

# Social Engagements and Students' Learning Outcomes in Rivers State Universities

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**Abstract:** *This study examined the relationship between social engagements and students' learning outcomes at Rivers State Universities. Three research questions and three hypotheses were used to guide the Study. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of six thousand one hundred and fourteen (6114), 300 level students and lecturers of Rivers State Universities. A sample size of 729 respondents was used for the study, the sample size was determined using Taro Yamena formular. The multi stage sampling technique was adopted in selecting the sampling size of the study. The instrument face and content were validated by the researcher's supervisor, one expert in educational management and one other expert in measurement and evaluation. The internal consistencies of the instrument were determined using Cronbach Alpha Statistics. A composite reliability coefficient of 0.98 was obtained which showed that the instrument was reliable. The hypotheses were further subjected to t-transformation to establish the significance of the r-value at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the analyzed data revealed that there is a high positive relationship between Social engagement, sport activities, social clubs and students politics and students' learning outcomes at Rivers State Universities. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that; quality assurance directorate should ensure that this is effective appraisal of staff, assessment of programmes and maintain quality assurance policy framework to enhance staff job performance.*

**Key words:** *Social engagement, students learning outcomes, sport activities, social clubs and students politics*

## INTRODUCTION

Education is the process of acquiring knowledge, competence, and the cultural norms of society by people and transmitting this to the coming generations to enhance the perpetual development of society. Education is a systematic process by which individuals are developed physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially, and mentally for their well-being and that of their society. It is equally a vital transformational tool and instrument for socio-economic empowerment.

Social engagements in universities encompass a range of activities that foster interaction among students outside the classroom, such as sports activities, social clubs, and student politics. These engagements provide students with opportunities to develop interpersonal skills, build networks, and pursue interests beyond their academic work, Blimling (2019). Sports activities and social clubs in universities are integral components of student life

that significantly impact personal and academic development. Participation in sports activities encourages teamwork, discipline, and leadership, Harris & Linder (2018).

**Sports activities** offer more than just physical exercise; they promote teamwork, discipline, and leadership skills. Engaging in sports helps students develop a strong work ethic and time management skills as they balance practice schedules with academic responsibilities. The camaraderie and sense of achievement from participating in team sports can boost self-esteem and motivation, which often translates into improved academic performance, Sanchez & Woodson (2018). Sports activities provide a healthy outlet for stress, contributing to better overall well-being and a more balanced approach to university life. While involvement in social clubs offers a platform for students to explore personal interests and connect with peers who share similar passions. **Social clubs**, on the other hand, allow students to pursue personal interests and hobbies while fostering a sense of community, Wolniak, & Pascarella (2015). By joining clubs related to their interests, students can develop organizational and leadership skills, such as planning events and managing group projects. Social clubs also provide a platform for networking and forming meaningful connections with peers who share similar passions. This engagement enhances students' sense of belonging and can lead to greater academic involvement and success, Astin (1999). The skills and experiences gained through social clubs complement academic learning and contribute to a well-rounded university experience. Student politics, on the other hand, allows students to engage in governance, advocacy, and decision-making processes, enhancing their understanding of institutional dynamics and honing their organizational skills, Kuh & O'Donnell (2013). **Student Politics** Engaging in student politics provides students with a unique opportunity to develop leadership and governance skills. Involvement in student government or political organizations allows students to participate in decision-making processes, advocate for their peers, and influence campus policies. This experience cultivates critical thinking, public speaking, and negotiation skills, which are valuable both in academic settings and future careers. Additionally, student politics can enhance students' understanding of institutional dynamics and contribute to a greater sense of responsibility and commitment to their academic community, Pascarella & Terenzini (2015).

These extracurricular activities play a crucial role in shaping students' learning outcomes by providing practical experiences that complement their academic learning. Skills gained through social engagements, such as effective communication, problem-solving, and time management, are directly applicable to academic tasks and projects. Moreover, students who actively participate in these activities often develop a greater sense of responsibility and initiative, which can translate into improved academic performance and engagement. Social engagements contribute to students' overall well-being by offering a supportive community and a balanced approach to university life. The sense of belonging and camaraderie built through these activities can alleviate stress and provide emotional support, leading to a more positive academic experience. Students are better equipped to manage their responsibilities and achieve their educational goals. Student learning outcomes are specific statements that describe what students are expected to know, understand, and be able to do by the end of a course, program, or educational experience. These outcomes serve as measurable goals that guide the design, delivery, and assessment of educational activities. Students' learning outcomes help educators and institutions ensure that their teaching and curriculum are effective in helping students

achieve desired learning outcomes. It is against this background that this study examines the relationship between social engagements and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities.

Engagement in sports activities has a profound impact on students' learning outcomes, fostering both cognitive and non-cognitive skills. Students who participate in sports tend to have better concentration, memory, and classroom behavior. Engagement in sports activities supports students' learning outcomes by enhancing cognitive function, emotional well-being, social skills, and physical health. Sports activities promote emotional and social development, which are essential for academic success. Participation in team sports teaches students essential social skills such as cooperation, communication, and conflict resolution. Engagement in social clubs significantly influences students' learning outcomes in Rivers State universities by fostering a sense of community and enhancing personal development. Social clubs offer students the opportunity to build networks, form friendships, and develop a sense of belonging, which can positively impact their academic performance. Social clubs also provide a platform for students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings, thereby enhancing their learning experience. Students in a debate club can improve their public speaking and argumentation skills, which are useful in various academic disciplines. Similarly, those in a business club might engage in activities that simulate real-world business scenarios, thereby deepening their understanding of their coursework. Nwabueze (2020). Engagement in social clubs can help reduce stress and improve mental health, which are crucial for academic success.

Engagement in student politics can have a significant impact on students' learning outcomes in Rivers State universities, influencing both academic and personal development. Active participation in student politics often requires students to develop and enhance critical skills such as leadership, public speaking, and strategic thinking. These skills are not only valuable for political activities but also translate into improved academic performance. Okoli and Ndu (2022), students involved in student politics tend to demonstrate higher levels of confidence, better organizational skills, and a greater ability to articulate their ideas, which positively affects their classroom participation and academic results. Engagement in student politics in Rivers State universities offers numerous benefits that can positively influence students' learning outcomes, it also requires a careful balance to avoid potential negative impacts on academic performance. The key lies in effective time management and institutional support to ensure that students can fully benefit from their political involvement without compromising their academic success. Student politics provides a practical platform for applying theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Universities are higher education institutions saddled with the responsibility of training high level manpower. It is in these institutions that students are equipped with knowledge and skills to enable them man different sectors of the economy. Students' involvement in sports activities, social clubs, and student politics plays a crucial role in their overall development, yet the impact of these engagements on academic performance and personal growth is not always well understood. While sports activities can enhance teamwork and stress management, their influence on academic outcomes and how they integrate with academic responsibilities remains unclear. Similarly, social clubs offer

opportunities for skill development and community building, but the extent to which these activities support academic success and personal development requires further investigation. Student politics, which involves leadership and governance roles, can shape students' understanding of institutional dynamics and enhance their leadership abilities.

Despite the recognized benefits of student involvement in sports activities, social clubs, and student politics, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these engagements impact student learning outcomes. While sports activities are known to foster teamwork and discipline, their specific effects on academic performance and integration with academic responsibilities are not well-documented. Similarly, while social clubs provide opportunities for personal development and networking, the precise relationship between these activities and academic success is unclear. This lack of clarity makes it challenging for educational institutions to effectively support and leverage these activities to enhance learning outcomes. Student politics, involving roles such as leadership and governance, can offer valuable skills and insights into institutional dynamics, but its impact on academic performance and overall student engagement is often underexplored. There is insufficient research on how political involvement influences academic achievement and how it interacts with other forms of student engagement. Addressing these gaps is crucial for developing strategies that optimize the benefits of sports, social clubs, and student politics, ensuring they contribute positively to student learning outcomes and overall educational experience.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between social engagements and students' learning outcomes at Rivers State University. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

4. determine the relationship between engagement in sports activities and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities.
5. find out the relationship between engagement in social clubs and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities.
6. ascertain the relationship between engagement in student politics and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between engagement in sports activities and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities?
2. What is the relationship between engagement in social club activities and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities?
3. What is the relationship between engagement in student politics and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between engagement in sports activities and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities.
2. There is no significant relationship between engagement in social club and students' learning outcome in Rivers State Universities.

3. There is no significant relationship between engagement in student politics and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities.

### METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational research design. The study was carried out in Rivers State. The population of the study comprised of 6,114 300 level students and lecturers from Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The Taro Yamane formula was adopted in determining the sample size of 729 respondents. The instruments for data collection were two sets of self-developed questionnaires titled "Students' Social Engagement Questionnaire (SSEQ) and Student Learning Outcome Questionnaire"(SLOQ), the questionnaire was structured on a 4-point Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1, in which a respondent is required to tick (√) his/her choice in the space provided for response to the statements in the questionnaire. To validate the instrument, the researcher adopted the face and content validity method. In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, the instrument was administered to twenty (20) students from the University of Port Harcourt who were not part of the population. Their responses were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha method. The computation yielded reliability coefficients of 0.79, 0.81, 0.82, 0.85, 0.80, 0.77 and 0.88 for the various clusters of the instrument respectively. Data collected for this study were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) statistics.

### RESULT

**Research Question One:** What is the relationship between engagement in sports activities and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities?

**Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (PPMC) analysis on the relationship between sports activities and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities**

Correlations		Sport Activities	Students Learning Outcomes	Level of correlation
Sport Activities	Pearson Correlation	1	.75	High and positive relationship
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	340	340	
Students Learning Outcomes	Pearson Correlation	.75	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	340	340	

**Source: Researcher SPSS Statistical Output (2024)**

Table 4.1 shows the summary of Pearson product moment correlation on the relationship between engagement in sports activities and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities. The result in Table 4.1 revealed that responses to questionnaire items 1-7 for engagement in sports activities and questionnaire items 1-10 for students' learning outcomes had a correlation value of .75. The Pearson correlation value of .75 means that there is a high and positive relationship between engagement in sports activities and students' learning outcomes. This implies that participation in sports has been shown to enhance cognitive and affective outcomes for students. Engaging in sports helps students develop better time management skills, discipline, and resilience, which are transferable to academic pursuits, leading to improved academic performance.

**Research Question Two:** What is the relationship between engagement in social club activities and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities?

**Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (PPMC) analysis on the relationship between social club activities and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities**

Correlations		Social Club Activities	Students Learning Outcomes	Level of correlation
Social Club Activities	Pearson Correlation	1	.81	High and positive relationship
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	340	340	
Students Learning Outcomes	Pearson Correlation	.81	1	High and positive relationship
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	340	340	

**Source: Researcher SPSS Statistical Output (2024)**

Table 2 shows the summary of Pearson product moment correlation on the relationship between engagement in social club activities and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities. The result in Table 4.2 revealed that responses to questionnaire items 8-13 for engagement in social club activities and questionnaire items 1-10 for students' learning outcomes had a correlation value of .81. The Pearson correlation value of .81 means that there is a high and positive relationship between engagement in social club activities and students' learning outcomes. This implies that student engagement in social club activities positively influences learning outcomes by fostering a holistic educational experience.

**Research Question Three:** What is the relationship between engagement in student politics and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities?

**Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (PPMC) analysis of the relationship between student politics and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities**

Correlations		Student Politics	Students Learning Outcomes	Level of correlation
Student Politics	Pearson Correlation	1	.58	Moderate and positive relationship
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	340	340	
Students Learning Outcomes	Pearson Correlation	.58	1	Moderate and positive relationship
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	340	340	

**Source: Researcher SPSS Statistical Output (2024)**

Table 4.3 shows the summary of Pearson product moment correlation on the relationship between engagement in student politics and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities. The result in Table 4.3 revealed that responses to questionnaire items 14-20 for engagement in social club activities and questionnaire items 1-10 for students' learning outcomes had a correlation value of .58. The Pearson correlation value of .58 means that there is a moderate and positive relationship between engagement in student politics and students' learning outcomes. This implies that student engagement in student politics significantly influences learning outcomes by providing practical leadership experiences and fostering critical thinking skills.

**Hypotheses Testing**

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between engagement in sports activities and students’ learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities.

**Table 4: Summary of t-Transformation on the significant relationship between engagement in sports activities and students’ learning outcomes**

Variables	N	Df	t-Trans.	t-crit.	Sig.	Decision at p < 0.05
Sports Activities	340	338	13.32	1.82	0.000	HO <sub>1</sub> is Rejected Significant Relationship exist
Students’ Learning Outcomes	340					

**\* = Significant at 0.05 alpha level; N = 340**

The data presented in Table 4 revealed that the t-Transformation value of 13.32 is greater than the value of t-crit. of 1.82 at 0.05 alpha level with 338 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between engagement in sports activities and students’ learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities is rejected. The alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between engagement in sports activities and students’ learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities is upheld.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant relationship between engagement in social clubs and students’ learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities.

**Table 5: Summary of t-Transformation on the significant relationship between engagement in social clubs and students’ learning outcomes**

Variables	N	Df	t-Trans.	t-crit.	Sig.	Decision at p < 0.05
Social Clubs	340	338	8.61	1.65	0.005	HO <sub>2</sub> is Rejected Significant Relationship exist
Students’ Learning Outcomes	340					

**\* = Significant at 0.05 alpha level; N = 340**

The data presented in Table 5 that the t-Transformation value of 8.61 is greater than the value of t-crit. of 1.65 at 0.05 alpha level with 338 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between engagement in social clubs and students’ learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities is rejected. The



alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between engagement in social clubs and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities is upheld.

**Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant relationship between engagement in student politics and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities.

**Table 6: Summary of t-Transformation on the significant relationship between engagement in student politics and students' learning outcomes**

Variables	N	Df	t-Trans.	t-crit.	Sig.	Decision at $p < 0.05$
Students Politics	340	338	3.36	0.19	0.014	HO <sub>3</sub> is Rejected Significant Relationship exist
Students Learning Outcomes	340					

\* = Significant at 0.05 alpha level; N = 340

The data presented in Table 4.9 revealed that the t-Transformation value of 3.36 is greater than the value of t-crit. of 0.19 at 0.05 alpha level with 338 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between engagement in student politics and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities is rejected. The alternative hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between engagement in student politics and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities is upheld.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study for research question one revealed that there is a high and positive relationship between engagement in sports activities and students learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities. The corresponding hypothesis one also revealed that there is a positive relationship between engagement in sports activities and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities. The result reveals that the correlation coefficient  $r$  of 0.75 showed that the respondents of the study agreed that sports activities have a high positive relationship with students' learning outcomes. This is line with the findings of Levine, (2014) stated that regular physical activity through sports can reduce stress and anxiety, improve concentration, and enhance overall cognitive function, contributing to better learning outcomes

The findings of the study for research question two revealed that there is a high and positive relationship between engagement in social club and students learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities. The corresponding hypothesis one also revealed that there is a positive relationship between engagement in social clubs activities and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities. The result reveals that the correlation coefficient  $r$  of 0.81 showed that the respondents of the study agreed that sports activities have a high positive relationship with students' learning outcomes. This is line with the findings of Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2014), that students who participate in extracurricular activities, including social clubs, exhibit higher levels of school

engagement and academic achievement. This engagement not only improves their grades but also enhances their overall educational experience by promoting a balanced lifestyle and reducing stress.

The findings of the study for research question three revealed that there is a high and positive relationship between engagement in students' politics and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities. The corresponding hypothesis one also revealed that there is a positive relationship between engagement in students' politics and students' learning outcomes in Rivers State Universities. The result reveals that the correlation coefficient  $r$  of 0.58 showed that the respondents of the study agreed that students' politics have a moderate positive relationship with students' learning outcomes. This is in line with the findings of Finley (2011), stated that students take on leadership roles, they learn to balance academic responsibilities with extracurricular commitments, fostering time management and organizational skills that contribute to their academic success.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, of the study it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between engagement in sports activities, social clubs, student politics, and students' learning outcomes.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been made;

1. Develop programs that explicitly connect social engagements, such as Social clubs, sport activities and student politics, with academic objectives. This can include integrating service learning, project-based assignments related to club activities, or academic credit for leadership roles..
2. Implement regular assessments and gather feedback on the impact of social engagement activities on students' academic performance and personal development..
3. Encourage students involved in sports, social clubs, and student politics to regularly reflect on and provide feedback about their experiences and how these activities impact their academic work.

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