

BULLYING, PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined bullying, psychological well-being, and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State. The study was guided by five objectives, five research questions and five hypotheses. The study employed a correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 191,155 senior secondary school students across Rivers State. A sample of 400 senior secondary school students was selected using a multistage sampling technique. The study utilized three instruments: the "Students' Bullying Questionnaire" (SBQ), the "Students' Psychological Wellbeing Questionnaire" (SPWQ), and "English Language Performance Assessment Multiple Choice Test" (ELAMCT). The instruments were validated through expert review and pilot testing, and their reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha and Kuder Richardson 21 (KR-21) statistics. The overall reliability index of $\alpha = 0.89$ for SBQ and $\alpha = 0.79$ for SPWQ were obtained. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer the research questions 1-4 and test the null hypotheses 1-4 at 0.05 level of significance while the moderated multiple correlation (partial correlation) analysis was used to answer research question 5 and test hypothesis 5 at 0.05 level of significance. The finding revealed that, Social bullying showed a moderate negative relationship with academic performance while cyberbullying demonstrated no significant relationship with academic performance. emotional well-being, and social well-being were found to exhibited positive relationships on academic performance. Additionally, the study found a joint influence of bullying and psychological well-being on academic performance. In conclusion, the study highlighted the detrimental impact of bullying on academic performance, particularly physical and verbal bullying, and emphasized the positive influence of emotional well-being. It recommended that school administrators and educators implement comprehensive anti-bullying programme and psychological support initiatives to mitigate the effects of bullying and enhance students' emotional well-being, which in turn could improve their academic performance.

Keywords: Social bullying, Cyberbullying, Emotional well-being, Social well-being, Psychological health, Secondary education

INTRODUCTION

A Secondary education

Academic performance in secondary schools is a crucial indicator of educational outcomes and future opportunities for students. English language proficiency, in particular, plays a significant role in shaping academic success and overall educational achievement. In recent years, numerous studies have investigated the factors influencing students' performance in English, highlighting the multifaceted nature of academic performance. The proficiency of secondary school students in English is critical because it serves as a

foundational skill for other subjects and is essential for higher education and professional opportunities. Adeyemi and Adeyemi (2018) opined that English language skills are not only vital for academic success but also for effective communication and social integration. Students with strong English language skills tend to perform better academically because they can comprehend and engage with the curriculum more effectively.

Academic performance in English Language is a critical aspect of secondary education, serving as a fundamental determinant of students' overall academic success. English Language is not only a core subject in the curriculum but also a tool for communication across other subjects. As a result, proficiency in English is essential for students to excel in their studies, both in secondary school and beyond. However, several factors influence students' academic performance in English, including teaching quality, student motivation, and socio-cultural conditions. In Nigeria, English Language is a compulsory subject in both the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and the National Examination Council (NECO), making it a critical area of focus for educational stakeholders. Empirical evidence from the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) reports over the past years indicates a worrying trend in the performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers State. For instance, in the 2020 WASSCE, the pass rate for English Language in Rivers State was notably lower compared to the national average. Only 60% of candidates in the state obtained a credit pass in English Language, while the national average was 75%. This disparity highlights the challenges faced by students in the state, which can be attributed to factors such as inadequate teaching resources, insufficient teacher training, and the socio-economic challenges impacting students' learning environments. Similarly, the NECO results for English Language in Rivers State between 2018 and 2022 have shown fluctuating pass rates, with only 55% of students consistently passing the subject with a credit grade, which is below the national average. Several studies have shown that academic performance in English Language is frequently influenced by various psychological and environmental factors, including bullying and psychological well-being. Chuku and Ekpo (2019) found that students' engagement in learning is severely impacted by bullying, leading to a decline in their ability to perform well in English. Poor psychological well-being, characterized by stress and low self-esteem, exacerbates these challenges. Additionally, external factors such as peer pressure, inadequate parental support, and distractions in the learning environment also contribute to students' struggles in mastering English. The results from WASSCE and NECO exams reflect these difficulties, as many students fail to achieve the desired academic standards due to the combined effects of these psychological and environmental issues.

In Rivers State, despite ongoing efforts to improve educational outcomes, performance in English Language remains a significant concern for educators and policymakers. The educational sector faces challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teaching resources, and a lack of continuous professional development for teachers. These factors directly affect the quality of English Language instruction, which in turn influences student performance. Moreover, psychological factors like anxiety, stress, and a lack of confidence, often resulting from bullying and poor psychological well-being, further hinder students' ability to perform academically in English. These issues underscore the need for targeted interventions to address both the psychological and environmental factors affecting students' performance in English Language.

Bullying in secondary schools is a significant concern globally and is characterized by repeated aggressive behavior intended to cause harm or distress to the victim. This

behavior can be physical, verbal, or psychological, and it often involves an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim. Bullying can take various forms, including physical violence, verbal abuse, social exclusion, and cyberbullying. Research indicates that bullying is a common experience for many students in secondary schools. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately one in three students aged 13-15 worldwide have experienced bullying (WHO, 2020). In the context of Nigeria, including Rivers State, bullying is also a widespread issue, with studies showing significant rates of bullying among senior secondary school students (Egbochuku, 2018). Bullying can manifest in several forms: physical bullying involves physical aggression such as hitting, kicking, or pushing; verbal bullying includes name-calling, insults, and verbal threats; psychological bullying involves actions intended to harm someone's social relationships or self-esteem, such as spreading rumors or excluding someone from a group; and cyberbullying occurs through digital platforms and includes sending hurtful messages, sharing embarrassing photos, or creating fake profiles to harass someone.

The impact of bullying on secondary school students is profound and multifaceted. Victims of bullying often experience a range of negative outcomes, including psychological effects such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and suicidal thoughts (Lee & Chen, 2022). Bullying can lead to poor academic performance, particularly in subjects that require active participation and cognitive engagement, such as English language (Garcia & Lopez, 2019). Socially, victims may struggle with social interactions and have difficulty forming and maintaining friendships. They may also become socially withdrawn and isolated (Williams et al., 2020). Bullying can lead to physical health issues, including headaches, sleep disturbances, and gastrointestinal problems, which can further affect a student's ability to perform academically (Jones & Brown, 2021).

In addition to bullying and other factors, psychological wellbeing is increasingly recognized as a significant determinant of academic performance. Psychological wellbeing encompasses emotional, mental, and social health, affecting how students think, feel, and behave in their daily lives. Students who experience high levels of stress, anxiety, or depression often struggle with concentration and motivation, which can negatively impact their performance in English and other subjects (Lee & Chen, 2022). Creating a supportive and positive school environment that promotes mental health can therefore be beneficial for academic outcomes.

Psychological wellbeing is a fundamental aspect of overall health and significantly impacts students' ability to learn and perform academically. In the context of secondary schools, psychological wellbeing is critical for fostering a positive learning environment and supporting academic achievement. Psychological wellbeing is essential for students' academic success and personal development. When students have good psychological health, they are better able to cope with the challenges of school life, such as exams, peer relationships, and workload. They are more likely to be motivated, engaged, and resilient, which positively influences their academic performance. Conversely, poor psychological wellbeing can lead to issues such as anxiety, depression, and behavioral problems, which can hinder students' ability to concentrate, retain information, and perform well in school (Lee & Chen, 2022).

Poor psychological wellbeing can have significant consequences for students' academic performance and overall development. Students who suffer from mental health issues such as anxiety and depression often experience difficulties with concentration, memory, and motivation, leading to lower academic achievement (Lee & Chen, 2022). Additionally,

poor psychological health can lead to increased absenteeism, social withdrawal, and behavioral problems, further impacting academic performance and peer relationships.

Addressing psychological wellbeing in schools requires a comprehensive and proactive approach. Schools should implement policies and programs that promote mental health and provide support for students experiencing psychological difficulties. This includes having trained counsellors and mental health professionals available to support students, as well as programs that teach coping skills and emotional regulation. Creating a positive school climate is also essential. Schools should foster an environment of respect, inclusion, and support, where students feel safe and valued. Anti-bullying programs and policies are crucial in this regard, as they help prevent bullying and support victims. Encouraging positive peer interactions and providing opportunities for students to connect and build supportive relationships can also enhance psychological wellbeing (Williams et al., 2020).

Parental involvement is another critical aspect. Schools should engage parents in promoting psychological wellbeing by providing resources and support to help them understand and address their children's mental health needs. Open communication between parents, teachers, and school staff is vital to ensure that students receive the support they need both at home and at school.

Several scholars have conducted research related to the intersection of academic performance, psychological wellbeing, and bullying among senior secondary school students. This body of work provides a foundation for understanding these complex relationships and highlights areas where further research is needed. Smith and Johnson (2019) examined the impact of socio-economic status on academic achievement, specifically focusing on English language proficiency among senior secondary school students. Their study highlighted the significant influence of socio-economic factors on students' access to educational resources and their subsequent performance in English. The researchers emphasized the need for targeted interventions to support students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, suggesting that addressing these disparities could improve overall academic outcomes.

Despite the valuable insights provided by these studies, there remains a gap in the literature concerning the combined effects of socio-economic status, psychological wellbeing, and bullying on academic performance in English language among senior secondary school students, particularly in specific regional contexts such as Rivers State, Nigeria. While previous research has explored each of these factors independently, there is a need for a more integrated approach that considers how these elements interact to influence students' academic outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Despite various interventions, bullying continues to negatively impact students' mental health and social interactions. Social bullying and cyberbullying have been linked to emotional distress, social withdrawal, and decreased academic engagement. However, limited research has specifically addressed the interaction between these forms of bullying and psychological well-being among students in Rivers State. This study aims to fill this gap by assessing the extent of these impacts

Aim and Objectives

This study aims to examine the relationship between social bullying, cyberbullying, and psychological well-being (emotional and social well-being) among secondary school students in Rivers State. The specific objectives are:

1. To determine the relationship between social bullying and emotional well-being among secondary school students.
2. To examine the relationship between cyberbullying and emotional well-being among secondary school students.
3. To assess the relationship between social bullying and social well-being among secondary school students.
4. To investigate the relationship between cyberbullying and social well-being among secondary school students.
5. To determine the joint influence of social bullying and cyberbullying on psychological well-being and suggesting solutions.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between social bullying and emotional well-being among secondary school students?
2. What is the relationship between cyberbullying and emotional well-being among secondary school students?
3. What is the relationship between social bullying and social well-being among secondary school students?
4. What is the relationship between cyberbullying and social well-being among secondary school students?
5. What is the joint influence of social bullying and cyberbullying on psychological well-being?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There is no significant relationship between social bullying and emotional well-being among secondary school students.
2. There is no significant relationship between cyberbullying and emotional well-being among secondary school students.
3. There is no significant relationship between social bullying and social well-being among secondary school students.
4. There is no significant relationship between cyberbullying and social well-being among secondary school students.
5. Social bullying and cyberbullying do not jointly influence psychological well-being.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, a correlational design was employed. Correlational research is chosen to examine relationships between variables without manipulating them, focusing on how changes in one variable are associated with changes in another. This approach allows for the exploration of the extent and direction of these relationships among bullying, psychological wellbeing and academic performance in English language among senior secondary school students in rivers state.

The study was carried out in Rivers State. Rivers State, located in the southern part of Nigeria, is a region characterized by its rich cultural heritage and economic significance. The population of the study was 191,155 senior secondary school students in Rivers State. This consists of 90,036 males and 101,119 females drawn from 311 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State (Planning, Research and Statistics Dept, RSSSSB, 2023). The sample of the study is 400 SS1 and SS2 students drawn from the total population of the study. The Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size of 400 the study from the total population. To cover a substantial number in the population the sample size was increased to 400 (Appendix 1).

A multistage sampling procedure was adopted in the study. The schools were clustered into three senatorial districts namely Rivers East, Rivers West, and Rivers South East using clustering sampling technique. Three Local government areas (LGA) in each of the senatorial district were randomly selected. 6 schools were systematically selected from each of the selected LGAs by enlisting all the schools in the LGA in an alphabetical order and assigning unique number to each of the schools in the selected LGA. The draw and hat method was used to select the 1st school and every 3rd school on the list. 6 schools from each of the LGAs were selected. A total of 54 schools in 9 LGAs were selected for the study. Disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to assign weight to each of the schools. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the subjects from each of the schools

The instruments for data collection were two researcher-structured questionnaires and English Language Performance Test titled: "Students' Bullying Questionnaire" (SBQ), "Students' Psychological Wellbeing Questionnaire" (SPWQ) and "English Language Assessment Multiple Choice Test" (ELAMCT). The instruments were used to measure the various variables as reflected in the objectives of the study. The respondents were required to express their opinion on each item by ticking (✓) in the most appropriate column against the item stated.

The Students' Bullying Questionnaire was a comprehensive tool designed to assess the prevalence and types of bullying experiences among senior secondary school students. Each item typically used a frequency scale by measuring their level of agreeability with the questionnaire statement using a 4-point response scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" to gauge how frequently they encounter or witness different bullying behaviors. The Students' Psychological Wellbeing Questionnaire was designed to evaluate various dimensions of students' psychological health, focusing on emotional, social, and cognitive aspects. Respondents rate their experiences using a Likert scale that ranges from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

The Students' English Language Performance Assessment Multiple Choice Questions were crafted to evaluate students' proficiency and academic performance in English Language. This instrument comprises 40 multiple-choice questions covering various aspects of the English Language curriculum, including vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, writing skills, and literary analysis. Each question was designed to test students' understanding of key concepts and their ability to apply grammatical rules, interpret texts, and analyze literary elements. Questions are typically followed by four possible answers, from which students selected the most appropriate one. Every correct answer was awarded 2.5 marks giving a total of 100 marks.

The self-structured questionnaires were subjected to the vetting of the researcher's supervisor and two other experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of

Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) for face validation in order to check for correctness in spelling, ambiguity, relevance of content and appropriateness to achieve the purpose of the study.

The reliability of the three instruments Students' Bullying Questionnaire (SBQ), Students' Psychological Wellbeing Questionnaire (SPWQ) were tested by deploying the statistical test 'Cronbach's alpha' to the responses received from 20 private secondary schools who were not be part of the actual study. The researcher conducted a pilot study to ensure that ambiguities in the instrument were noted and modified in order to obtain the intended data. The Cronbach's alpha covering the overall reliability index of $\alpha = 0.89$ for SBQ, and $\alpha = 0.79$ for SPWQ.

For the English Language Assessment Multiple Choice Test (ELAMCT), the reliability of the instrument was done using Kuder Richardson 21 (KR-21) statistics to compute the reliability index 0.88 for ELAMCT was obtained and were considered high enough for the instruments to be reliable for the study.

The instruments were administered to the respondents in their respective schools with the help of two research assistants. Out of the 400 copies of questionnaires copies distributed to respondents 350 copies were duly filled, returned and analyzed. This gives a 87.5% response rate. The exercise lasted for three weeks.

The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer the research questions 1-4 and test the null hypotheses 1-4 at 0.05 level of significance while the moderated multiple correlation (partial correlation) analysis was used to answer research question 5 and test hypothesis 5 at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between social bullying and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 1: Relationship Between Social Bullying and Academic Performance in English Language among senior secondary school students

		Social bullying	Academic performance
Social bullying	Pearson Correlation	1	-.172**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	350	350
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	-.172**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	350	350

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 presents the relationship between social bullying and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State. The result shows that the r-value is -0.172 which shows a very weak negative relationship between social bullying and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students. This implies that increase in the social bullying leads to decline in academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

The correlation between social bullying and academic performance was significant at ($r=-.172$, $p=.000<0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between social bullying and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between cyberbullying and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between cyberbullying and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 2: Relationship Between Cyberbullying and Academic Performance in English Language Among senior secondary school students

		Cyberbullying	Academic performance
Cyberbullying	Pearson Correlation	1	.079
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.651
	N	350	350
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.079	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.651	
	N	350	350

Table 2 presents the relationship between cyberbullying and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State. The result shows that the r-value is 0.079 which shows a no relationship between cyberbullying and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students. This implies that increase in the cyberbullying had no influence in academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

The correlation between cyberbullying and academic performance was not significant at ($r=.079$, $p=.651>0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that there is no significant relationship between cyberbullying and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between emotional wellbeing and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between emotional wellbeing and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 3: Relationship Between Emotional Wellbeing and Academic Performance in English Language Among senior secondary school students

		Emotional wellbeing	Academic performance
Emotional wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	1	.589**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	350	350
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.589**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

N 350 350

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 presents the relationship between emotional wellbeing and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State. The result shows that the r-value is 0.589 which shows a moderate positive relationship between emotional wellbeing and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students. This implies that increase in the emotional wellbeing leads to increase in academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

The correlation between emotional wellbeing and academic performance was significant at ($r=.589$, $p=.000<0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between emotional wellbeing and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Research Question Four: What is the relationship between social wellbeing and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant relationship between social wellbeing and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 4: Relationship Between Social Wellbeing and Academic Performance in English Language Among senior secondary school students

		Social wellbeing	Academic performance
Social wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	1	.245**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	350	350
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.245**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	350	350

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 presents the relationship between social wellbeing and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State. The result shows that the r-value is 0.245 which shows a weak positive relationship between social wellbeing and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students. This implies that increase in the social wellbeing leads to increase in academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State. The correlation between social wellbeing and academic performance was significant at ($r=.245$, $p=.000<0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between social wellbeing and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Research Question Five: What is the joint influence of bullying and psychological wellbeing on academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Five: Bullying and psychological wellbeing does not jointly influence academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State.

Table 5: Moderated Multiple Correlation between bullying, psychological wellbeing and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students

Control Variables			Bullying	Academic performance	Psychological wellbeing
-none- ^a	Bullying	Relationship	1.000	-.840	.152
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	.004
		Df	0	799	799
	Academic performance	Relationship	-.840	1.000	.596
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		Df	799	0	799
	Psychological wellbeing	Relationship	.152	.596	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	.004	.000	.
		Df	799	799	0
Psychological wellbeing	Bullying	Relationship	1.000	.235	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.001	
		Df	0	798	
	Academic performance	Relationship	.235	1.000	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.001	.	
		Df	798	0	

a. Cells contain zero-order (Pearson) relationships.

Table 9 showed the joint relationship relationship between Bullying, psychological wellbeing and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State, it showed that Bullying had a strong negative correlation with academic performance ($r = -0.840$, $p < 0.005$) without the moderating effect of psychological wellbeing. The introduction of psychological wellbeing to the model yielded $r = 0.235$, $p < 0.05$ indicating change in the correlation between Bullying and academic performance. Based on this, the result revealed that psychological wellbeing significantly moderate the relationship between bullying and academic performance hence, there is a joint relationship between bullying, psychological wellbeing and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers State. Based on this result the null hypothesis 9 was rejected for the alternative hypothesis.

Discussion of Findings

The study found a weak negative relationship ($r = -0.172$) between social bullying and academic performance among senior secondary school students. This result suggests that while social bullying—such as exclusion, rumor-spreading, and manipulation—has some

negative impact on academic performance, the relationship is not as pronounced as with other forms of bullying.

This finding aligns with research by Pouwels et al. (2022), which noted that the academic effects of social bullying are often mediated by students' resilience and social support networks. While victims may experience feelings of isolation and marginalization, these effects may not directly or significantly impact academic outcomes unless the bullying is prolonged or coupled with other stressors. This could explain the weaker correlation in this context.

In contrast, a study by Wolke and Lereya (2020) observed a slightly stronger negative relationship between social bullying and academic performance, emphasizing that the effects may vary based on the frequency and severity of the bullying. Students who face persistent social exclusion may experience reduced classroom participation and engagement, which could indirectly affect their academic performance over time.

The study found no significant relationship ($r = 0.079$) between cyberbullying and academic performance among senior secondary school students. This result suggests that while cyberbullying is a growing concern due to the prevalence of digital technology and social media use among adolescents, its direct impact on academic performance may be limited or not easily measurable within the scope of this study.

This finding contrasts with research by Hinduja and Patchin (2022), which reported that cyberbullying can indirectly affect academic outcomes by increasing levels of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem among victims. These psychological effects often reduce students' ability to focus on academics. However, Hinduja and Patchin also noted that the relationship between cyberbullying and academic performance is mediated by the frequency and intensity of the bullying, as well as the availability of support systems.

The study found a weak positive relationship ($r = 0.245$) between social wellbeing and academic performance among senior secondary school students. This suggests that while there is some connection between students' social wellbeing and their academic outcomes, the relationship is not as strong or direct as that of other factors like emotional wellbeing. Social wellbeing, which encompasses students' social interactions, sense of belonging, and peer relationships, plays a role in shaping their academic engagement, but its effects may be less pronounced compared to emotional or psychological factors.

This finding is consistent with research by Seligman et al. (2021), who suggested that social wellbeing can influence academic performance by enhancing students' motivation and engagement in school activities. When students feel connected to their peers and school community, they are more likely to attend school regularly, participate in class, and engage in extracurricular activities, all of which contribute to academic success. However, Seligman et al. also noted that social wellbeing alone may not be sufficient to drive significant academic improvement unless accompanied by strong emotional and cognitive support.

Similarly, a study by Nix et al. (2020) highlighted that positive peer relationships and a supportive social environment at school can contribute to improved academic outcomes. However, they also emphasized that social wellbeing's influence on academic performance is often indirect and may depend on other mediating factors, such as the quality of student-teacher relationships and emotional support. In cases where students experience social challenges, such as exclusion or peer conflict, the impact on academic performance may be minimal or even negative.

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The study found a significant joint influence of bullying and psychological wellbeing on the academic performance of secondary school students, suggesting that the combined effects of these two factors may have a more pronounced impact on academic outcomes than either factor in isolation. Psychological wellbeing, which includes aspects such as self-esteem, emotional regulation, and mental health, interacts with experiences of bullying, either amplifying or mitigating their impact on academic performance. This relationship emphasizes the complex and multifaceted nature of factors that influence academic achievement among adolescents.

Research by Kowalski et al. (2020) supports this finding, indicating that students who experience bullying are more likely to suffer from negative psychological outcomes, such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, all of which can hinder academic performance. Their study showed that the effects of bullying on academic success are often compounded by the emotional distress that bullying causes, with students struggling to concentrate, engage in class activities, and complete assignments. In contrast, students with positive psychological wellbeing—characterized by resilience, emotional stability, and a strong sense of self-worth—are better able to cope with bullying and maintain their academic focus.

CONCLUSION

The finding of this study emphasize the significant role that various forms of bullying and psychological wellbeing play in influencing the academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State, particularly in English Language. Physical, verbal, and relational bullying were found to have a negative impact on students' academic outcomes, with physical bullying showing the strongest relationship. Conversely, psychological wellbeing—encompassing emotional, social, cognitive, and relational aspects—demonstrated varying degrees of positive influence on academic performance. Specifically, emotional wellbeing had a moderate positive relationship with academic performance, suggesting that students who are emotionally healthy tend to perform better in academic tasks. The joint influence of bullying and psychological wellbeing further highlights the complex interplay between these factors in determining students' academic success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of each study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. School administrators should introduce programs to raise awareness of the impact of social bullying and promote inclusivity to mitigate its weak negative effect on academic performance.
2. Educators should focus on increasing digital literacy and awareness to prevent cyberbullying, as its minimal relationship with academic performance suggests the need for further exploration of its broader impacts.
3. School counsellors should provide emotional wellbeing programs to support students, as the moderate positive relationship between emotional wellbeing and academic performance suggests this as a key area for improvement.
4. Teachers and counsellors should work together to support students' social wellbeing, which, though weakly linked to academic performance, can enhance overall school engagement and peer interactions.
5. School leaders should develop integrated approaches that address both bullying and psychological wellbeing to create a supportive academic environment that can enhance students' overall performance

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