

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2



International Journal of Social Work and Development Studies (IJSDS)



**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
RIVERS STATE UNIVERSITY**

EMOHUA CAMPUS, P.M.B 5080, PORT HARCOURT
RIVERS STATE NIGERIA

**International Journal
of Social Work
and Development Studies (IJSDS)**
Vol 1 Issue 2

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**TEACHERS' IMPRESSION MISMANAGEMENT,
CONCEALMENT OF ACCOMPLISHMENT THROUGH HUMBLE
BRAGGING AND STUDENTS' SELF-PROMOTION IN
PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DELTA STATE**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated teachers' impression mismanagement, the concealment of accomplishments through humble bragging, and students' self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State. Impression management, a central concept in social psychology, refers to conscious or subconscious efforts to influence others' perceptions, often balancing the goals of appearing competent and likable. This investigation was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. A correlational survey with an ex-post facto design was utilized.

The study population comprised all public secondary school principals and teachers in Delta State, totaling 479 principals and 14,877 teachers. A multi-stage sampling procedure produced a sample of 500 participants, comprising 100 principals and 400 teachers. Data were collected using the Teachers' Impression Mismanagement and Students' Self-Promotion Questionnaire (TIMSSPQ). Reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in a coefficient (α) of 0.89. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). A total of 500 questionnaires were administered to randomly selected participants. Data analysis involved simple percentages, mean scores, standard deviation, coefficient of determination (with 2.50 as a benchmark), and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis.

The findings indicated that teachers' impression mismanagement and humble bragging affect students' self-promotion. In a bid to appear modest, teachers downplay their achievements instead of emphasizing them. In conclusion, these teacher behaviors impact students' self-promotion through learning. Students are given the impression that it is wrong to brag about genuine accomplishment. In conclusion, modelling authentic behaviours, promoting self-awareness, and encouraging genuine self-promotion can foster a positive learning environment that enhances students' self-confidence, self-awareness, and resilience.

Keywords: Impression, Mismanagement, Accomplishment, Self-Promotion, Nigeria

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Impression management, a fundamental concept in social psychology, involves the deliberate or subconscious actions individuals take to shape how others view them, typically balancing the need to seem both competent and likable (Goffman, 2019; Leary & Kowalski, 2020). This dynamic is particularly important in educational contexts, where teachers and students interact within hierarchical frameworks, and perceptions of authority, reliability, and effectiveness significantly influence relationships and learning outcomes (Rosenberg et al., 2016).

As role models, teachers use impression management strategies to build trust, uphold classroom authority, and convey expertise while ensuring they do not alienate students (Houtman & De Valk, 2014). Nonetheless, when these tactics involve downplaying achievements through subtle self-deprecation or indirect boasting, they risk leading to impression mismanagement, where attempts at humility can backfire, diminishing authenticity and weakening relational ties (Sezer, 2015). Schuck and Ward (2023) found that teachers' use of humble bragging a method that disguises boasting with complaints or feigned modesty can exacerbate this mismanagement, inhibiting students from developing effective self-promotion skills.

Self-promotion is a vital impression management strategy that emphasizes personal successes to showcase competence, but it can come across as arrogant or insincere, especially in collective or hierarchical environments like classrooms (Jones & Pittman, 2012). In educational settings, teachers must assert their expertise to build students' confidence while steering clear of any semblance of superiority, which could hinder open communication and student involvement (Weinberger, 2023).

Research indicates that educators often employ indirect methods to lessen these risks, such as downplaying their achievements to seem more relatable, a

behavior that aligns with overarching cultural expectations of humility in professional roles (Sezer, Gino & Norton, 2018). Students, in turn, replicate these behaviors by managing impressions as they navigate teacher assessments and peer interactions. Studies show that adolescents actively engage in impression management in classrooms, utilizing their appearance, participation, and verbal expressions, often valuing likability over overt displays of competence to receive positive evaluations (Lücke, 2019; Schuck & Ward, 2023).

Students might minimize their efforts or successes to avoid seeming boastful, a tendency amplified by witnessing similar behaviors from authority figures (Lücke, 2019). When teachers demonstrate ineffective self-promotion, it fosters a classroom culture where authenticity is compromised for a false sense of modesty, potentially inhibiting students' capability to advocate for themselves in future academic and career settings (Weinberger, 2023).

The consequences of teachers' humble bragging affect students, who absorb these behaviors and adopt maladaptive self-promotion strategies. Social learning theory suggests that behavior is influenced by observational learning from authority figures, particularly in impression-sensitive areas like the disclosure of achievements (Houtman & De Valk, 2014). However, by concealing their achievements through humble brags, teachers inadvertently give students the impression that self-promotion is inherently risky or inauthentic, prompting them to understate their successes to comply with these "humble" standards (Sezer, 2015; Lin, 2024).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In educational environments, teachers serve as pivotal role models whose self-presentation strategies significantly influence student behavior and development. However, teachers' attempts to balance competence and likability often lead to impression mis-

management, particularly through humble bragging a self-promotion tactic that disguises boasts with complaints or false humility. This approach, intended to convey achievements without appearing arrogant, frequently backfires resulting in perceptions of insincerity and diminished relational trust.

The issue is further compounded by the broader phenomenon of hiding accomplishments, in which educators conceal efforts or successes to appear relatable or avoid envy, resulting in diminished perceived authenticity and negative interpersonal consequences. This mismanagement not only undermines teacher-student rapport but also models ineffective impression management for students, who observe and internalize these behaviors during formative years. Addressing this issue is essential to cultivate classrooms where both teachers and students can transparently celebrate accomplishments, thereby enhancing motivation, trust, and long-term growth.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How does teachers' impression mismanagement and hiding accomplishment through bragging influence students' self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State?
2. What are the approaches to curb teachers' impression mismanagement and improve students' self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State?

1.3 Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between teachers' impression mismanagement, hiding accomplishments through bragging and students' self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State
2. There is no significant relationship between the approaches to curb teachers' impression mismanagement and improve students' self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State,

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is theoretically grounded in Social Learning Theory, as proposed by Albert Bandura (1977). The theory posits that individuals acquire new behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge by observing and imitating others, such as teachers and role models within their social environment. According to Bandura, learning is a cognitive process that occurs through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. Social Learning Theory emphasizes that individuals learn by observing others, imitating their behaviors, and receiving feedback or reinforcement for their actions. In this context, students may adopt these behaviors by observing their teachers and imitating them, underscoring the importance of teachers modeling authentic behaviors and promoting healthy self-promotion.

Impression management (IM) refers to the conscious or subconscious techniques individuals use to shape how others view them, balancing perceptions of competence (respect) and likability (warmth) during social interactions (Leary & Kowalski, 2020). In educational environments, IM is prevalent as both teachers and students navigate hierarchical relationships where self-presentation influences evaluations, interactions, and results. One key tactic of IM is self-promotion, which involves emphasizing one's achievements to demonstrate competence; however, this may lead to perceptions of arrogance, prompting the use of indirect strategies like humble bragging or invisibility (Jones & Pittman, 2012).

Impression mismanagement occurs when these strategies are unsuccessful, resulting in unintended negative impressions, such as perceived insincerity or paternalism. Teachers might use humble bragging to downplay their successes among peers, which can backfire and negatively affect students' ability to self-promote (Sezer, 2022). Humble bragging, characterized as "bragging disguised as humility or complaint," allows individuals to subtly showcase their

successes while avoiding direct boasting (Sezer et al., 2018). This tactic enables individuals to demonstrate competence while maintaining likability in professional settings where overt self-promotion may be frowned upon. For example, one might use complaint-based humble brags (e.g., “It’s tiring to keep receiving emails about my award-winning curriculum”) or humility-based expressions (e.g., “Winning teacher of the year was a stroke of luck; anyone could do it”) to appear more relatable (Sezer, 2015).

In academic setting, humble bragging can manifest on platforms like social media, where academics modestly share their achievements to prevent envy, yet this behavior may undermine trust (Weyman, 2022). Narcissistic tendencies can worsen humble bragging, as highly narcissistic individuals tend to utilize this tactic more without accurately assessing the relational costs (Holoien et al., 2017). While this concept is broadly applicable to education, more specific examples are emerging, such as educators humble bragging about student performance (e.g., “I’m overwhelmed with grading all these perfect scores”) to convey effectiveness without appearing superior, in line with cultural expectations of teacher humility (Trivedi & Srinivas, 2019).

However, this can obscure true achievements, leading to a “self-promotion paradox” where indirect tactics detract from authenticity (Sezer et al., 2018). Teachers often model self-presentation to maintain authority and foster rapport, while students adjust their behaviors to secure favorable assessments (Rosenberg et al., 2023). Concealing achievements through self-deprecating remarks or omission fits into this dynamic, as educators might downplay their successes to promote equity or reduce student envy, but this behavior may convey a lack of confidence and lower perceived competence (Sezer, 2022). Teachers’ humble bragging exemplifies maladaptive impression mismanagement, which can inhibit students’ self-promotion abilities through social learning (Houtman &

De Valk, 2014).

Professional portfolios can serve as effective tools for intentional and positive impression management. These portfolios, containing curated work samples, reflections, and evidence of practice, enable teachers to present their skills and accomplishments strategically without overt boasting. This method minimizes mismanagement by offering a transparent, evidence-based framework that showcases their strengths while reducing the likelihood of perceived exaggeration. For example, portfolios could document teaching innovations, student outcomes, and professional growth, supporting a professional identity that aligns with institutional standards (Weyman, 2022).

Authentic leaders prioritize honesty, transparency, and humility, fostering a culture of trust (Alicke & Sedikides, 2019). Teachers who embrace authentic leadership are more likely to encourage genuine self-promotion and discourage humble bragging. Regular self-reflection enables teachers to better understand and manage their impression management tendencies, helping to reduce humble bragging (Anderson, Hildreth & Howland, 2015). Feedback and coaching can assist educators in identifying and addressing their impression management behaviors (Bolino, Long & Turnley, 2016). By focusing on student needs and outcomes, the narrative shifts away from teacher self-promotion towards authentic student achievements.

Furthermore, institutions can provide performance feedback systems to help teachers align their impressions with genuine behaviors, enhancing relational dynamics and professional effectiveness (Weyman, 2022). Awareness training, such as workshops on self-presentation and gratitude-focused sharing, can promote humility without deception. In academia, where accomplishments are typically shared through publications or awards, steering clear of humble bragging can foster authentic collaborations, ultimately

benefiting career advancement (Sezer et al., 2018).

3.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

Survey design was adopted for this study. The study is a correlational survey using ex-post facto design. The population for this study comprised all public secondary school principals and teachers made up of 479 principals and 14,877 teachers in Delta State. The multi-stage sampling procedure was used to draw a sample of 500 participants which includes 100 principals and 400 teachers. Teachers' Impression Mismanagement and Students' Self-Promotion Questionnaire (TIMSSPQ) was the instrument used to collect information for the study. The Cronbach Alpha statistics was used to establish the reliability and an alpha coefficient (α) of 0.89 was obtained.

A four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used. The researcher administered a total of 500 questionnaires to randomly selected participants in the study area. Simple percentage, mean scores, standard deviation, coefficient of determination using 2.50 as a benchmark and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to analyze data.

4.0 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table 1: Response to teachers' impression mismanagement, hiding accomplishments through humble bragging and students' self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State

TEACHERS' IMPRESSION MISMANAGEMENT	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	STD	RE-MARK
Talking about achievements to impress students	155 (31%)	187 (37.4%)	80 (16%)	78 (15.6%)	3.81	1.91	Agreed
Downplaying achievements to avoid appearing arrogant	110 (22.2%)	200 (40%)	84 (16.8%)	106 (21.2)	2.76	1.87	Agreed
Making casual comments about accomplishments to get recognition	82 (16.4%)	55 (11%)	140 (28%)	223 (44.6%)	1.98	1.74	Disagreed
Undermines trust between teachers and students	150 (30%)	160 (32%)	40 (8%)	150 (30%)	2.89	1.86	Agreed
Prioritize authenticity over appearing humble	90 (18%)	70 (14%)	250 (50%)	90 (18%)	2.92	1.83	Disagreed

Table 1 shows response of teachers' impression mismanagement, hiding accomplishment through bragging and students' self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State. From the remark, the respondents agreed with 1, 2, 4 items and disagreed with 3, 4 items.

Table 2: Response to approaches to curb teachers' impression mismanagement and improve students' self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State

Approaches to curb teachers' impression mismanagement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std	Remark
The use of professional portfolios	130 (26%)	150 (30%)	85 (17%)	135 (27%)	3.16	2.94	Agreed
Professional development	100 (20%)	100 (20%)	100 (20%)	200 (40%)	2.46	2.65	Disagreed
Self-awareness and reflection	200 (40%)	78 (15.6%)	142 (28.4%)	80 (16%)	2.98	2.80	Agreed
Student-Centered Approach	130 (26%)	180 (36%)	80 (16%)	110 (22%)	2.94	2.89	Agreed
Feedback and coaching	90 (18%)	80 (16%)	130 (26%)	200 (40%)	2.38	1.78	Disagreed

Table 2 shows response on the approaches to curb teachers' impression mismanagement and improve students' self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State. From the remark, the respondents agreed with 1, 3, 4 items and disagreed on 2, 5 items.

Table 3: Pearson “r” on teachers’ impression mismanagement, hiding accomplishment through bragging and students’ self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State

Variables	N	X	r-Cal.	r-Crit.	Level of Sign
Teachers’ impression mismanagement and hiding accomplishment through bragging	500	2.96	0.050	0.028	0.05
Students’ self-promotion		2.88			

Data in table 3 revealed Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis on teachers’ impression mismanagement, hiding accomplishment through bragging and students’ self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State. The mean was 2.96 and 2.88, the calculated r - value was 0.050 while the critical r-table value was 0.028 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated r - value was greater than the critical r-table value, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4: Pearson “r” on teachers’ impression mismanagement, hiding accomplishment through bragging and students’ self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State

Variables	N	X	r-Cal.	r-Crit.	Level of Sign
Approaches to curb teachers’ impression mismanagement	500	2.81	0.072	0.084	0.05
Students’ self-promotion		2.98			

Data in table 4 revealed Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis on approaches to curb teachers’ impression mismanagement and improve students’ self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State. The mean was 2.81 and 2.98, the calculated r - value was 0.072 while the critical r-table value was 0.084 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated r - value was lesser than the critical r-table value, the null hypothesis is retained.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study spotlighted the teachers' impression mismanagement and concealing accomplishments through humble bragging influence students' self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State. The findings showed that teachers' impression mismanagement and humble bragging can have impact on students' self-promotion. This is in support of Sezer (2015); Sezer et al. (2018); Sezer (2022) impression mismanagement arises when these tactics fail, leading to unintended negative impressions such as insincerity or paternalism. Teachers' humble bragging as a mechanism for hiding accomplishments among teachers, its mismanagement pitfalls, and downstream effects on students' self-promotion skills. Humble bragging, defined as "bragging disguised as humility or complaint," allows individuals to conceal overt boasting while indirectly signaling success. Actors use it to achieve dual goals—conveying competence without sacrificing likability often in professional contexts where direct self-promotion is stigmatized. For instance, complaint-based humble brags or humility-based ones mask accomplishments to appear relatable.

Also, the study established approaches to curb teachers' impression mismanagement and improve students' self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State. The findings revealed that teacher's impression mismanagement and humble bragging can be curbed by promoting authenticity, self-awareness, using professional portfolio and student-centered approach. This is in line with Schön (2013); Avolio & Gardner (2015); Kluger & DeNisi (2016); Weyman (2022). The use of professional portfolios as tools for deliberate and positive impression management. Portfolios serve as curated collections of work samples, reflections, and evidence of practice, allowing teachers to strategically present their skills and achievements without overt boasting. This approach curbs mismanagement by providing a tangible, evi-

dence-based platform that emphasizes transparency and self-reflection, reducing the risk of perceived exaggeration. For instance, portfolios enable teachers to document pedagogical innovations, child outcomes, and professional development, fostering a professional identity that aligns with institutional expectations.

Authentic leaders prioritize transparency, honesty, and humility, creating a culture of trust and openness. Teachers who adopt authentic leadership approaches are more likely to promote genuine self-promotion and discourage humble bragging. Self-Awareness and reflection for example, teachers who engage in regular self-reflection are better equipped to recognize and manage their own impression management tendencies. Encouraging teachers to reflect on their motivations and behaviors can help mitigate humble bragging. Feedback and coaching can help teachers identify and address impression management behaviors. Focusing on student needs and outcomes can shift the attention away from teacher self-promotion and towards genuine student achievement. Institutional support, such as performance feedback systems, to help teachers align their impressions with authentic behaviors, thereby improving relational dynamics and professional efficacy.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This study established that teachers' impression mismanagement, particularly through humble bragging—disguising boasts as complaints or false modesty—significantly influences students' self-promotion behaviours in public secondary schools in Delta State. The findings confirm a significant positive correlation between these teacher behaviours and maladaptive student self-presentation, as students internalise through social learning the notion that genuine accomplishment sharing is inappropriate.

The study further indicates that strategies such as professional portfolios, self-awareness and reflection

practices, and student-centred pedagogies represent more effective approaches to addressing these behavioural patterns. However, it was also observed that existing professional development programmes and feedback mechanisms were not perceived as effective in their current implementation.

Overall, addressing teacher impression mismanagement is essential for fostering authentic classroom cultures where students develop healthy self-confidence, resilience, and the capacity for genuine self-advocacy in academic and future professional contexts.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study on teachers' impression mismanagement, concealment of accomplishment through humble bragging, and students' self-promotion in public secondary schools in Delta State, the following recommendations are made:

- **Establish Authentic Communication Training Programmes for Teachers:** The Delta State Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Post-Primary Education Board (PPEB), should develop and implement mandatory professional development workshops focused on authentic self-presentation and communication strategies. These programmes should equip teachers with skills to share professional accomplishments transparently without resorting to humble bragging or false modesty, while reinforcing that appropriate self-promotion can serve as positive modelling for students.
- **Integrate Professional Portfolios into Teacher Evaluation Systems:** School principals and quality assurance officers should require teachers to maintain structured professional portfolios documenting achievements, instructional innovations, and student outcomes using verifiable evidence. This system would provide a formal and transparent mechanism for showcasing accomplishments, reducing reliance on indirect or disguised forms of self-presentation while strengthening institutional accountability.
- **Develop Student-Focused Self-Promotion Education Curricula:** Curriculum planners at the Delta State Ministry of Education should incorporate structured modules on healthy self-promotion, assertiveness, and authentic communication into civic education or social studies curricula at both junior and senior secondary levels. These modules should help students distinguish between constructive self-advocacy and boastful behaviour, enabling them to develop confident but balanced communication skills.
- **Establish Teacher Peer Observation and Feedback Mechanisms:** School administrators should implement structured peer observation systems where teachers periodically observe classroom interactions and provide constructive feedback on communication and impression management practices. This would encourage professional reflection, reduce normalisation of impression mismanagement, and support the development of more authentic communication norms within schools.
- **Mandate Principal-Led School Culture Monitoring:** The Post-Primary Education Board should require principals to conduct annual school culture assessments focused on communication norms, including perceptions of humble bragging and impression management behaviours. These assessments should use anonymous surveys of teachers and students to generate baseline and longitudinal data for tracking cultural change and identifying schools requiring targeted support.
- **Create Recognition Systems for Transparent Professional Practice:** School-based management committees should establish formal rec-

ognition frameworks that reward teachers who demonstrate transparent and evidence-based sharing of professional achievements through portfolios, mentoring, and peer learning activities. This would reinforce authentic self-presentation as a valued professional norm and reduce institutional incentives for indirect or disguised self-promotion.

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