

**Original Article**

## **Body Shaming Experiences of Girls Studying in Public Schools: A Narrative Inquiry**

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative study explores the experiences of body shaming among girls attending public schools in Pokhara, Nepal. The participants were purposively selected based on prior information to ensure rich data collection. The data were gathered through in-depth interviews and reflective notes, analyzed using the six thematic analysis procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The findings indicate that students experience significant frustration due to derogatory nicknames from peers and teachers, leading to feelings of irritation towards friends, faculty, and administration. Additionally, the girls reported low self-esteem and loneliness stemming from body shaming, which aligns with the objectification theory proposed by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) and Becker's labeling theory (1963). A critical finding indicates a lack of interest in academic performance, with grades declining as a result of these experiences. It is imperative to address this issue within schools, as these girls suffer from circumstances beyond their control.

**Keywords:** *body shaming, low grades, low self-esteem, frustration*

### **Introduction**

Cases of bullying are a very common phenomenon in schools. Bullying is commonly known as violent conduct a group of people or some powerful ones do against a person who intentionally and regularly happens to harm them. A common form of bullying these days in schools is body shaming which has hindered the study of students at large. As per Dolezal (2015), body shaming is known for criticizing and commenting or comparing physically to others and oneself to hurt or humiliate them. Fredikson and Robert (1997) state that body shaming occurs when a person compares his or her physique with others and feels like having less than others or failing to meet the appearance like others have. It indirectly harms one who feels so and has negative consequences. Body shaming is further defined by Schluter (2023) as the act of humiliating someone based on their physical appearance. Moreover, it is a form of bullying that mainly targets physical body parts (Duarte et al., 2014)

Likewise, Schluter et al. (2021) argue that body shaming as an emotional act result in self-humiliation as they feel socially rejected, have feelings of loneliness, and get lost in isolation. Concerning body shaming cases people happen to lose confidence and turn to be unhappy and ignored as well as live as moodier than before. As students spend almost seven hours in

school and as of diversified backgrounds they have, there exist cases of bullying as I have closely observed them. Familial, peer bases and media, and seen and unseen cases of body shaming have surprisingly hindered girls' wellbeing. This might affect their study and achievements.

As per Yadav et al. (2023), in Nepal weight and body are the major causes of body shaming and unfair treatment teasing and bullying and it has a toxic culture that starts from home and the parents and relatives start calling them *motti*, *puku*, *kali*, and *venti* as love language or the so-called bad practices, and in most cases, teenagers are found not responding to such address and are humiliated inside but never found expressing. This has just been a normal culture at home and even in schools though it is not accepted legally and even the present Constitution of Nepal has stated it as discrimination.

Body shaming, appearance teasing, and trolling are intricately linked forms of cyberaggression, sharing core theoretical frameworks. These behaviors can be understood through three primary lenses: first, they exemplify online harassment; second, they are manifestations of cyberaggression, which serves as their defining characteristic (Corcoran et al., 2016); and third, they reflect online disinhibition as conceptualized by Suler (2004) and further explored by Ungerer (2021). While physical appearance may serve as a basis for trolling, it is essential to recognize that this factor is not the sole motivator (Yadav et al., 2023). A critical examination of these phenomena reveals profound psychological and sociocultural ramifications, necessitating a deeper understanding of their impact on targeted individuals and broader societal norms.

Incidents of bullying and body shaming have become increasingly prevalent, as evidenced by numerous reports in daily newspapers and confessional pages within schools and colleges. Students often refrain from expressing their experiences, viewing such disclosures as sources of shame. For instance, I encountered a student in tears in a restroom, devastated after being subjected to body shaming by her mathematics teacher. This incident illustrates a troubling aspect wherein students, particularly girls, are caught in a cycle of humiliation and emotional distress that they feel powerless to confront publicly.

The rising cases of body shaming necessitate a thorough investigation into the experiences of female students in educational institutions and the subsequent effects on their academic performance. Existing literature underscores the profound emotional repercussions of body shaming, which can lead to self-humiliation, feelings of social rejection, loneliness, and isolation (Robert & Goldberg, 2007). These emotional consequences have been found to significantly undermine self-confidence, resulting in increased unhappiness and mood disturbances among victims (Yadav 2021).

As students spend approximately seven hours a day in school, the diverse backgrounds from which they come can exacerbate the prevalence of bullying and body shaming. Recent studies indicate that familial influences, peer dynamics, and media portrayals contribute to the normalization of body shaming behaviors, thereby adversely affecting the well-being of female students (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). The detrimental effects of body shaming extend beyond emotional turmoil, as they can significantly hinder academic achievements by creating an environment rife with anxiety and insecurity,

ultimately impacting students' ability to engage fully in their educational pursuits (Kumar & Saini, 2020).

Furthermore, the societal stigma surrounding body image has been documented as a significant factor leading to mental health issues among adolescents. Yadav et al. (2023) highlight that body stigma is a primary driver of body shaming, which manifests not only in overt bullying but also in subtler forms of discrimination that permeate social interactions within schools. In the context of Nepal, it has been observed that this toxic culture often originates from familial interactions, where derogatory terms are used as expressions of affection, further embedding these harmful practices into the fabric of students' daily lives (Ghimire, 2020).

This climate of silence surrounding body shaming is alarming, as it discourages victims from seeking help or sharing their experiences, thereby perpetuating a cycle of isolation and emotional distress. The reluctance of students to articulate their experiences publicly, compounded by the fear of further humiliation, underscores the urgent need for intervention and support within educational institutions. The emotional toll and the potential for severe consequences, including mental health issues and academic decline, necessitate immediate action to create safe and supportive environments for all students.

In conclusion, the critical examination of body shaming and bullying within schools reveals a pressing need for comprehensive strategies to address these issues. By exploring the experiences of female students and understanding the multifaceted nature of body shaming, educational stakeholders can develop effective interventions that promote a culture of acceptance and respect, ultimately fostering all students' well-being and academic success.

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of secondary-level students concerning their body shaming and its consequences on their academic performance and their well-being. I have gone for this as it requires a solution as it has a potentially bad impact on the girl's education and emotions. It is required to make policies to unfold their genuine experiences at large and needs immediate actions. To meet this purpose, I have developed the following research questions:

How do students perceive the cases of body shaming in schools?

How have the incidents of body shaming hindered their academic performance?

How do students cope with such incidents in school?

This study explored the experiences of body shaming in schools and its effects on their academic concern as it is required to know their wellbeing as body shaming has been a crucial issue and it may contribute to their low self-esteem and hinder their socio-emotional life at large. As this case has been common in schools, exploration of their experience may contribute to shaping the future of students with sound wellbeing and higher self-esteem. It is expected that exploration of their experience might stop them from being more frustrated and have higher self-recognition. Further, adolescents can create their identities and high self-recognition. This can also help create new policy interventions and a positive school culture. It can also contribute to creating a good and welcoming culture among peers, students, and teachers and inclusively shaping a good school culture.

Body shaming is on the rise and it has been practised in different forms. Webb et al. (2016) assert it is an activity aimed at making negative comments to anybody based on their appearance, color, and skin or body shape which goes beyond normal. The cases of body shaming are on the rise and the most common influencers are said to be peers weight body shaming is most common and even family members and teachers are also in the second position for making them feel low (Sugiat, 2019). In addition, the act of insulting a person's physical appearance including body shape, size, or skin color, is the most common practice of body shaming (Graham, 2020). Likewise, body shaming these days is a condition of criticizing one's own appearance and having oneself compared with others and making critiques on others' appearances without any basic knowledge which finally results in shame and low self-esteem. This is what triggers a person to feel ashamed and even humiliated with deemed identity (Sukoco, Purnomo & Hadiwijoyo, 2022). The most common victims of body shaming are the adolescents, as it directly affects them and they are emotionally more sensitive at this age. This might affect their study too. Adolescence is the age between 10-19 and pupils have emotional, social, psychological, and even physical changes them, and if they are the victims of body shaming, they have the chance of being broken and emotionally weak. This age is supposed to be the age at which they create their own identity and search for life (Goldenberg et al., 2013). WHO defines "adolescents" as individuals in the age group of 10 to 19 years. This transitional age period might have long-term effects on them and when they face body shaming, they can be more victimized and this can have a direct impact on their study as well as in careers and creating their self-identity.

Dhungana (2022) explores the experience of violence within schools in Nepal and reveals that academically low performing and culturally undervalued students are called *bhuskul* which is resulting to rationalize discrimination and violence against them and it is found to be hindering schools from promoting peace at schools and promoting nonviolence. This situation is critical and such practices also need exploration. Based on the assumptions and ideas presented above, this study explored cases of body shaming experiences of girls and its impact on their study.

This study is particularly timely and necessary given the rising cases of body shaming and the reluctance of students to express their experiences openly due to feelings of shame. My encounters with students, including one who was visibly distressed after being body shamed by a teacher, underscore the urgent need for a deeper understanding of the impact of body shaming on students' academic performance. The issue of body shaming is not only a pressing concern globally but also demands attention within the context of our local educational environment. Investigating this phenomenon shows that effective strategies are needed to mitigate its effects and cultivate a safe and supportive school culture for all students.

### **Theoretical Referents**

Objection theory, particularly within the realm of moral psychology, critiques behaviors and attitudes that are considered morally objectionable due to their violation of personal or societal norms (Fredricson & Roberts, 1997). This theoretical framework is particularly pertinent when examining body shaming, as it elucidates emotional experiences of shame that arise when girls internalize societal judgments regarding their physical appearance. In this context, shame transcends fleeting feelings, manifesting as a profound emotional state shaped

by external feedback and internalized standards of bodily perfection. Recent psychological studies have investigated the ramifications of body shaming during adolescence, revealing its adverse effects on self-esteem, emotional regulation, and mental health outcomes (Pahlavnejad et al., 2025). These findings align closely with the constructs explored in objection theory, highlighting how girls internalize shame as a reflection of societal rejection. The objection to their appearance, often expressed by peers and authority figures, significantly impacts these girls, leading to detrimental consequences in their academic performance. Body shaming encompasses the criticism or mockery of an individual's physical appearance, which can result in severe psychological repercussions. In Nepal, girls are particularly susceptible to societal pressures regarding body image, influenced by traditional standards of beauty and contemporary media portrayals (Crawford et al., 2009). This prevalence of body shaming can precipitate issues such as low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression, all of which adversely affect academic performance (Jones & Lee, 2022). Furthermore, objection theory posits that individuals experience objectification when perceived primarily as bodies rather than as holistic individuals. This objectification leads to internalized shame, which often results in decreased motivation and engagement in academic settings (Savage & Bue, 2023). Studies indicate when girls view themselves through the lens of objectification, their academic performance suffers due to heightened stress and distraction associated with shame (Seek, et al., 2021). Thus, utilizing objection theory as a theoretical foundation enhances the understanding of the intricate relationship between body shaming experiences and academic performance, shedding light on the underlying psychological mechanisms.

Labeling theory, articulated by Becker (1963) posits that societal labels profoundly influence individual self-identity and behavior. Society's response to deviance often results in individuals being categorized as 'deviants,' leading to stigmatization and perpetuating further deviant actions (Becker, 1963). This labeling process not only impacts those labeled but also shapes societal perceptions of normalcy and deviance, reinforcing these constructs through social interactions.

Labeling theory explains how labels like "problem child" or "at-risk student" can influence teacher expectations, student self-esteem, and academic trajectories, potentially leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy of academic failure or behavioral issues (Becker, 2018). I have used labeling theory as a theoretical refrain from sociological point of view. This strand of this theory argues that girls' self-perceptions of their body are shaped by how, peers, teachers, friends and family use verbal and non-verbal communication concerning their body appearance (Bernburg, 2019). In the same way, critical jokes on their body weight, skin tone and shape of body lead to the stage of shame (Mustafa et al., 2022).

### **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research design, which is well-regarded for its ability to provide detailed and descriptive presentations of data that extend beyond the confines of quantitative scales and measurements (Guetteman, 2015). The study focuses on the experiences of 17 students in classes nine and ten, selected through purposive sampling. The participants were engaged in reflective note-taking and participated in in-depth interviews during the final term of the academic year 2024/2025.

Out of the 17 students, five were chosen for interviews, while the remaining students contributed reflective notes detailing their experiences with body shaming. The selection of these five individuals aimed to elicit rich, qualitative data that would provide deeper insights into their lived experiences. To ensure the interviews remained focused and relevant, a set of guided questions was utilized, thereby minimizing the risk of deviation from the main topics. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, with students contributing at their convenience.

The analysis of the collected data was conducted using qualitative thematic analysis, following the framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006). After transcribing the interview recordings and reflective notes, the data were systematically coded and categorized to organize the information regarding the students' experiences of body shaming and its impact on their academic performance. The process coding process involved all the steps as stated by Barun and Clarke (2006) which included axial coding for building connection among codes and develop broader themes. Finally, selective coding was integrated to the categories and finally to the identified themes into a cohesively developed narrative, which allowed me to derive meaningful insights. This structured approach helped me to enhance analysis and provide rigor to the study. This thematic analysis involved blending the insights from both reflective notes and interview responses to develop overarching themes that encapsulated the most common experiences reported by the participants.

While thematic analysis is widely recognized as a prevalent method for qualitative data analysis, one critique is that researchers often fail to provide a comprehensive account of the analytical process (Choy, 2015). In response to this critique, this study has endeavored to address such concerns by clearly delineating and adhering to the six stages outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) throughout the thematic analysis process. Coding was conducted based on responses to open-ended questions, ensuring a robust and reliable analytical framework. Following the initial coding, a thorough review of the coding process was undertaken to finalize the themes derived from the collected data. The resulting themes were then analyzed in conjunction with relevant literature, employing triangulation to enhance credibility and depth of the analysis.

This study has adopted Barun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis as a widely utilized qualitative research method that facilitates the identification, analysis, and reporting of themes within qualitative data identifying patterns and constructs for a coherent narrative that reflects participants' experiences. Throughout this process, I remained reflexive, acknowledging my positionality and its impact on interpretation (Riessman, 2008). It was done to present a rich, nuanced understanding of the narratives that captures the complexity of human experience. This analytical framework comprises several key phases, each integral to ensuring rigor and depth in the analysis process. Trustworthiness in this study was established through measures of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was achieved via data triangulation and referential adequacy (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba 1985). Transferability was ensured through rich, thick descriptions of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability involved detailed descriptions of participant selection criteria (Elo et al., 2014) and the research setting (Nowell et al., 2017), as well as authenticating interview transcriptions (Barun & Clarke, 2006). Confirmability was supported by a documented research audit trail that acknowledged researcher bias (Shenton, 2004) and data analysis methods (Moser & Korstjens 2022).

Verbatim quotes from the data substantiated findings (Berger, 2015), and peer debriefing was utilized to minimize bias.

The limitations of the study included a small sample of 17 students and five students were selected for in-depth interview restricting generalizability (Malterud et al, 2016). However, the school was noteworthy due to its varied students' background. The strength of this qualitative study lies in the in-depth exploration of body shaming experiences of students in school, revealing insights on the interplay between body shaming, learning environment, and students' performance (Malterud, 2016). Ethical clearance was obtained from the school administration, and informed consent was secured from all participants, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality.

## Results and Findings

This section highlights the experiences of girl students studying in public schools of Pokhara concerning body shaming and its impact on their studies. After having an intense analysis of the data generated through reflective notes and in-depth interviews, I collected significant insights on their experiences of body shaming and its impact on their study for ensuring a safe and positive school climate for all and protecting girls from insecurities and having less performance because of this concern.

This study elucidates the profound effects of body shaming on female students within the public schools of Pokhara, drawing insights from reflective notes and in-depth interviews. Three primary themes emerged from the narratives, which are critical for understanding the impact of body shaming on these students' academic and emotional well-being. The four themes include: nicknames led frustration, low self-esteem and loneliness, less interest in study and low grades and intense irritation with friends, teachers, and administration. Here I present the interpretation of the findings.

### Nicknames Led Frustration

Many students have reported that they are frustrated as their friends start calling them nicknames that they created on their own. They shared experiences of distress and had loneliest feelings, even being in the crowd and feeling embarrassed everywhere. Here are some narratives they share:

Rama shared:

*Yes, deep down, I got hurt badly. I have experienced many sleepless nights. Even the junior brothers on the bus called me Kalibudhi which was heart-piercing. One of my male peers in class regularly calls me oeee kali dhauu homework garis...ah ... it's painful. I cannot say anything; instead going right straight to my seat and make faces. I get disturbed often because of this situation and I get lost as I happen to overthink...*

Ritu shared:

*I am even called moot by male teachers. They call me oee motti ... have you done that? oee motti stand up and say the formula of ...isn't it so bad? How can my teacher call me so rudely? I wonder whether he is aware of body shaming or not. Not only my teachers, senior brothers often tease me whenever I go out on the veranda. They point*

*out my appearance and make comments like oeee her na one duck is out there. I had no way of hurting myself and being low and frustrated and having shame on me ...*

Rosa shared:

*Of course, I am the one who is victimized much. Should I blame my fate or my parents and elders for having short height? I have not committed a crime but no idea why people are making me feel low, the word Pudkki which my peers, juniors, and seniors often use while calling gives me a hellish life. I cannot respond at all. How much to bear? Sometimes I felt like quitting school and getting lost for some span of my life. The things which I don't have and which I don't like are stressed by them. It's so much painful.*

Rubi shared:

*I am new to this school. On the first day of my class nine, I could hear the word vampire. I was wondering why many boys used to pronounce it whenever I happened to enter the class. A few days later, I made a few close friends and they told me that I was called Vampire because of my teeth as they are not tightly arranged. After knowing this, I am not happy to be in this school and it has been continued by them ... I am deeply hurt and I have deeply rooted frustration. I don't enjoy being around them.*

The narratives collected from students reveal the profound impact of body shaming based on personal appearance, leading to significant emotional distress. Many students expressed feelings of humiliation and loneliness, even amidst peers, indicating the pervasive nature of this issue. Rama articulated her pain vividly, recounting how derogatory nicknames, such as “*Kalibudhi*,” inflicted emotional wounds that led to sleepless nights and social withdrawal. She described feeling lost in her thoughts, struggling with overthinking due to the relentless teasing. Ritu experienced body shaming from both peers and teachers, noting how being referred to as “*mooti*” by male teachers was particularly hurtful. She questioned the awareness of her educators regarding the implications of their words, while also facing ridicule from senior students. Rosa reflected on the challenges of being criticized for her height, expressing a desire to escape the unrelenting torment associated with the nickname “*Pudkki*.” Her narrative highlights a sense of helplessness and a longing for acceptance, exacerbated by societal expectations. Rubi, a newcomer, revealed the emotional toll of being labeled “*Vampire*” due to her teeth. This experience contributed to her discomfort in the school environment, leading to feelings of frustration and isolation. These narratives collectively underscore the urgent need for interventions that address body shaming within educational settings. The pervasive use of derogatory nicknames has not only affected the students’ emotional wellbeing but may also hinder their academic performance, necessitating immediate attention from educators and policymakers.

### **Low Self-esteem and Loneliness**

Most of the students have expressed the feeling of having low self-esteem and loneliness causing body shaming at the school atmosphere. It is reported that they are in a very critical situation.

Rima shared:



*I am almost down; I don't have respect for myself. I feel like I am not worth living. I feel very low when the classes are going on and I don't feel like going in front and presenting myself in the crowd. I prefer living in a small group and quietly sitting instead of moving around and having interaction. The only reason is I will be teased ...*

Ritu said:

*I am not happy with this life. If I have to suffer just because of my skin colour, and shape of body and if people make fun of me for no reason, I have nothing to enjoy. Everything is theirs; I am none and I don't have to talk to them as I can never answer them well and keep their mouth short. It's better, I live in silence and cry for the things I am not responsible for. Are my parents or my culture to be blamed? hmm, disgusting act people have no love for me right...*

Likewise, Renu shared:

*Sometimes it is so difficult to keep people's mouth short and it is me who is helpless and needed to keep myself disturbed. I do not think I will be able to teach them manners and I don't even think I will get justice...even teachers keep me down who are supposed to keep others unspoken and give some values. If they keep on hurting, what can I expect from my silly and unkind fellows? Life has no meaning and I am lost .... I overthink or...I am forced to.... helpless...*

The data and narratives provided by the students reveal a profound sense of isolation and diminished self-worth resulting from experiences of body shaming. Many participants expressed a pervasive sense of loneliness and dissatisfaction with their lives, stemming from the derogatory nicknames assigned to them. This theme underscores psychological distress that arises when individuals, particularly young girls, are subjected to humiliation linked to their physical appearance. For example, a student named Rama conveyed the emotional toll of such experiences, stating, *"I got hurt badly. I have experienced many sleepless nights."* Such testimonials reflect the urgent need for interventions that promote a supportive and inclusive school culture. Addressing these issues is critical to safeguarding the wellbeing of students and ensuring that they are afforded justice in their educational environments.

### **Less Interest in Study and Low Grades**

From the data, it is obvious that students have less interest in studying and are found to be having decreased grades which is bad and requires urgent intervention. Here are some of the sharing of their reflections and narratives.

Rubi shared:

*Most of the days, I am not interested in study as I am deeply hurt and I remember everything whenever I happen to see my friends and teachers who often tease me every day. I neither enjoy their class nor enjoy friends' presence. I am full of anger but not able to express them even if I wished to.... I used to get good grades in my previous school but ever since I joined this school it has gone down as I happen to be ashamed of my body and appearance for no reason .....*

Rama shared:

*I feel like quitting Maths period as my teacher has hurt me so deep. Whenever I see him, I found myself in the terrible condition as I remember all the insults and bad names he gave me, I never enjoy his teaching*

Rosa shared:

*As of body shaming, I started questioning my existence; I never had sound sleep and I used to overthink and cry most of the time but without letting others know it. It has disturbed my study as I couldn't focus and concentrate and I have more irritation. Slowly it hampered my grades and even I have no concern for my study as I overthink what I am shamed for.*

Ritu shared:

*I don't want to focus on my study. What I often do is overthink and cry. I sometimes don't want to speak and do my task assigned. It has lowered my study hours as I keep on spending hours thinking of my height and teeth and having them not perfect. I often sleep in class as I am sleepy because of sleepless nights overthinking and of course, reacting but I am helpless...*

The data presented reveal alarming consequences of body shaming on the academic performance of female students, demonstrating a notable decline in their interest in studying. The findings indicate that these experiences not only hinder academic achievement but also contribute significantly to feelings of worthlessness and isolation. Rima poignantly expressed, “*I feel like I am not worth living,*” which encapsulates profound despair that often accompanies body shaming. Such narratives illustrate how the school environment can become detrimental to the mental health of students, highlighting the urgent need for educators and policymakers to implement strategies that foster a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere. Addressing these pressing issues is vital for restoring students' self-worth, improving academic outcomes, and enhancing the overall wellbeing of affected girls.

### **Intense Irritation with Friends, Teachers, and Administration**

The girls are found to be intensely irritated with their friends, teachers, and even with administration because of body shaming experiences. They felt like avoiding and ignoring them as they felt those people were the ones who made them the victims. It is a serious concern as the ones with whom they need close contact and deep interaction are perceived as irritating ones. Here are the responses they shared.

Ritu shared:

*Whenever I see some of my friends who have commented on my body and skin color, I do have goose booms and I felt like screaming or slapping them from inside...poor me I never will be able to do so. I feel like my day is a waste of time as of them ...*

Rosa shared:

*It's quite disguising to have been in a class of those whom I curse and never wanted to set. My destiny needed to remain as a poor guy ...I hate their presence and the lectures in the true sense... their presence gives me the flashback ...when are they going to have the changes .... silly them ...*

Rima shared:

*I do pity the school administration ...don't they have to see and find out what's going on inside the school premises. It's very painful to see those poor fellows who are ignorant of such matters ...Isn't it the time to address such things? When will they be aware of such things and will not be using gender-biased language, and will understand what body shaming is? So, my juniors don't have to face a hellish life like I am and some of my friends live as of diction and styles they have for us ... uh huu ... poor they... poor me...my destiny ...*

Lastly, the data reveal a troubling link between body shaming and academic performance. Students reported a marked decline in their interest in studies and subsequent drops in grades. Rubi noted, *"I am not interested in study as I am deeply hurt,"* illustrating how emotional distress can lead to academic disengagement. This finding emphasizes the importance of addressing body shaming not only as a social issue but as a significant factor influencing educational outcomes. The narratives of these students reveal a critical intersection between body shaming, psychological distress, and academic performance. The experiences shared reflect a broader societal issue that requires immediate intervention to ensure a safe and nurturing educational environment. Educational institutions must prioritize awareness and training on body image issues among staff and students to mitigate harmful effects of body shaming. By amplifying the voices of these students, this study contributes to ongoing discussions about mental health and the need for systemic change in schools.

## Discussions

The body shaming experiences of girls in public schools in Pokhara have been deeply illuminating, revealing a spectrum of psychological and academic challenges. A prominent theme arising from the data is the frustration induced by derogatory nicknames, which have been shown to correlate with declining academic performance. Participants expressed a pervasive sense of frustration linked to the names used by peers and, alarmingly, by teachers. This aligns with the findings of Tggemann and Slater (2015), who noted that body shaming can lead to depression and mental disturbances among students. The girls' accounts underscore the offensive nature of body shaming and its detrimental effects, necessitating a cessation of such behavior within school environments. (Yadav et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the data highlighted intense irritation towards friends, teachers, and school administration. Students articulated feelings of being marginalized and unheard, a sentiment echoed in the work of Milosevic et (2023), which calls for urgent intervention by educational organizations to address these injustices. Brown et al. (2022) emphasized the necessity for educators to instill basic values in students to combat such harmful activities, yet the present study reveals a troubling contradiction: many teachers are themselves perpetrators of body shaming. This finding underscores the urgent need for comprehensive training and awareness programs for educators to foster a culture of respect and support within schools.

Another critical finding pertains to the low self-esteem and loneliness experienced by the girls. The participants conveyed a reluctance to engage with their peers and teachers, preferring isolation over the risk of further humiliation. This observation contradicts the assertions of Sabiston, et al. (2019), who suggested that ignoring body shaming experiences

could facilitate healing. The girls in this study, however, reported a desire for solitude, indicating that the psychological toll of body shaming has led to profound feelings of disconnection and despair. This finding too aligns with the labeling theory as girls self-esteem and academic trajectories resulted in failure and anxiety (Becker, 2018). The findings resonate with Tria et al. (2020), who documented the serious consequences of body shaming, reinforcing the imperative for schools to implement effective interventions to support affected students.

Moreover, the results of the study indicate that body shaming has led to decreased academic interest and lower grades among the participants. Contrary to the findings of Satapathy et al. (2022), who posited that body shaming could motivate girls to excel academically, this research illustrates a starkly different reality. Furthermore, the findings of the study align with the labeling theory which posits that as of body shame verbally and nonverbally by peers, teachers and family, victims tend to experience hurt, anxiety, low academic performance (Becker, 2018; Becker, 1963). This study aligns with the societal and educational stances of labeling theory. The narratives of the girls reflect a sense of hopelessness regarding their educational pursuits, with many contemplating quitting their studies altogether. This alarming trend emphasizes the need for educational institutions to recognize the negative correlation between body shaming and academic performance, and to take proactive measures to create a supportive learning environment in school. Such labeling should be discouraged in school.

In conclusion, the findings of this study paint a distressing picture of the pervasive impact of body shaming on the lives of female students in public schools. The evidence presented herein underscores the urgent need for schools to address these issues comprehensively. Girls are found to be objected and labeled as of appearance of body image and skin tone ((Fredricson & Roberts, 1997; Becker, 2018). Educational stakeholders must prioritize the implementation of policies and practices that promote inclusivity as Nepal's Education Policy (2019) has the provision of inclusion in education and even the present Constitution of Nepal has ensured the right to get education in a free environment irrespective of any biases and background providing due respect, and support for all students, thereby fostering a healthier and more equitable educational landscape. The voices of the affected girls must be amplified, guiding the development of interventions that truly address the root causes of body shaming and its consequences in school setting of Nepal.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

Consequently, it is essential to address the issue of body shaming within schools. A collective effort must be made to raise awareness about this pressing problem, advocating for protective measures that ensure a peaceful and welcoming atmosphere. Educational stakeholders must work together to create a culture of acceptance and respect, where every student is valued, and no individual is subjected to humiliation based on their appearance.

To mitigate the detrimental effects of body shaming, it is critical that schools implement comprehensive policies and training programs aimed at promoting mental health awareness and fostering positive social interactions. Teachers and administrators should be equipped with the necessary resources and knowledge to recognize and address body-shaming behaviors effectively. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to engage in

dialogue surrounding body positivity and empathy, thereby empowering them to stand against such harmful practices.

The need for decisive action against body shaming in schools cannot be overstated. By working collaboratively to create a culture of respect and acceptance, educational stakeholders can protect the wellbeing of all students and ensure that schools remain safe havens for learning and personal growth. It is imperative that we collectively confront and eradicate body shaming, thereby fostering a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for future generations.

In Nepal, discrimination in any form is strictly prohibited by law. Schools, as institutions where values are instilled in young minds, must not become breeding grounds for insults and body shaming. The legal framework clearly prohibits such practices, and schools are designated as peace zones within the nation. Therefore, it is imperative to remind all relevant authorities and students that body shaming has no place in educational settings, as it severely hinders the well-being and academic performance of numerous students.

To combat this issue, schools must actively cultivate a positive culture that rejects inhuman and unkind behaviors. It is essential to prioritize the establishment of an acceptance culture within these institutions, fostering an environment that is both safe and supportive for all students. Future research exploring various methods and issues related to body shaming in schools is also encouraged, as this will aid in eradicating such detrimental trends.

The alarming rise in body shaming incidents is a pressing concern, particularly as many girls experience profound depression, humiliation, and diminished self-esteem as a result. Additionally, the irritation directed towards school authorities and peers, coupled with a declining interest in academic pursuits, warrants serious consideration. Such conditions can precipitate grave consequences, including mental distress and, psychological disorders, and, in extreme cases, suicidal ideation (Gruber, 2021). So, it is imperative to have an implication for this finding at every level and domain in the Nepali educational setting.

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