). *Bullying at School and Later Criminality: Findings from Three Swedish Community Samples of Males.* **Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health**, 21, 151–156. DOI: 10.1002/cbm.806

Pearce, J.B., Thompson, A. E. (1998). *Practical Approaches to Reduce the Impact of Bullying.* **Arch Dis Child**, 79, 528–31.

Pells, K., Portela, M. J. O. and Revollo, P. E. (2016). Experiences of Peer Bullying among Adolescents and Associated Effects on Young Adult Outcomes: Longitudinal Evidence from Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam. UNICEF

Plan Ethiopia (2008). Desk Review/Case Assessment on the Present Situation of Corporal Punishment, Sexual Abuses and Bullying in Schools in Ethiopia. Addis Ababa

Raskauskas, J. L., Gregory, J., Harvey, S.T., Rifshana, F.and Evans, I. M. (2010): *Bullying among Primary School Children in New Zealand: Relationships with Prosocial Behaviour and Classroom Climate.* **Educational Research**, 52(1), 1-13.

Salmivalli, C., Lagerspetz, K. Bjorkqvist, K., Osterman, K. and Kaukiainen, A (1996). *Bullying as a Group Process: Participant Roles and Their Relations to Social Status Within the Group.* **Aggressive Behavior**, 22, 1-15

Salmivalli, C., Voeten, M., and Poskiparta, E. (2011). *Bystanders Matter: Associations between Reinforcing, Defending, and the Frequency of Bullying Behavior in Classrooms.* **Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology**, 40, 668 – 676.

Seigne, E., Coyne, I., Randall, P. and Parker, J. (2007). *Personality Traits of Bullies as a Contributory Factor in Workplace Bullying: An Exploratory Study.* **International Journal of Organization Theory and Behavior**, 10 (1), 118-132

Sutton, J., Smith, P.K. and Swettenham, J. (1999) *'Social Cognition and Bullying: Social Inadequacy or Skilled Manipulation?'* **British Journal of Developmental Psychology***, 17, 435–50.

Tani, F., Greenman, P. S., Schneider, B.H. and Fregoso, M. (2003). A Study of Childhood Personality and Participant Roles in Bullying Incidents. **The Journal of School Psychology International**, 24(2), 131-135.

Teng, Z., and Liu, Y. (2013). *The Role of Neuroticism in the Relation between Self-Esteem and Aggressive Emotion among 1085 Chinese Adolescents.* **Psychology***, 4*(10), 729-735.

Terefe, D. and Mengistu, D. (1997). *Violence in Ethiopian Schools: A Study of Some Schools in Addis Ababa.* In T. Ohsako (ed.) **Violence at School: Global Issues and Interventions** (pp 34-56). Paris: UNESCO, International Bureau of Education

Twemlow, S. W., Fogany, P., Sacco, F.C., Gies, M.L., Evans, R. and Ewbank, R. (2001). *Creating a Peaceful School Learning Environment: A Controlled Study of an Elementary School Intervention to Reduce Violence.* **American Journal of Psychiatry**, 158, 808–810.

Van Geel, M., Goemans, A. Toprak, F., Vedder, P. (2017). *Which Personality Traits are related to Traditional Bullying and Cyberbullying? A Study with the Big Five, Dark Triad and Sadism.* **Personality and Individual Differences**, 106 (1), 231-235.

Whitney, R. and Smith, P. K. (1993). *A Survey of the Nature and Extent of School Bullying in Junior/Middle and Secondary Schools*. **Educational Research**, 35(1), 3-25.

Wu, J., He, Y., Lu, C., Deng, X.,Gao, X., Guo, L., … Zhou, Y. (2015). *Bullying Behaviors among Chinese School-Aged Youth: A Prevalence and Correlates Study in Guangdong Province.* **Psychiatry Research**, *225*, 716–722.

Yang, S., Stewart, R., Kim, J., Kim, S., Shin, S., Dewey, M. E. Maskey, S., Yoon, J. (2013). *Differences in Predictors of Traditional and Cyber-Bullying: A 2-Year Longitudinal Study in Korean School Children.* **Eur Child Adolesc Psychiatry**, *22*, 309–318. DOI 10.1007/s00787-012-0374-6e

Zottis, G.A., Salum, G.A., Isolan, L.R., Manfro, G.G., Heldt, E.(2014). *Associations between Child Disciplinary Practices and Bullying Behavior in Adolescents*. **J Pediatr (Rio J)**, 90, 408-414