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GENDER AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN SOCIAL STUDIES: A NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The objective of this Study is to comprehensively understand how gender influences academic success in Social Studies among students in Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive research design of the ex-post facto. The population of the study consisted of 21,510 student in Junior Secondary Schools in the 16 Local Government Areas of Ekiti State, Nigeria. The sample of the study consisted of 600 students selected using multistage random procedure. This was done by first dividing the state into three senatorial districts. The second stage was the selection of a Local Government Area from each of the senatorial districts after which four schools were selected from each of the LGAs using simple random sampling techniques making it a total of 12 schools. In each of the schools selected, 50 students were sampled taking into consideration their gender. Hence, 25 male and 25 female students were sampled in each of the schools selected for the study. This made it a total of 600 students. A self-design instrument tagged, Questionnaire on Gender Influence and Inventory on Students Performance in Social Studies were used to collect data for the study. The instruments were administered by the researcher through the help three trained research assistants. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts mean, standard deviation, and bar charts. The finding of the study revealed that the trend in the performance of male and female students are across different score range are similar, societal norms and cultural expectations significantly impact the academic performance of male and female students in Social Studies, economic background influences access to educational resources for both male and female students in Social Studies, teachers' attitudes significantly shape performance differences between male and female students in Social Studies and societal norms and cultural expectations, economic background, teachers' attitudes, and peer interactions significantly predict the performance of female students in Social Studies. It was recommended among others that there should be the implementation of awareness in schools and communities to challenge and change societal norms and cultural expectations that negatively impact students' academic performance.

Keywords: Gender, Academic Success, Social Studies, Peers, Attitude, Educational Resources

Introduction

Education is a cornerstone of development, providing individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in society. In Nigeria, like many other countries, education plays a vital role in shaping future opportunities and outcomes for its citizens. Within the educational landscape, Social Studies stand out as a subject that not only imparts academic knowledge but also fosters critical thinking, civic awareness, and societal understanding. However, despite the importance of Social Studies, there exist notable disparities in academic achievement, particularly concerning gender differences among students. Numerous studies have highlighted that male and female students often exhibit varying levels of success in Social Studies, prompting a deeper exploration into the factors influencing these differences.

Gender-based performance differences in Social Studies are not uncommon. Male students may demonstrate strengths in certain areas of the subject, while female students excel in others. These disparities can manifest in exam scores, classroom participation, grades, and overall academic achievement. Understanding the extent and nature of these differences is crucial for designing targeted interventions and promoting equitable learning outcomes. Gender is the set of traits that classify an organism as female or male, depending on its reproductive function (Ayodele & Adebisi, 2013). Many studies have shown that men generally perform better than girls (Olatola et al., 2017). Several investigations have shown that gender has a role in students' academic success or failure. For instance, studies have shown significant gaps in the performance of male and female students in Social Studies

Societal norms and cultural expectations play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes towards education and their academic performance. In Nigeria, traditional gender roles, expectations, and perceptions about the relevance of certain subjects may influence how male and female students engage with Social Studies. These socio-cultural influences create a complex environment where gender intersects with educational experiences. Gender differences in educational achievement are a major worldwide problem that has a big impact on people's personal growth, social justice, and the advancement of nations. These differences still exist and take many different forms in Nigeria, a country known for its rich cultural diversity and intricate social structure.

Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds may face challenges accessing quality educational resources, including textbooks, technology, and extracurricular opportunities. These disparities in resource allocation can impact students' preparedness and ability to succeed in Social Studies, further exacerbating gender-based differences. The socio-economic condition explores the mechanisms of student's academic performance which are possible means for the identification of the socio-economic and cultural factors (Olatola et al., 2017). However, differences in the availability of facilities and investment level in education of a household can eventually lead to inequalities in students' academic achievements (Buchmann, 2002). Empirical studies have found that academic performance of students with lower socio-economic status is slower than that of students with higher socio-economic status. As a result, a student's low socio-economic status is associated with poor cognitive and academic development

and language problems (Morgan et. al., 2009). Illiterate parents, their professional backwardness, their poor income and poor health condition, lack of educational access which are negatively influenced the students' academic performance (Aikens and Barbarin, 2008).

The classroom environment, teaching methods, and teacher-student interactions play crucial roles in shaping academic success. Teachers' attitudes, expectations, and instructional strategies can influence how male and female students engage with Social Studies. Positive teacher-student relationships, inclusive teaching practices, and supportive learning environments are essential for mitigating performance gaps and fostering gender equity. Hence, this study investigated gender and academic success in social studies: A Nigerian perspective.

Statement of the Problem

Significant gender-based performance disparities seems to exist in Social Studies among Nigerian students, with each gender observed to be exhibiting distinct strengths and weaknesses in various areas of Social Studies. These disparities are reflected in the overall performance trends, with male and female students demonstrating differing levels of academic success over time. Traditional societal norms and cultural expectations in Nigeria seem to be influencing students' attitudes towards Social Studies, shaping their engagement and academic outcomes. Additionally, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds were observed to face greater challenges in accessing quality educational resources, which exacerbates gender-based performance differences. The attitudes, expectations, and instructional strategies of teachers play a crucial role in either mitigating or reinforcing these performance differences. Furthermore, peer interactions seems to impact academic outcomes, with positive peer support enhancing performance and negative interactions contributing to the observed gender-based performance gaps in Social Studies. It is in lieu of this that this study tends to examine gender and academic success in social studies: A Nigerian perspective.

Objectives of the Study

Objective of this Study is to comprehensively understand how gender influences academic success in Social Studies among students in Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Examine the extent of performance differences between male and female students in Social Studies.
2. Identify the socio-cultural, economic, and educational factors that contribute to gender-based disparities in academic outcomes in Social Studies

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

1. What is the performance trend of male and female students in Social Studies?
2. What is the impact of societal norms and cultural expectations on the academic performance of male and female students in Social Studies?

3. How does economic background influence access to educational resources for male and female in Social Studies?
4. What is the role of teachers' attitude in shaping performance differences between male and female students in Social Studies?
5. What is impact of peer interactions on the performance differences between male and female students in Social Studies?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significance difference in the performance of male and female students in Social Studies.
2. Societal norms and cultural, economic background, teachers' attitude, and peer interactions will not significantly predict the performance of male students in Social Studies.
3. Societal norms and cultural, economic background, teachers' attitude, and peer interactions will not significantly predict the performance of female students in Social Studies.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive research design of the ex-post facto. It is an ex-post facto because it examined variables as they exist. Hence, the students' results are collected over time by the researcher. The population of the study consisted of 21,510 student in Junior Secondary Schools in the 16 Local Government Areas of Ekiti State, Nigeria (Ekiti State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2023). The sample of the study consisted of 600 students selected using multistage random procedure. This was done by first dividing the state into three senatorial districts. The second stage was the selection of a Local Government Area from each of the senatorial districts after which four schools were selected from each of the LGAs using simple random sampling techniques making it a total of 12 schools. In each of the schools selected, 50 students were sampled taking into consideration their gender. Hence, 25 male and 25 female students were sampled in each of the schools selected for the study. This made it a total of 600 students. A self-design instrument tagged, Questionnaire on Gender Influence and Inventory on Students Performance in Social Studies were used to collect data for the study. The instruments were administered by the researcher through the help three trained research assistants. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts mean, standard deviation, and bar charts.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the performance trend of male and female students in Social Studies?

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of performance trend of male and female students in Social Studies

Score	Male		Female	
	F	%	F	%
01-39	13	4.33	12	4.00
40-49	78	26.00	98	32.67
50-59	100	33.33	101	33.67

60-69	51	17.00	46	15.33
70-100	58	19.33	43	14.33

The performance trend of male and female students in Social Studies, as illustrated in Table 1, shows distinct patterns across different score ranges. Both genders have similar percentages in the highest scoring range (70-100), with males slightly outperforming females at 19.33% compared to 14.33%. In the mid-range scores (50-59), females slightly edge out males, with 33.67% of females scoring in this range compared to 33.33% of males. However, a notable difference is observed in the 40-49 score range, where a higher percentage of females (32.67%) fall compared to males (26.00%). Both genders have a low percentage of students scoring in the lowest range (01-39), with males at 4.33% and females at 4.00%. Therefore, while the performance trends for both genders are somewhat similar, females have a higher concentration in the 40-49 range, indicating a slight overall difference in performance distribution. This is further depicted on figure 1 below.

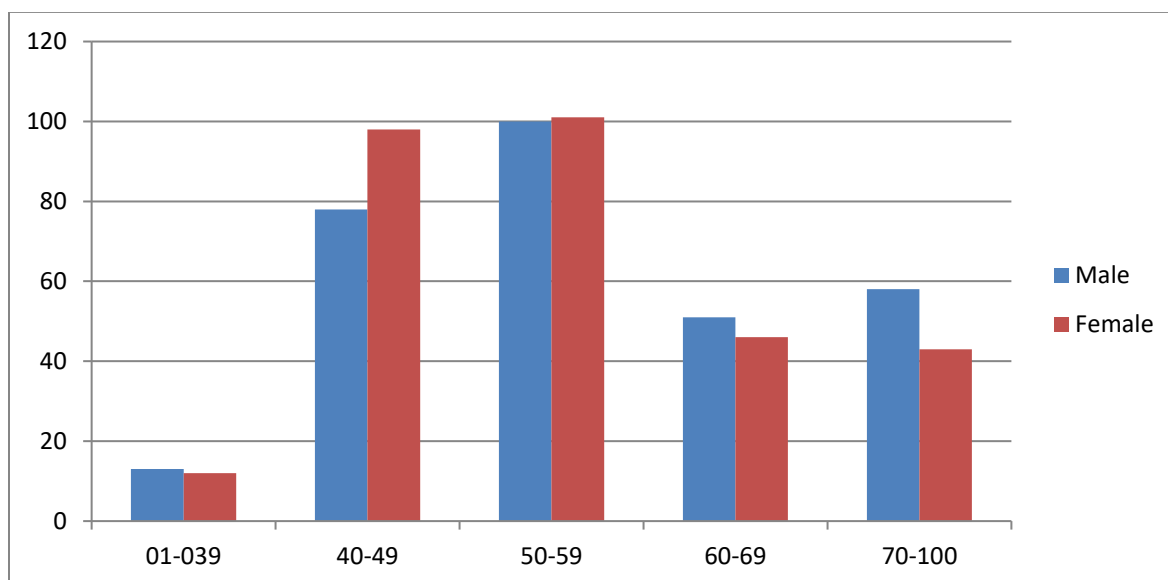


Figure 1: Bar Chart of the performance trend of male and female students in Social Studies

Research Question 2: What is the impact of societal norms and cultural expectations on the academic performance of male and female students in Social Studies?

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation of the impact of societal norms and cultural expectations on the academic performance of male and female students in Social Studies

	ITEM	SA (4)	A (4)	D (4)	SD (4)	\bar{x}	S.D	Decision
1	Societal expectations influence my interest in studying Social Studies.	234	218	111	37	3.08	1.17	Significant
2	Cultural norms affect how much effort I put into my Social Studies assignments and exams.	218	298	29	55	3.13	1.03	Significant
3	I believe my academic performance in Social Studies is influenced by the roles	233	221	78	68	3.03	0.94	Significant

	traditionally assigned to my gender in society.							
4	My community's cultural expectations have a significant impact on how I perceive the importance of Social Studies.	234	217	69	80	3.01	1.15	Significant
5	The societal norms around gender roles affect the way teachers and peers perceive my capabilities in Social Studies.	334	187	52	27	3.38	0.78	Significant
	Grand Mean					3.13		

Table 2 reveals that each item assessed has a mean score above 3.00, indicating a general agreement among respondents that societal and cultural factors play a crucial role. Specifically, the statement "Societal norms around gender roles affect the way teachers and peers perceive my capabilities in Social Studies" received the highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 3.38$), suggesting a strong perception of gender-based biases in academic evaluation. The impact of cultural norms on effort and engagement in Social Studies assignments and exams also scored highly ($\bar{x} = 3.13$). Overall, the grand mean of 3.13 and the consistent standard deviations around 1.00 indicate a significant and consistent belief among students that societal and cultural expectations influence their academic performance in Social Studies. Hence, societal norms and cultural expectations significantly impact the academic performance of male and female students in Social Studies.

Research Question 3: How does economic background influence access to educational resources for male and female in Social Studies?

Table 3: Mean and Standard deviation of the influence of economic background on the access to educational resources for male and female in Social Studies

	ITEM	SA (4)	A (4)	D (4)	SD (4)	\bar{x}	S.D	Decision
1	Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds have less access to textbooks and study materials related to Social Studies.	256	225	56	63	3.12	0.87	Significant
2	Male students from lower-income families face challenges in accessing technology (computers, internet) for Social Studies assignments and research.	270	212	78	40	3.19	0.70	Significant
3	Female students from higher-income households tend to have better access to educational resources in Social Studies compared to their male counterparts from similar backgrounds.	301	212	42	45	3.28	0.92	Significant
4	The economic status of a student's family significantly impacts their ability to participate in extracurricular activities related to Social Studies (e.g., field trips, workshops).	345	125	86	44	3.29	1.00	Significant
5	Financial constraints often limit access to additional learning resources and tutoring services for Social Studies among male and female students from low-income backgrounds.	284	224	76	16	3.29	0.79	Significant
	Grand Mean					3.12		

From table 3, each item shows a mean score above 3.00, reflecting a general consensus on the impact of economic disadvantages. The highest mean score is associated with the statement "The economic status of a student's family significantly impacts their ability to participate in extracurricular activities related to Social Studies" ($\bar{x} = 3.29$), highlighting financial barriers to broader educational engagement. Similarly, students from lower-income families face challenges in accessing technology ($\bar{x} = 3.19$) and textbooks ($\bar{x} = 3.12$), which are critical for completing Social Studies assignments and research. Female students from higher-income households reportedly have better access to resources compared to their male counterparts ($\bar{x} = 3.28$), suggesting a gendered disparity within economic strata. The grand mean of 3.12 hence, economic background influences access to educational resources for both male and female students in Social Studies.

Research Question 4: What is the role of teachers' attitude in shaping performance differences between male and female students in Social Studies?

Table 4: Mean and Standard deviation of the the role of teachers' attitude in shaping performance differences between male and female students in Social Studies

	ITEM	SA (4)	A (4)	D (4)	SD (4)	\bar{x}	S.D	Decision
1	Teachers' expectations of male students in Social Studies are higher compared to their expectations of female students.	287	231	54	28	3.30	0.72	Significant
2	Male students receive more encouragement and praise from teachers in Social Studies classes compared to female students.	243	230	77	50	3.11	1.04	Significant
3	Teachers tend to provide more challenging assignments and opportunities for male students to excel in Social Studies than for female students.	345	135	85	35	3.32	0.85	Significant
4	In classroom discussions and debates related to Social Studies, teachers give more speaking opportunities to male students than to female students.	276	223	22	79	3.16	1.03	Significant
5	Teachers' attitudes towards male and female students in Social Studies affect their motivation and confidence levels in the subject.	389	201	10	0	3.63	0.65	Significant
	Grand Mean					3.30		

Table 4 reveals that each item shows a mean score above 3.00, indicating strong agreement on the issues presented. Teachers' expectations of male students are perceived to be higher ($\bar{x} = 3.30$), and male students are seen to receive more encouragement and praise ($\bar{x} = 3.11$). Furthermore, there is a belief that teachers provide more challenging assignments and opportunities for male students ($\bar{x} = 3.32$) and give them more speaking opportunities in classroom discussions ($\bar{x} = 3.16$). The highest mean score is associated with the perception that teachers' attitudes towards male and female students significantly affect their motivation and confidence levels in the subject ($\bar{x} = 3.63$). The grand mean of 3.30 hence, teachers' attitudes significantly shape performance differences between male and female students in Social Studies.

Research Question 5: What is impact of peer interactions on the performance differences between male and female students in Social Studies?

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of the impact of peer interactions on the performance differences between male and female students in Social Studies

	ITEM	SA (4)	A (4)	D (4)	SD (4)	\bar{x}	S.D	Decision
1	Male students in Social Studies often receive more positive feedback and support from their peers compared to female students.	156	98	234	112	2.50	0.89	Not Significant
2	Peer interactions in group projects and discussions tend to favor male students' contributions over those of female students in Social Studies classes.	342	156	63	39	3.34	1.05	Significant
3	Female students face more challenges in forming study groups and collaborative learning opportunities in Social Studies compared to male students.	323	221	53	3	3.44	1.67	Significant
4	Peer pressure and social dynamics negatively impact female students' participation and engagement in Social Studies discussions and activities.	287	212	43	58	3.21	1.01	Significant
5	The quality of peer interactions significantly influences the academic performance and learning outcomes of male and female students in Social Studies.	235	221	123	21	3.12	1.06	Significant
	Grand Mean					3.12		

Table 5 shows the impact of peer interactions on performance differences between male and female students in Social Studies, with a grand mean of 3.12, indicating a significant overall influence. Male students reportedly receive more positive feedback and support from peers compared to female students, though this finding is not significant ($\bar{x} = 2.50$). However, other aspects, such as peer interactions favoring male students in group projects and discussions ($\bar{x} = 3.34$), female students facing more challenges in forming study groups ($\bar{x} = 3.44$), and the negative impact of peer pressure on female students' participation ($\bar{x} = 3.21$), are significant. The quality of peer interactions also significantly influences academic performance and learning outcomes for both genders ($\bar{x} = 3.12$). Therefore, peer dynamics play a substantial role in shaping gender-based performance disparities in Social Studies.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significance difference in the performance of male and female students in Social Studies.

Table 6: T-test analysis of the significance difference in the performance of male and female students in Social Studies

GROUPING	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t-test	p-value
MALE	300	59.0967	14.75193	598	1.854	0.064
FEMALE	300	56.9333	13.81781			

P<0.05

From table 6, the p-value is 0.064, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05, the hypothesis is therefore not rejected. While the mean performance of male students (59.10) is slightly higher than that of female students (56.93), the difference is not statistically significant.

This implies that there is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students in Social Studies.

Hypothesis 2: Societal norms and cultural, economic background, teachers' attitude, and peer interactions will not significantly predict the performance of male students in Social Studies.

Table 7: Regression Analysis of the significant prediction of the performance of male students in Social Studies by Societal norms and cultural, economic background, teachers' attitude, and peer interactions.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	145.548	7.483		19.450	.000
Societal Norms and Culture	-.144	.075	-.087	-1.928	.055
Economic Background	-.261	.051	-.235	-5.131	.000
Teachers' Attitude	-.511	.045	-.501	-11.262	.000
Peer Interaction	-.237	.050	-.215	-4.713	.000

P<0.05

Given the results of the regression analysis on table 7, societal norms and cultural expectations ($p = 0.055$) do not significantly predict the performance of male students in Social Studies, as their p-value is greater than the significance level of 0.05. However, economic background ($p = 0.000$), teachers' attitudes ($p = 0.000$), and peer interactions ($p = 0.000$) significantly predict the performance of male students, as their p-values are less than 0.05. Thus, while societal norms and cultural expectations do not significantly predict performance, economic background, teachers' attitudes, and peer interactions do.

Hypothesis 3: Societal norms and cultural, economic background, teachers' attitude, and peer interactions will not significantly predict the performance of female students in Social Studies.

Table 8: Regression Analysis of the significant prediction of the performance of female students in Social Studies by Societal norms and cultural, economic background, teachers' attitude, and peer interactions

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	139.598	7.068		19.752	.000
	Societal Norms and Culture	-.202	.071	-.130	-2.863	.005
	Economic Background	-.234	.048	-.225	-4.889	.000
	Teachers' Attitude	-.489	.043	-.511	-11.418	.000
	Peer Interaction	-.175	.047	-.170	-3.699	.000

P < 0.05

From table 8, the results revealed that societal norms and cultural expectations ($p = 0.005$), economic background ($p = 0.000$), teachers' attitudes ($p = 0.000$), and peer interactions ($p = 0.000$) significantly predict the performance of female students in Social Studies, as all their p -values are less than the significance level of 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis is therefore rejected. All the factors—societal norms and cultural expectations, economic background, teachers' attitudes, and peer interactions—significantly predict the performance of female students in Social Studies.

Findings of the Study

1. The trend in the performance of male and female students across different score ranges are similar.
2. Societal norms and cultural expectations significantly impact the academic performance of male and female students in Social Studies.
3. Economic background influences access to educational resources for both male and female students in Social Studies.
4. Teachers' attitudes significantly shape performance differences between male and female students in Social Studies.
5. Peer dynamics play a substantial role in shaping gender-based performance disparities in Social Studies.
6. There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students in Social Studies.
7. Societal norms and cultural expectations do not significantly predict performance, economic background, teachers' attitudes, and peer interactions do.
8. Societal norms and cultural expectations, economic background, teachers' attitudes, and peer interactions significantly predict the performance of female students in Social Studies.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that the trend in the performance of male and female students across different score ranges are similar. This implies that, on average, both genders exhibit comparable levels of achievement in Social Studies, with no significant disparities. This finding aligns with Tiedemann's (2000) research, which noted that gender differences in academic performance are often minimal when accounting for external influences such as teacher expectations and parental beliefs. Mikami (2019) emphasized that peer support and interactions play crucial roles in shaping students' academic self-concept and engagement, further influencing their academic outcomes. Also,

Tiedemann's (2000) study found out that teachers' gender-biased expectations can limit students' academic growth by providing unequal opportunities and encouragement.

The finding of the study shows that societal norms and cultural expectations significantly impact the academic performance of male and female students in Social Studies. This finding shows the pervasive influence of societal and cultural factors on education. For instance, societal expectations often dictate gender-specific roles and behaviors, which can affect students' engagement and performance in academic subjects. For male students, societal norms might pressure them to conform to stereotypes that prioritize physical prowess or economic provision over academic achievement. Similarly, female students might be influenced by cultural expectations that place higher value on domestic roles, potentially leading to less emphasis on their academic pursuits. This aligns with study by Leaper, Farkas, and Brown (2012), who found that gender stereotypes and societal expectations can adversely affect students' academic engagement and performance, particularly when these expectations clash with their academic interests.

The finding of the study revealed that economic background influences access to educational resources for both male and female students in Social Studies. This is supported by the findings of Sirin (2005), who demonstrated that socioeconomic status is a powerful predictor of academic achievement, often due to disparities in access to resources and educational opportunities. Schools in economically disadvantaged areas should receive increased funding to ensure that all students have access to necessary learning materials, such as textbooks and digital devices. Additionally, providing subsidized or free internet access can help bridge the technology gap that exists between students of different economic backgrounds.

This finding of the study also shows that teachers' attitudes significantly shape performance differences between male and female students in Social Studies. Studies reveals that teachers' expectations and behaviors can influence student outcomes, often perpetuating gender biases. (Sadker & Zittleman, (2009) found that teachers tend to have higher expectations for male students and provide them with more challenging opportunities and encouragement in subjects like Social Studies. This differential treatment can lead to increased confidence and motivation in male students, while female students may receive less support and recognition, affecting their academic performance and self-esteem. Such biases not only reinforce traditional gender roles but also create an inequitable learning environment, highlighting the need for teacher training programs that promote gender equality and inclusive teaching practices (Li & Hasan, 2010). The implications of these findings stress the importance of addressing gender biases in educational settings to ensure that both male and female students have equal opportunities to succeed.

The finding of this study reveals that peer dynamics play a substantial role in shaping gender-based performance disparities in Social Studies. Peer interactions can significantly impact students' academic engagement and achievement. For instance, male students often receive more positive feedback and support from their peers, which can enhance their confidence and participation in Social Studies (Lavy & Sand, 2018). Conversely, female students may face challenges in forming study groups and receiving equitable recognition in collaborative learning settings, which can negatively affect their performance (Jacobs, 2004). These situations are critical because they influence how students perceive their abilities and their willingness to engage with the subject matter. Furthermore, the social interaction of peer groups often reflect broader societal gender norms, which can perpetuate stereotypes and limit opportunities for female students. Addressing these disparities requires fostering inclusive and supportive peer environments that encourage all students to participate and excel equally (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

The finding of the study reveals that there is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students in Social Studies. This finding corroborated Hyde (2005) and Sadker & Zittleman (2009) who reported that gender differences in educational outcomes, usually attributing them to sociocultural factors and differential treatment by teachers. However, the current study's findings align with Else-Quest, Hyde, & Linn, (2010) who found that when provided equal opportunities and resources, performance differences between genders tend to diminish. These findings shows that ensuring equitable educational practices and resources can lead to similar academic outcomes for both male and female students in Social Studies

The finding of the study shows that societal norms and cultural expectations do not significantly predict performance, economic background, teachers' attitudes, and peer interactions do. This reflects the pervasive influence of both external societal factors and immediate educational environments on academic outcomes for female students. This finding corroborated the report of UNESCO (2015) which stated that gender stereotypes can limit educational opportunities and affect girls' self-perception, leading to reduced academic performance. It does not corroborate Mikami, (2019) who stated that cultural expectations often prioritize domestic responsibilities for girls, thereby limiting the time and energy they can devote to their studies. This finding is supported by literature which shows that socioeconomic status (SES) is a critical determinant of educational achievement. Students from low SES backgrounds often lack access to essential educational resources, such as textbooks, technology, and extracurricular opportunities, which are crucial for academic success (Reardon, 2013). The lack of financial stability can also lead to additional stressors, such as malnutrition and poor health, further hindering academic performance (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Also according to Tiedemann, (2000) Teachers might unconsciously encourage male students more, provide them with more challenging tasks, and have higher expectations for their success, which can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy where female students internalize these lower expectations and perform accordingly. Leaper, Farkas, & Brown, (2012) in their own finding revealed that Female students often face more significant challenges in forming supportive peer networks, which are essential for collaborative learning and academic support.

The finding of the study revealed that societal norms and cultural expectations, economic background, teachers' attitudes, and peer interactions significantly predict the performance of female students in Social Studies. This reflects the pervasive influence of both external societal factors and immediate educational environments on academic outcomes for female students. This finding corroborated the report of UNESCO (2015) which stated that gender stereotypes can limit educational opportunities and affect girls' self-perception, leading to reduced academic performance. Also Mikami, (2019) stated that cultural expectations often prioritize domestic responsibilities for girls, thereby limiting the time and energy they can devote to their studies. This finding is supported by literature which shows that socioeconomic status (SES) is a critical determinant of educational achievement. Students from low SES backgrounds often lack access to essential educational resources, such as textbooks, technology, and extracurricular opportunities, which are crucial for academic success (Reardon, 2013). The lack of financial stability can also lead to additional stressors, such as malnutrition and poor health, further hindering academic performance (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Also according to Tiedemann, (2000) Teachers might unconsciously encourage male students more, provide them with more challenging tasks, and have higher expectations for their success, which can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy where female students internalize these lower expectations and perform accordingly. Leaper, Farkas, & Brown, (2012) in their own finding revealed that Female students often face more significant challenges in forming supportive peer networks, which are essential for collaborative learning and academic support. The literature suggests that girls may experience exclusion or marginalization in mixed-gender groups, which can reduce their participation and engagement in classroom activities.

Conclusion

The finding of this study revealed the significant impact of societal norms, economic background, teachers' attitudes, and peer interactions in shaping academic performance in Social Studies. Addressing these factors through targeted interventions and equitable educational practices is essential for promoting gender equality and improving academic outcomes for all students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made:

1. There should be the implementation of awareness in schools and communities to challenge and change societal norms and cultural expectations that negatively impact students' academic performance.
2. The government should develop and incorporate curriculum content that reflects gender equality and encourage both male and female students to engage actively in Social Studies.
3. Educational management should ensure equitable distribution of educational resources such as textbooks, technology, and extracurricular opportunities to students from all economic backgrounds.
4. There should be the introduction of financial support programs, including scholarships and grants, specifically aimed at economically disadvantaged students to enhance their access to educational resources.
5. Educational administrators should conduct regular professional development programs for teachers to raise awareness about unconscious biases and to promote gender-sensitive teaching practices.
6. Teachers should be encouraged to provide equal encouragement and academic support to all students, regardless of gender, to ensure that both male and female students feel valued and motivated.
7. Promote collaborative learning strategies that encourage positive peer interactions and mutual respect among students.
8. Government should implement strict anti-bullying policies and create a supportive school culture that discourages negative peer dynamics and promotes positive social interactions among students.
9. There should be the development of targeted intervention programs for female students, particularly in areas where societal norms, economic background, teachers' attitudes, and peer interactions negatively impact their performance.
10. The introduction of female role models and mentors in Social Studies to inspire and motivate female students to pursue excellence in Social Studies.

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