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BULLYING AND ACADEMIC STRESS AS PREDICTORS OF SOCIAL SKILLS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Developing social skills in senior high school students is a pressing issue. This study focuses on the significance of bullying and academic stress as predictors of social skills among senior high school students. 331 senior high school students were selected using a cluster sampling method, and the data were analyzed through regression analysis. The study concludes that both bullying and academic stress significantly correlate with the social skills of senior high school students. Replication using other variables not covered in this study may be undertaken to account for the 19.3% variance in social skills, and policy formulation on bullying is recommended.

KEYWORDS: *Bullying, Academic Stress, Predictors, Social Skills, Senior High School Students*

1. INTRODUCTION

Developing social skills in senior high school students is a pressing issue. Many senior high school students have low social skills, such as disengagement and isolation (Lee et al., 2022). A lack of connections with peers or the school environment makes engaging with others difficult. This oversight in fostering social skills hinders students' confidence in participating in various school activities (Mihalec-Adkins & Cooley, 2020). Furthermore, a lack of initiatives to enhance social interactions contributes to a less inclusive school environment (Farmer et al., 2021).

Social skills remain a significant issue for senior high school students worldwide, with troubling trends across various education systems (Yudha & Mandasari, 2021). In the United States, many students experience disengagement, self-isolation, and low self-esteem as indications of low social skills (Ghobadi et al., 2020). In Japan, students facing academic pressure often feel disconnected and lonely (Ozawa-de Silva, 2021). Similarly, in Brazil, disadvantaged students struggle with low social skills in public schools (Andrade, 2022).

In the Philippines, the problem of social skills in senior high school students is a critical issue. In Metropolitan Manila, many students acquire low social skills (Cleofas, 2020). Similarly, in rural Bohol, low social skills are so prominent that students do not participate in class (Paroginog et al., 2018). This lack of social engagement poses challenges to their academic performance and overall development (Lawson & Lawson, 2020).

Low social skills can have a profound impact on senior high school students, affecting their academic performance, mental health, and future opportunities (Evans et al., 2018). Students with poor social skills often struggle to build relationships with peers and teachers, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness (Øzerk et al., 2021). This disengagement can result in decreased participation in class activities and extracurricular programs, which are vital for personal growth and development (Afrahi et al., 2022)

The lack of social skills among senior high school students is a pressing concern that negatively impacts individual well-being and the educational environment (Trigueros et al., 2020). This deficit hinders their ability to form positive relationships and reduces engagement in the school community (Evans, 2018). Therefore, further investigation was vital for promoting educational equity and supporting students' social development.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study focused on determining the significance of bullying and academic stress as predictors of social skills among senior high school students. Specifically, it aimed:

1. To determine the levels of bullying in terms of physical, verbal, and cyberbullying; academic stress in terms of

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workload and examination; and social skills in terms of self-control, empathy, assertiveness, and cooperation.
2. To determine the significance of the relationship between bullying and academic stress and the social skills of senior high school students.
3. To determine the significance of the influence of bullying and academic stress on the social skills of senior high school students.

1.2 Hypothesis

The following hypotheses will be tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H01. Bullying and academic stress do not significantly correlate with the social skills of senior high school students.

H02. The degree of bullying and academic stress does not significantly influence the social skills of senior high school students.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1994) argues that to understand human development, one must consider the entire ecological system in which growth occurs. Ecological models theory of human development emphasizes the importance of the microsystem, particularly the school environment, in shaping human development.

In this study, negative environmental factors such as bullying indicated by physical, verbal, and cyber (Gaete et al., 2021) and academic stress from workload and examinations (Dewi et al., 2022) stand for microsystems, within the school context, serve as predictive variables. These factors significantly influence the development of social skills such as self-control, empathy, assertion, and cooperation (Paroginog et al., 2018), which stands for human development among senior high school students. Understanding the role of the school microsystem is essential for addressing the challenges students face and promoting positive social interactions. The school environment within the theory is excluded from the study.

This study was delimited only to the microsystem element asserted in the theory. All other systems, namely the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem in the theory, were excluded.

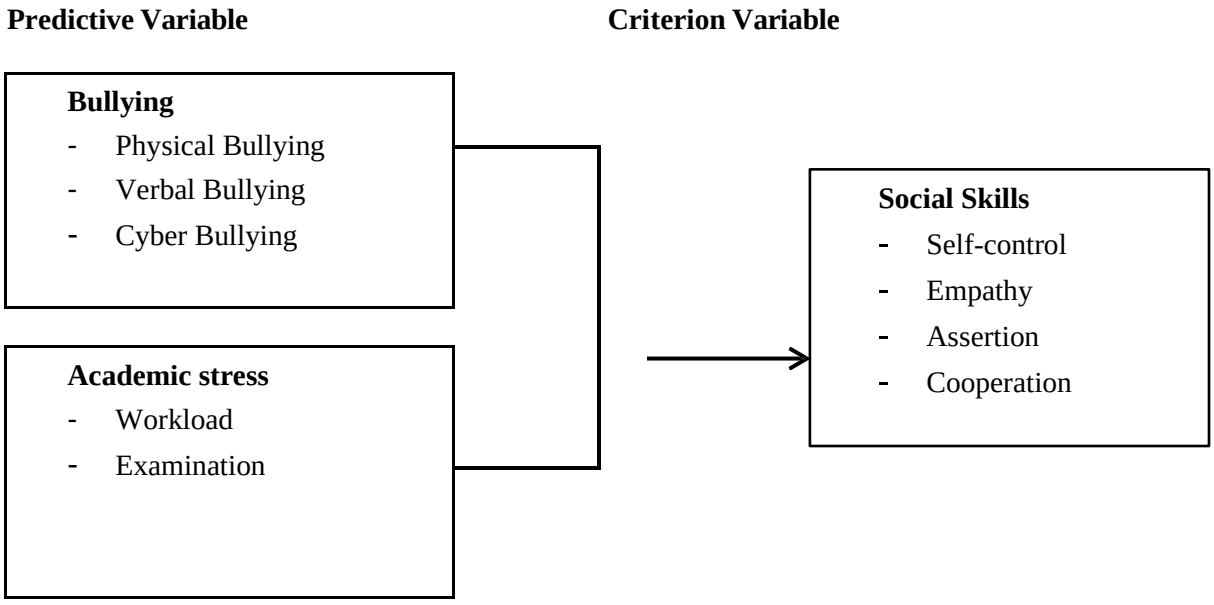


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The research employed a quantitative approach to gather and analyze data on bullying, academic stress, and social skills among senior high school students. A descriptive-correlational design was utilized to examine the relationships between variables without manipulating them (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The study specifically aimed to assess the associations among bullying, academic

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stress, and social skills. Data were collected through a survey questionnaire, which measured the relevant variables. Statistical methods, including correlation analysis, were conducted to determine the strength and direction of the relationships among the variables. This research design provided insights into the dynamics among bullying, academic stress, and social skills, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the factors that influence social skills development and overall student well-being.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in three public secondary schools in the Division of Tagum City, referred to as Schools A, B, and C. These schools were chosen because they belonged to one division, had similar grade levels, and were close to each other within the city. This setup allowed for a clearer understanding of the educational environment in that area.

2.3 Sample and Sampling Method

This study focused on Grade 12 senior high school students from three public schools in Tagum City during the 2024–2025 academic year. The total population of Grade 12 students across seven public schools in the city was 2,380, distributed as follows: School A (772 students), School B (423), School C (397), School D (356), School E (200), School F (168), and School G (64). To ensure a representative and manageable sample, the researcher employed a cluster sampling method, wherein each school served as a distinct cluster.

From the total population, three schools—Schools A, B, and C—were selected using cluster sampling. These schools were chosen because they had the highest student populations, thereby maximizing diversity and representation. Within each selected school, Grade 12 students were randomly sampled to ensure a range of perspectives. This approach enhanced the efficiency of the sampling process and minimized logistical challenges associated with accessing a broader population.

Using the Raosoft sample size calculator, the researcher determined that a minimum sample size of 331 students was required based on a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error**.** To comply with ethical standards, only students aged 18 and above were included in the study, ensuring proper consent procedures. Data collection was carried out using structured survey questionnaires**,** which gathered insights into students' experiences and perceptions related to bullying, academic stress, and social skills.

2.4 Research Instrument

This study employed four adapted research instruments, which the researcher modified to align with the overall objectives of the study. Additionally, a panel of experts validated these instruments to ensure that an appropriate tool was used to gather the necessary data. Pilot testing was conducted with 30 respondents to assess the reliability of the instrument.

The Bullying section utilized a 15-item survey questionnaire adapted from a previous study by Gaete et al., 2021). This questionnaire assessed bullying based on three indicators: Physical, Verbal, and Cyber. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale, with a rating of five (5) indicating the highest level and a rating of one (1) indicating the lowest level. The mean scores for Bullying were interpreted using a predefined matrix.

Range of Means	Description	Interpretation
4.20-5.00	Very High	Bullying is in a very critical situation.
3.40 – 4.19	High	Bullying is in substantial presence.
2.60 -3.39	Moderate	Bullying is present, but it is not overwhelming.
1.80 – 2.59	Low	Bullying occurs infrequently.
1.00-1.79	Very Low	Bullying is virtually nonexistent.

The section on Academic Stress utilized a survey questionnaire consisting of 10 items, adapted from a study conducted by (Dewi et al., 2022). This questionnaire aimed to assess academic stress in two indicators: Workload and Examination. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale, where a rating of five (5) represented the highest level of performance and a rating of one (1) represented the lowest level. The mean scores for academic stress were interpreted using a predefined matrix.

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Range of Means	Description	Interpretation
4.20-5.00	Very High	This means that the academic stress of senior high school is extremely heavy.
3.40 – 4.19	High	This means that the academic stress of the senior high school is very heavy.
2.60 -3.39	Moderate	This means that the academic stress of the senior high school is heavy.
1.80 – 2.59	Low	This means that the academic stress of senior high school is light.
1.00-1.79	Very Low	This means that the academic stress of the senior high school is very light.

The section on Social Skills utilized a survey questionnaire consisting of 20 items, adapted from a study conducted by (Paroginog et al., 2018). This questionnaire aimed to assess students' performance in four indicators: Self-control, Empathy, Assertion, and Cooperation. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale, where a rating of five (5) represented the highest level of performance and a rating of one (1) represented the lowest level. The mean scores for teachers' performance were interpreted using a predefined matrix.

Range of Means	Description	Interpretation
4.20-5.00	Very High	This means that the social skills of the senior high school are excellent.
3.40 – 4.19	High	This means that the social skills of senior high school students are very good.
2.60 -3.39	Moderate	This means that the social skills of the senior high school students are good.
1.80 – 2.59	Low	This means that the social skills of the senior high school students are poor.
1.00-1.79	Very Low	This means that the social skills of senior high school students are very poor.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedures

Before collecting data, the researcher carefully sought approval from the Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE) to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines. After receiving approval from SMILE, the researcher submitted a formal request to the Superintendent of the Tagum City Division for permission to conduct the study. Once the Superintendent approved, the researcher then sought permission from the principals of the three selected schools.

After obtaining consent from the principals, the researcher visited each school to distribute informed consent forms. Since the study involved minors, both parental consent and student assent were required. For respondents aged 18 and older, informed consent was obtained directly from them. The researcher also scheduled a time to administer the questionnaires, during which respondents received detailed information about the study, including its purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights as respondents. It was emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents could withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences. This approach ensured that respondents fully understood the study and agreed to participate willingly, in accordance with ethical standards.

On the day the questionnaires were administered, parental consent and student assent were secured, along with informed consent from all respondents before any questionnaires were distributed. This process ensured that only those who had provided the necessary consent were included in the study. The researcher prioritized the confidentiality of respondents' identities and the information they provided. Respondents were assured that their names and any personal data collected would be kept strictly confidential and used solely for research purposes. This commitment to confidentiality aimed to build trust and protect the privacy of all respondents.

2.6 Data Analysis

The data collected was organized into separate master data sheets as needed, and the results were analyzed and interpreted using several statistical methods. The mean was employed to address the first objective of the study, specifically to describe the levels of bullying, academic stress, and their impact on the social skills of senior high school students. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was utilized to examine the relationships among the variables, assessing the significance of the relationships between bullying, academic stress, and social skills. Additionally, regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the significant influence of bullying and academic stress on the social skills of senior high school students.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical procedures in this study were carefully planned to reduce any risks to the respondents. Face-to-face meetings were held to explain the study's goals, methods, and possible outcomes, ensuring respondents understood their involvement. For minor respondents, parents gave permission, and the students signed forms agreeing to take part voluntarily. Approvals were obtained from the Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE) and the Department of Education, as well as from school principals, to meet ethical and legal

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requirements. Data collection took place during students' free periods to avoid disrupting their classes. To protect privacy, all information was managed according to the Data Privacy Act, with access limited to the researcher. Sensitive information was stored securely in locked cabinets, and digital files were encrypted and kept on password-protected devices. Respondents' identities were kept anonymous to ensure confidentiality.

3. RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in this chapter. Specifically, the findings are presented in descriptive analysis, correlational analysis, regression analysis, and a summary of the findings.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 is the descriptive table. It showed the levels of perceived knowledge and attitudes toward history, as well as the sense of nationalism among senior high school learners and their respective indicators. Lastly, it contained the number of samples, the standard deviation, the mean, and its descriptive level

Table 1: Descriptive Table

Variables	N	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Bullying	**331**	**0.55**	**1.86**	**Low**
Physical		0.61	1.89	Low
Verbal		0.60	1.85	Low
Cyber		0.61	1.84	Low
Academic Stress	**331**	**0.56**	**4.12**	**High**
Workload		0.59	4.12	High
Examination		0.60	4.11	High
Social Skills	**331**	**0.51**	**4.17**	**High**
Self-Control		0.57	4.16	High
Empathy		0.57	4.20	Very High
Assertion		0.58	4.14	High
Cooperation		0.57	4.17	High

4.20-5.00 Very High, 3.40-4.19 High, 2.60-3.39 Moderate, 1.80-2.59 Low, 1.00-1.79 Very Low

The results showed that the bullying variable had a mean score of 1.86**,** which was interpreted as low, indicating that bullying occurred infrequently among the respondents. All related indicators also yielded mean scores that were similarly described as low. In contrast, the academic stress variable recorded a mean of 4.12, classified as high, suggesting that senior high school students experienced significant levels of academic stress. All associated indicators also reflected high levels of stress. Meanwhile, the social skills variable obtained a mean of 4.17, which was interpreted as high, which implied that students generally possessed strong social skills. Notably, the empathy indicator received a rating described as very high, while the remaining indicators were all rated as high.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 contained the predictive variables, which were bullying and academic stress, and a criterion variable, which was social skills. Lastly, it included the r-value, p-value, decision on H01, and its interpretation.

Table 2. Correlation Table

Variables	Social Skills			
	r-value	**p-value**	**Decision on H_{01}**	**Interpretation**
Bullying	-0.879	0.000	Reject	Significant at high correlation
Academic Stress	0.860	0.000	Reject	Significant at high correlation

Table 2 showed that the correlation between bullying and social skills yielded a p-value of 0.000, which was less than the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that the correlation between the two variables was statistically significant. The r-value of -0.879 indicated a strong negative correlation, suggesting that as bullying increased, social skills significantly decreased, and vice versa. Similarly, the correlation between academic stress and social skills also produced a p-value of 0.000, which was below the 0.05 threshold. Consequently, the null hypothesis was also rejected, indicating a statistically significant relationship**.** The r-value of

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0.860 indicated a strong positive correlation**,** implying that as academic stress increased, social skills also tended to increase correspondingly.

Regression Analysis

Table 3 is the regression table. It showed the predictors, namely bullying and academic stress. It also contained the criterion variable, which was social skills. It also contained the estimate, t-value, p-value, the decision on hypotheses, and the corresponding interpretation.

Table 3. Regression Table

Predictor	Estimate	Stand. Estimate	SE	t	P	Decision on H_{o2}	Interpretation
Intercept	0.616		0.096	6.39	0 .000		
Bullying	-0.505	-0.540	0.047	-10.83	0.000	Reject	Significant
Academic Stress	0.356	0.387	0.046	7.75	0.000	Reject	Significant
R= 0.899, R^2= 0.808, Adjusted R^2=0.807, F=690.0, Sig.=0.000							

Table 3 showed that the bullying variable had a beta coefficient of -0.505**,** indicating that it had a negative influence on the social skills of senior high school students. This suggested that a one-unit increase in bullying corresponded to a 0.505-unit decrease in social skills. The p-value of 0.000, which was less than the 0.05 level of significance, led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming that the influence of bullying on social skills was statistically significant.

In addition, the academic stress variable obtained a beta coefficient of 0.356, signifying a positive influence on social skills. This implied that a one-unit increase in academic stress was associated with a 0.356-unit increase in social skills**.** The p-value of 0.000 also indicated statistical significance, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis regarding this predictor.

Moreover, Table 3 revealed that the combined predictors—bullying and academic stress—yielded an R-squared (R^2) value of 0.807, which meant that these two variables jointly explained 80.7% of the variance in the social skills of the students. This overall model was found to be statistically significant, as supported by an F-value of 690.0 and a p-value of 0.000**.**The resulting regression equation was: SS = -0.505B + 0.356AS + 0.616

Summary of Findings

1. Bullying among senior high school students occurred infrequently; academic stress was very heavy, while social skills were very good.
2. Bullying and academic stress were significantly correlated with social skills.
3. Bullying and academic stress significantly influenced the social skills of senior high school students.

4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the discussions, conclusion, and recommendation, specifically including the reviews of previously published studies that either supported or denied the results of this study.

Descriptive Analysis

Bullying

The findings of this study are supported by Dorio et al. (2020), who state that a supportive school climate can reduce the prevalence of bullying. Additionally, Seong (2024) emphasizes the importance of proactive measures in schools to foster a safe environment that discourages bullying behavior. Conversely, low levels of bullying are encouraging, as they may contribute to better emotional and social development among students. Divecha and Brackett (2020) further highlight that reducing bullying can lead to improved emotional well-being and social skills.

Academic Stress

The results are consistent with research by Barbayannis et al. (2022), which highlights that high academic stress can adversely affect students' mental health and overall well-being. Furthermore, Carmona-Halty et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of managing academic stress to promote better academic performance and engagement. High levels of academic stress can hinder effective learning and may contribute to negative outcomes such as burnout and disengagement. Additionally, Marôco et al. (2020) discuss how these factors impact students' overall success.

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In summary, the elevated levels of academic stress among students underscore the need for interventions and support systems aimed at helping students better manage their workload and examination pressures (Balkis et al., 2024). Providing resources and strategies for coping with academic challenges can enhance students' overall educational experiences and promote healthier academic engagement (Fullerton et al., 2021).

Social Skills

The findings support the study by Guo et al. (2023), who emphasize that strong social skills are crucial for students' academic success and emotional well-being. Additionally, Trigueros et al. (2020) highlight the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing students' social skills, leading to better academic and social outcomes. High levels of cooperation reinforce the importance of students being able to work well with others, which is essential in collaborative learning settings. Conversely, Ferreira et al. (2020) mentioned that inadequate social skills can create challenges in forming relationships and participating in group activities.

The high ratings in social skills suggest that students are well-equipped to engage positively with their peers, enhancing their overall school experience (Cavaletto & Miglietta, 2024). In summary, students' strong social skills reflect their capacity for effective and empathetic interaction. Such a supportive social climate encourages collaboration and connection within the school, playing a key role in promoting both academic achievement and personal growth.

Correlation and Influence of Bullying and Academic Stress on Social Skills

This study supports Coelho et al. (2022), highlighting a strong negative link between bullying and social skills, where increased bullying is tied to reduced peer interaction abilities, greater anxiety, and social withdrawal, ultimately impairing students' overall social competence. Esquivel et al. (2023) reinforce that bullying negatively affects students' social interactions, fostering isolation and lower confidence. These findings highlight how bullying and academic stress impair the development of social skills, especially among senior high school students.

The findings about academic stress reveal a significant positive correlation with social skills, supporting the study by Thompson et al. (2021). Students facing academic stress may enhance their social skills by seeking peer support and engaging in collaborative tasks. Academic pressure can foster stronger interpersonal abilities, as effective coping leads to improved communication and teamwork (Sokolowski, 2022). On the other hand, Radhamani and Kalaivani (2021) found that managing academic pressure can boost resilience and social competence, encouraging teamwork and communication. The study highlights a complex link between bullying, stress, and social skills, stressing the need to address both for healthy development.

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, bullying, and academic stress are significant predictors of social skills among senior high school students. This conclusion confirms the study of Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development, emphasizing that environmental factors, such as microsystems, play a crucial role in human development.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, it is primarily recommended that this research be replicated in other locales using different variables not covered here to explain the 19.3% of the variance in social skills. Moreover, educators' policies on bullying as a detrimental factor of social skills may be formulated as a concrete means to advocate the realization of Sustainable Development Goals for equal access to quality education.

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