



Doi: <https://www.ijsrjournal.com/ijsrehs.v2i1.2026.ijsr-387277>

Effects of Social Bullying on Students Academic Performance in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of social bullying on students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State. To achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher formulated 3 objectives of the study, 3 research questions and 3 null hypotheses that guided the study. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The researchers formulated. The population of the study comprised all student of senior secondary school in Rivers State, specially (SS 2) numbering 17,774 students. The sample size of the study was derived by applying the Taro Yamen's Procedure for determining appropriate sample size. By substitution, this gave a sample size of 399,9, hence the sample size of the study was 400, which was proportionally distributed to the students. The study made use of simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was self-structured questionnaire titled "Effects of Social Bullying on Students Academic Performance Questionnaire. The data gathered were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using t-test transformation at 0.05 level of significance. Based on the analysis, the findings of the study revealed that spreading rumors, social exclusion and public humiliation have negative effect on the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that schools should empower guidance counsellors to organize regular anti-bullying and emotional resilience programs to help students cope with the psychological effects of rumors, schools should initiate clubs, social activities, and mentorship programs targeted at helping isolated students form positive peer relationships and school authorities should create strict rules against acts of public shaming, whether from teachers or peers, and apply sanctions promptly.

Keywords: *Effects, Social Bullying, Students, Academic Performance*

INTRODUCTION

In schools, bullying occurs in all areas. It can occur in nearly any part in or around the school building, though it more often occurs in recess, hallways, bathrooms, on school buses and waiting for buses, classes that require group work or after school activities. Bullying in school sometimes consist of a group of students taking advantage of or isolating one student in particular and gaining the loyalty of bystanders, who, in some cases want to avoid becoming the next victim (Ishtiaque Ahmed & Nasrin, 2022). School bullying is a widespread issue that affects secondary school students in three essential parts of their lives; psychologically, educationally and professionally. Bullying is a sort of aggressive behaviour against others such as, verbal by calling nasty names, physical by kicking, pushing or tripping up and social by everyone stopped talking to you (Pillay, 2017).

Academic performance is the first aspect which influences bullying at school. therefore, bullied children live within fear, self-blame, feel weak and it affects their personality traits and self-confidence, so this situation makes them unable to study well and they might hate going to school. Furthermore, they will lose their opportunities to participate with others or enjoy school activities. Hence, they will gain less academic performance and low educational attainment (Nasrin, Ahmed, & Rahman, 2021). There is a strong relationship between bullying and school quality such as class size, lack of library, sports facilities.

Both bullies and victims feel more negative about school, and persistent bullying may lead to stress and depression. Bullying can lead to anxiety, low self-esteem, hopelessness and isolation. Children miss lessons or are scared to attend school. They lose concentration when they do attend. Some of the effects last long after the bullying, until they are adults.

One adverse effect of bullying is that it also leads to suicide. While suicide is rare in bullied children, the other effects of bullying are also devastating and last well beyond the time when the child is actually bullied (Bowser, Larson, Bellmore, Olson, & Resnik, 2018). Many schools have a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying, but sometimes have difficulty identifying the victims and the abusers because children are afraid to come forward. Bullying causes long-term problems such as depression and anxiety. In his essay "The long-term effects of bullying", psychologist Delprato, Akyeamong, & Dunne (2017) relays his own bullying experiences as a child, as well as the experience of his patients and then, asserts that the anger, anxiety, and depression of that moment often linger into adulthood, causing problems with keeping a job, forming relationship and even continued victimization in abusive relationship or work environment.

Students who are bullied cannot concentrate in schools, so their grades may be a warning sign that a student is being bullied. A child's grade may also suffer if he or she misses a lot of school due to bullying. Children who are bullied will complain of headaches, stomachaches, and overall fatigue. These issues are usually caused by mental anguish that manifest in physical ailments. Students who are bullied often use physical complaints to get out of school. additionally, they may avoid infectious from holding crime during the day (Goodboy, Martin, & Goldman 2016). A particularly unfortunate effect of bullying is that some children who are bullied go on to victimize and harass other children. In the same way that some student begins to bully at school because they are bullied at home, children who are bullied at school will begin to look for children more vulnerable than they are to bully. It is an effort to exert any power they may have over someone more vulnerable. A bullied child, may, at the demand of his own bully become a bully to another child.

Social bullying negatively impacts academic performance by causing emotional distress, which can lead to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Halliday, Gregory, Taylor, Digenis & Turnbull, 2021). This emotional toll makes it difficult for students to concentrate in class, attend school regularly, and engage with learning, resulting in lower grades and potential long-term academic struggles. The impact on a student's sense of belonging and motivation further contributes to poor academic outcomes. Bullying can affect everyone those who are bullied, those who bully, and those who witness bullying. Bullying is linked to many negative outcomes including impacts on mental health, substance use, and suicide. It is important to talk to kids to determine whether bullying or something else is a concern.

Concept of Social Bullying

Social bullying negatively affects academic performance by causing decreased concentration, increased absenteeism, and a decline in grades. Students who are bullied often experience mental anguish that manifests as physical symptoms, and they may have lower motivation and cognitive skills in subjects like math, reading, and spelling. The fear and anxiety associated with being bullied can lead to a reluctance to attend school, further impacting academic achievement (Huang, 2020).

The effect of social bullying can be widespread. It is harmful in many ways, including academically, socially, physically, and mentally. Bullying free environment is essential in every educational institution. Previous studies indicate that bullying can affect children's academic performance. This issue is getting concern for psychologists, educators, teachers, and families in several countries around the world. This study aims to how bullying can affect children's academic performance in terms of gender, age, forms of bullying, and common bullying. This study will provide a clear idea of which age children have faced bullying frequently, which gender has faced bullying in the school frequently, what types of bullying they have faced, and the impact of bullying on academic performance. This finding will help improve the school learning environment for the students (Huang & Vidourek, 2019).

Bullying is the most common phenomenon for schoolchildren

A secure school environment is essential for the children. The environment of the school and student academic performance is interrelated with each other. The school environment can be

negatively affected through bullying (Meyer-Adams, & Conner, 2008). In recent years, bullying has been increasing day by day in school among children. Bullying has short and long-term impacts on children. The short-term effects of bullying are poor academic performance, difficulty maintaining social relationships, and increased risk of substance abuse. The long-term effects of bullying are chronic depressions, increased risk of suicide, anxiety disorder, and stress (Halliday et al., 2021). The effect of bullying can be internally and externally. Children's academic performance is an external phase of school life. Every year one out of five students has been reported bullied. In the previous, several studies have found that children who have faced bullying have performed poorly in school. Bullying is predictable consequences in the school; poor academic performance is the negative impact of bullying on children (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2020). It is found that bullying attachment was associated with children's poor academic performance (Strom et al., 2013). The negative impact of bullying increase with age and this effect of bullying is enduring (Ponzo, 2013). For children, it is also found that children who have reported being bullied have poorer literacy skills than their peers who do not report any bullying (Philly, 2017).

Bullied leads towards children's poor academic performance (Okhotan et al., 2020). Bullying victimization and bullying environment had significant and adverse relationships with students' science, math, and reading performance as well (Huang, 2020). Another longitudinal study demonstrated that being bullied in 3rd grade projected poor academic performance in 5th-grade students (Liu et al., 2014). Moreover, students who are victims of bullying have shown less interest in the school and feeling unsafe in the school (Bowser et al., 2018). Lower motivation has been found on students who have been bullied in high school. As a result, they have been faced less confidence, lack of motivation, and high levels of emotional and social problems, which turn into poor performance (Goodboy et al., 2016). An alternative study was conducted based on exploiting data of 210,523 students in 51 countries from the program of international student assessment. They found that bullying can affect victims' academic literacy, including reading, mathematical, and scientific literacy (Yu & Zhao, 2021). Another research work conducted on fifteen countries from Latin America's sixth-grade students have also found the same prediction about bullying effect. The students who have faced bullying have lower math and reading scores than those who do not have faced bullying (Delprato et al., 2017). So, poor academic performance among children have presented on those students who have bullied (Turunen et al., 2017).

Social Bullying Behaviour and Scholastic Adjustment

Maalikh, Sumarwati and Rakhmawati (2024) examined forms and effects of verbal bullying: perceptions of junior high school students in Indonesia. The study investigated the effects of verbal bullying on scholastic adjustment of junior secondary school students. The study adopted a case study approach. The participants were 300 students from public, private and sports schools in Surakarta. A researcher developed questionnaire and interview was used to gather quantitative and qualitative data collection respectively. Mean, percentages and independent t-test were used to analyze the data. The finding of the study revealed that majority of the junior high school students agreed that verbal bullying had negative emotional and psychological impacts. Most students identified words referring to physical deficiencies or body shaming (71%), academic achievement (56%), and family background (57%) as significant forms of bullying effects. Verbal bullying resulted to one's physique and family background was reported as the most hurtful. Approximately 40% of students reported feeling of hurt, and 38% felt embarrassed by verbal bullying, which impacted their self-confidence and emotional well-being. The study concluded that there was a significant negative impact of verbal bullying and students' school adjustment.

Types of social bullying include spreading rumors, excluding others from groups, and damaging someone's reputation through public embarrassment, gossip, or online actions like posting humiliating content. It can be direct, like public humiliation, or indirect and covert, such as spreading gossip or isolating someone in a hidden way.

Examples of Social Bullying

1. Spreading Rumors: Intentionally circulating false or hurtful information about someone. Spreading rumors negatively affects students' academic performance by causing psychological distress like anxiety

and distraction, creating a toxic social environment that reduces focus, and leading to academic burnout (Ishtiaque Ahmed & Nasrin, 2022). This can cause students to avoid school, struggle to concentrate on their studies, and make poor decisions, ultimately leading to a decline in grades and a negative long-term impact on their future success.

Psychological and Social Effects

Increased anxiety and mental distress: False rumors can increase the psychological pressure on students, causing anxiety and mental distress.

Toxic social environment: Rumors create an atmosphere of tension and mistrust, damaging social relationships and making it difficult to concentrate on school (Ishtiaque Ahmed & Nasrin, 2022).

Academic burnout and avoidance: Students may experience academic burnout from the constant stress of dealing with rumors, and in severe cases, might start avoiding school to escape the pain of exclusion, which can have long-term academic consequences.

Academic and behavioral effects

Reduced focus and distraction: Rumors can distract students from their academic goals, impacting their ability to focus in class and while studying.

Poor decision-making: The pressure from rumors can influence students to make poor decisions or engage in inappropriate behaviors that detract from their studies.

Lowered grades and absenteeism: Environments with high levels of gossip have been linked to lower grades and higher rates of absenteeism.

2.Exclusion: Deliberately leaving someone out of a group, activity, or social event. Student exclusion negatively affects academic performance, leading to lower achievement, increased dropout rates, and a higher likelihood of criminal activity and unemployment. It hinders social and emotional development, with social exclusion specifically reducing a student's ability to adapt to challenges and participate in positive peer interactions (Liu, Bullock, & Coplan, 2014).

Negative academic and long-term consequences

Lower achievement: Exclusion is directly linked to poorer educational outcomes, such as lower grades and exam results (Liu, Bullock, & Coplan, 2014).

Increased dropout rates: Students who are excluded are more likely to leave school entirely.

Long-term disadvantages: The negative effects extend beyond school, correlating with higher rates of unemployment and criminal activity later in life.

Social and psychological impacts

Hinders social-emotional development: Exclusion, both through formal discipline and peer relationships, limits opportunities for positive peer interactions, which are crucial for social, emotional, and cognitive development (Liu, Bullock, & Coplan, 2014).

Reduces self-regulation: Social exclusion can compromise a student's ability to develop self-regulation skills, which are essential for effective learning.

Impacts motivation and well-being: Being excluded can lead to a sense of not belonging, which is linked to depression and reduces students' motivation and well-being, further impacting their performance.

3. Public humiliation: Embarrassing someone in front of others, which can be a direct or indirect tactic. Public humiliation negatively affects academic performance by creating emotional distress, which can lead to lower grades, reduced confidence, and avoidance of academic tasks. It often results in students feeling stressed, anxious, and worthless, impairing their ability to focus and learn by disrupting cognitive functions and leading to a lack of motivation or even withdrawal from school entirely (Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2018).

Cognitive and emotional impacts

Reduced confidence: Humiliation leads to a loss of self-esteem and self-confidence, making students doubt their abilities and knowledge.

Impaired focus: The emotional distress caused by humiliation can require extra mental energy to manage, leaving less capacity for academic tasks and disrupting cognitive functions necessary for learning (Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2018).

Increased anxiety and stress: Students may experience heightened anxiety, stress, and feelings of helplessness or worthlessness, which interfere with their ability to perform well academically.

Negative association with learning: It can lead to a negative attitude toward school and subjects in which the student has been humiliated, such as creating a fear of making mistakes in subjects like mathematics.

Behavioral and motivational impacts

Withdrawal and avoidance: Students may "shut down" or withdraw from class participation to avoid further humiliation, which can lead to them becoming more isolated.

Demotivation: Humiliation can cause a significant drop in motivation to study and engage with the material (Meyer-Adams & Conner, 2018).

Poor academic habits: Shame can cause students to develop poor academic habits as a coping mechanism.

Behavioral issues: Some students may act out or disrupt class as a way to cope with or push back against feelings of humiliation.

Higher risk of dropping out: Consistently negative experiences and poor performance due to humiliation can increase the risk of a student leaving school altogether.

4. Damaging reputation: Using gossip or public embarrassment to harm someone's social standing. A poor reputation negatively impacts academic performance through reduced self-confidence, increased stress, and social exclusion. Students with a damaged reputation, whether due to bullying, disciplinary issues, or other factors, may struggle to concentrate, have lower grades, and lose motivation (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2020). This can lead to a cycle of poor academic performance and decreased well-being.

Effects on the student

Psychological and emotional toll: Negative reputation can lead to lower self-esteem, anxiety, and a lack of confidence.

Decreased motivation: Students may become demotivated, which affects their willingness to engage in academic activities.

Difficulty concentrating: A damaged reputation can cause distraction and make it difficult for students to focus in class.

Reduced engagement: Students may experience social exclusion or avoid participation, further harming their academic progress (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2020).

How reputation affects behavior;

Social consequences: A negative reputation can lead to being targeted by bullying, which has been shown to disrupt academic behavior and lead to lower grades.

Disciplinary issues: A student's reputation can be affected by indiscipline, which can result in consequences that directly interfere with their ability to learn, such as being sent home or having to miss class (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2020).

Teacher and peer perception: A student's reputation can influence how teachers and peers perceive their abilities and behavior, potentially impacting how much support or attention they receive.

Statement of the Problem

Social bullying has increasingly become a silent but pervasive challenge in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Unlike physical or verbal bullying, social bullying such as gossiping, spreading rumours, social exclusion, intentional embarrassment, and damaging peer relationships often occurs subtly and is therefore difficult for teachers, parents, and school authorities to detect. As a result, many students suffer emotional and psychological harm without immediate support or intervention.

Reports from educators and counsellors in Rivers State indicate that a significant number of students experience feelings of isolation, rejection, and humiliation linked to peer-driven social aggression. These experiences can profoundly affect students' emotional well-being, leading to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and diminished motivation to participate in academic activities. Consequently, students who endure social bullying may experience declining concentration, reduced engagement during lessons, increased absenteeism, and overall poor academic performance. Despite the growing concern, the phenomenon of social bullying has received limited focused research attention in Rivers State. Most available studies tend to generalize bullying without distinguishing the specific effects of social bullying, even though it is one of the most psychologically damaging forms of peer aggression. This gap in knowledge makes it difficult for teachers, school counsellors, and policymakers to understand the full impact of social bullying on students' academic outcomes or to design targeted interventions that address its root causes.

Therefore, there is a pressing need to conduct an empirical investigation into the effects of social bullying on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, in order to provide evidence-based insights that can inform school policies, counselling strategies, and preventive programs aimed at creating safer and more conducive learning environments.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the effects of social bullying on students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study seek to:

1. Examine the extent to which spreading rumors affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State.
2. Determine the extent to which social exclusion affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State
3. Find out the extent to which public humiliation affects the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State

Research Questions

The researcher developed the following research questions that guided the study

- 1 To what extent does spreading rumors affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State?
- 2 To what extent does social exclusion affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State?
- 3 To what extent does public humiliation affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State?

Hypothesis

The researcher developed the following research questions that guided the study

- 1 There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which spreading rumors affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State.
- 2 There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which social exclusion affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State

- There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which public humiliation affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State

RESEARCH METHOD

This study made use of descriptive survey design. The essence of this design was to elicit information from the respondents. The population of the study comprised all student of senior secondary school in Rivers State, specially (SS 2) numbering 17,774 students (source; RSSSSB). 12,669 students were for Obio/Akpor local government area while 5,105 is for Port Harcourt local government area respectively. The sample size of the study was derived by applying the Taro Yamen's Procedure for determining appropriate sample size. By substitution, this gave a sample size of 399,9, hence the sample size of the study was 400, which was proportionally distributed to the students. The study made use of simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was self-structured questionnaire titled "Effects of Social Bullying on Students Academic Performance Questionnaire (ESBSAPQ). The instrument was distributed directly to the respondents by the researcher with the help of 2 research assistant. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using t-test transformation at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: To what extent does spreading rumors affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation analysis on the extent spreading rumors affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State

S/ No	Questionnaire Items	Obio/Akpor: n = 280			Port Harcourt: n = 120		
		Mean \bar{x}	SD	Remarks	Mean \bar{x}	SD	Remarks
1.	Rumors can distract students from their academic goals, impacting their ability to focus in class and while studying	2.83	0.84	High Extent	2.91	0.85	High Extent
2.	The pressure from rumors can influence students to make poor decisions or engage in inappropriate behaviors that detract from their studies	2.72	0.82	High Extent	2.86	0.84	High Extent
3.	Students may experience academic burnout from the constant stress of dealing with rumors	2.75	0.83	High Extent	2.93	0.85	High Extent
4.	False rumors can increase the psychological pressure on students, causing anxiety and mental distress	2.69	0.82	High Extent	2.95	0.86	High Extent
5.	Rumors create an atmosphere of tension and mistrust, damaging social relationships and making it difficult to concentrate on school	2.67	0.82	High Extent	2.87	0.85	High Extent
Grand Total		2.73	0.83		2.90	0.85	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 presents that items 1 to 5 have means of 2.83, 2.73, 2.75, 2.69, 2.67 for Obio/Akpor students with standard deviations ranging from 0.84 to 0.82 and means of 2.91, 2.86, 2.93, 2.95, 2.87 for Port Harcourt students with standard deviations ranging from 0.85 to 0.85 which indicate “High Extent” on the extent spreading rumors affect the students’ academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State. Also, the grand means for Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students are 2.73 and 2.90 respectively, further confirming a “High Extent” on the extent spreading rumors affect the students’ academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State. However, it was found that spreading rumors affect the students’ academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State to a High Extent.

Research Question 2: To what extent does social exclusion affect the students’ academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation analysis on the extent social exclusion affect the students’ academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State

S/ No	Questionnaire Items	Obio/Akpor: n = 280			Port Harcourt: n = 120		
		Mean \bar{x}	SD	Remarks	Mean \bar{x}	SD	Remarks
6.	Social exclusion is directly linked to poorer educational outcomes, lower grades and exam results	2.89	0.85	High Extent	2.95	0.86	High Extent
7	Students who are excluded are more likely to leave school entirely	2.86	0.83	High Extent	2.86	0.84	High Extent
8	Exclusion, both through formal discipline and peer relationships, limits opportunities for positive peer interactions	2.78	0.83	High Extent	2.91	0.85	High Extent
9	Social exclusion can compromise a student’s ability to develop self-regulation skills	2.83	0.84	High Extent	2.82	0.84	High Extent
10	Being excluded can lead to a sense of not belonging, which is linked to depression and reduces students’ motivation	2.86	0.84	High Extent	2.86	0.84	High Extent
Grand Total		2.84	0.84		2.88	0.85	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 presents that items 6 to 10 have means of 2.89, 2.86, 2.78, 2.83, 2.86 for Obio/Akpor students with standard deviations ranging from 0.85 to 0.84 and means of 2.95, 2.86, 2.91, 2.82, 2.86 for Port Harcourt students with standard deviations ranging from 0.86 to 0.84 which indicate “High Extent” on the extent social exclusion affect the students’ academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State. Also, the grand means for Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students are 2.84 and 2.88 respectively, further confirming a “High Extent” on the extent social exclusion affect the students’ academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State. So, it is found that social exclusion affects the students’ academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State to a High Extent.

Research Question 3: To what extent does public humiliation affect the students’ academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation analysis on the extent public humiliation affect the students’ academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State

S/	Questionnaire Items	Obio/Akpor: n = 280	Port Harcourt: n = 120
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No		Mean \bar{x}	SD	Remarks	Mean \bar{x}	SD	Remarks
11.	Humiliation leads to a loss of self-esteem and self-confidence, making students doubt their abilities and knowledge	2.89	0.85	High Extent	2.95	0.86	High Extent
12.	The emotional distress caused by humiliation can require extra mental energy to manage, leaving less capacity for academic tasks	2.86	0.83	High Extent	2.86	0.84	High Extent
13.	Humiliation leads to a negative attitude toward school and subjects in which the student has been humiliated	2.78	0.83	High Extent	2.91	0.85	High Extent
14.	Students may "shut down" or withdraw from class participation to avoid further humiliation	2.83	0.84	High Extent	2.82	0.84	High Extent
15.	Humiliation can cause a significant drop in motivation to study and engage with the material	2.86	0.84	High Extent	2.86	0.84	High Extent
Grand Total		2.84	0.84		2.88	0.85	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 presents that items 10 to 15 have means of 2.89, 2.86, 2.78, 2.83, 2.86 for Obio/Akpor students with standard deviations ranging from 0.85 to 0.84 and means of 2.95, 2.86, 2.91, 2.82, 2.86 for Port Harcourt with standard deviations ranging from 0.86 to 0.84 which indicate "High Extent" on the extent public humiliation affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State. Also, the grand means for Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students are 2.84 and 2.88 respectively, further confirming a "High Extent" on the extent public humiliation affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State. Thus, it is found that public humiliation affects the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State to a High Extent.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which spreading rumors affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which spreading rumors affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State

	F	Sig.	T	df	p-value	α -value	Decision
Equal variances assumed	1.085	.298	4.251	398	.107	.050	H ₀ Not Rejected
Equal variances not assumed			4.251	796.709	.107	.050	

The information in table 4 shows that equal variances assumed has $t = 4.251$, $df = 398$, and 2-tailed $p = 0.107$. Thus, the null hypothesis 1 that "there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which spreading rumors affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State" is not rejected as $t(71) = 4.251$, 2-tailed p

= 0.107 > α = 0.05. This implies that respondents are in agreement that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which spreading rumors affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which social exclusion affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State

Table 5: t-test analysis of the significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which social exclusion affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State

	F	Sig.	T	df	p-value	α -value	Decision
Equal variances assumed	15.599	.123	11.985	398	.097	.050	H ₀ Not Rejected
Equal variances not assumed			11.985	781.568	.097	.050	

Table 5 presents that equal variances assumed has t = 11.985, df = 398, and 2-tailed p = 0.097.

Therefore, the null hypothesis 2 that "there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which social exclusion affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State" is not rejected as t(71) = 11.985, 2-tailed p = 0.097 > α = 0.05. Thus, the respondents agreed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which social exclusion affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which public humiliation affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State.

Table 6: t-test analysis of the significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which public humiliation affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State

	F	Sig.	T	df	p-value	α -value	Decision
Equal variances assumed	1.085	.298	4.251	398	.107	.050	H ₀ Not Rejected
Equal variances not assumed			4.251	796.709	.107	.050	

The information in table 6 shows that equal variances assumed has t = 4.251, df = 71, and 2-tailed p = 0.107. Thus, the null hypothesis 1 that "there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which public humiliation affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State" is not rejected as t(71) = 4.251, 2-tailed p = 0.107 > α = 0.05. This implies that respondents are in agreement that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt students on the extent to which public humiliation affect the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study in research question one revealed that spreading rumors has negative affect on the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State. This finding is in collaboration with Nakamoto & Schwartz (2020) who admitted that intentionally circulating false or hurtful information about someone. Spreading rumors negatively affects students' academic performance by causing psychological distress like anxiety and distraction, creating a toxic social

environment that reduces focus, and leading to academic burnout. This can cause students to avoid school, struggle to concentrate on their studies, and make poor decisions, ultimately leading to a decline in grades and a negative long-term impact on their future success.

The study in Research Questions two indicated that social exclusion affects the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State. This study is in the same view with Nasrin & Ahmed (2021) who asserts that deliberately leaving someone out of a group, activity, or social event. Student exclusion negatively affects academic performance, leading to lower achievement, increased dropout rates, and a higher likelihood of criminal activity and unemployment. It hinders social and emotional development, with social exclusion specifically reducing a student's ability to adapt to challenges and participate in positive peer interactions.

The finding of the study in research question three revealed that public humiliation affects the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State. This finding is in collaboration with Pillay (2017) who admitted that embarrassing someone in front of others, which can be a direct or indirect tactic. Public humiliation negatively affects academic performance by creating emotional distress, which can lead to lower grades, reduced confidence, and avoidance of academic tasks. It often results in students feeling stressed, anxious, and worthless, impairing their ability to focus and learn by disrupting cognitive functions and leading to a lack of motivation or even withdrawal from school entirely.

CONCLUSION

Effects of social bullying on students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State cannot be over emphasized. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that spreading rumors, social exclusion and public humiliation have negative effect on the students' academic performance in public senior schools in Rivers State. The study also deduced that social bullying negatively impacts academic performance by causing emotional distress, which can lead to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. This emotional toll makes it difficult for students to concentrate in class, attend school regularly, and engage with learning, resulting in lower grades and potential long-term academic struggles. The impact on a student's sense of belonging and motivation further contributes to poor academic outcomes. Bullying can affect everyone those who are bullied, those who bully, and those who witness bullying. Bullying is linked to many negative outcomes including impacts on mental health, substance use, and suicide. It is important to talk to kids to determine whether bullying—or something else is a concern.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Schools should empower guidance counsellors to organize regular anti-bullying and emotional resilience programs to help students cope with the psychological effects of rumors.
2. Schools should initiate clubs, social activities, and mentorship programs targeted at helping isolated students form positive peer relationships.
3. School authorities should create strict rules against acts of public shaming, whether from teachers or peers, and apply sanctions promptly.

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