GENDER INFLUENCE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES SYSTEM: A STUDY OF BABCOCK UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS

ADESIYAN VICTOR A. PhD
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, BABCOCK UNIVERSITY
adesiyanv@babcock.edu.ng

JACOB BABAJIDE, PhD
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, BABCOCK UNIVERSITY
babajidej@babcock.edu.ng

SEIGHA SONIA GESIERE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, BABCOCK UNIVERSITY

WOLE-TAIWO OLAYINKA
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, BABCOCK UNIVERSITY

KEYWORDS
Academic performance, gender, gender influence, gender disparities, Nigerian universities

ABSTRACT
Gender is a biological as well as socially and culturally constructed concept of masculinity and femininity on individuals' actions, opportunities, and societal expectations. The concept of gender has impacted every segment of societal interactions including students' academic performance which encompasses acquisition of information across cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor domains encountered in formal educational environment. However, less attention has been given to the effect of gender differences on academic performance in the literature. Therefore, this study addressed the problem of gender differences in academic performance in Nigerian universities. The survey research design was employed, involving 397 undergraduate students from Babcock University and the University of Lagos, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via a structured self-administered questionnaire, and descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. The study was anchored on the social constructivist theory. The study revealed that gender discrimination affects both male and female students, leading to lower self-esteem, uneven performance across disciplines, and influencing study time and career choices. Teaching content and curriculum designed also contribute positively to gender equality in both private and public universities. The study concluded that gender discrimination significantly impacts academic experiences in Nigerian universities. While institutional policies support

gender equality, government policies are ineffective; teaching content and socio-economic factors also influences students' academic performance. The study recommended adequate data monitoring, policy reform, awareness campaigns, curriculum review, support services, and socio-economic support as solutions to the observed challenges.

Introduction

Academic performance is a multifaceted area of research that has received significant attention and investigation over an extended period of time. The focus is often on the level a student attains in their coursework and educational pursuits. There are several factors that have the potential to impact a student's academic performance, including both advantageous and detrimental effects. One of the primary factors that have a significant impact is the inherent drive and exertion shown by a learner. Shing (2020) opined that there is a positive correlation between students' self-motivation and their academic achievement, with those who exhibit greater levels of self-motivation and invest more effort tending to do better academically.

Meanwhile, motivation of students may be influenced by several factors, including the level of interest they have in their courses, their personal objectives, their self-efficacy beliefs, and their utilization of self-regulated learning strategies, the impacts of teachers and peers are also significant in academic contexts. According to Pardo (2019), the provision of assistance, guidance, and relevant feedback by instructors has a favourable influence on students' academic achievement. Similarly, the presence of like-minded individuals who prioritized academic pursuits may have a positive impact on an individual's motivation and level of exertion.

Academic performance, as opined by King et al. (2017), encompasses the acquisition of information across cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor domains, which students encounter in formal educational environment. It is often assessed by means of test results, active participation in class, timely completion of assignments, and the cumulative grade point average. Gender influence, on the other hand, pertains to the impact of socially and culturally formed concepts of masculinity and femininity on individuals' actions, opportunities, and societal expectations (Ozturk et al., 2020). The primary components of gender influence include gender stereotypes, gender roles, and gender socialization experienced throughout the process of parenting.

Numerous scholarly investigations have examined the impact of gender on academic achievement in different countries. According to Essel, Vlachopoulos & Tachie-Menson (2021), gender was found to have minimal influence on academic performance within Ghanaian universities in Africa. In the context of Nigeria, Birhanu (2019) observed that gender was not shown to be a significant determinant of undergraduate grade point averages at institutions located in the Midwestern region. In Lagos for instance, Pitan & Muller (2020) observed a trend where female students in higher education demonstrated superior performance compared to their male counterparts, specifically in the field of humanities.

Conversely, a number of studies have elucidated the adverse impact of gender. According to Keller et al. (2022) meta-analysis research conducted in the United States, it was shown that there is a continuous pattern of female under performance in math-intensive domains. In a study conducted by Onyedikachi (2021), there was a negative impact on academic achievement in elementary schools in Oyo State due to teacher interactions that exhibited gender prejudice. Also, a study conducted in Lagos by Wrigley-Asante (2023), identified gendered impediments to education as the primary factor contributing to comparatively lower WASSCE results in females' secondary schools. When considering various locations and disciplines, it is evident that gender continues to significantly influence academic attainment on a global scale. Thus, this study investigated the problem of gender disparities in the academic performance of Nigerian Universities, focusing on Babcock University and University of Lagos.

Methodology

A descriptive survey technique was adopted for this study. The data for this research was retrieved from primary source, using a questionnaire which was administered to selected undergraduates in University of Lagos, Lagos state and Babcock University, Ogun State, Nigeria, using the purposive sampling technique. The analysis below presents the data obtained from respondents and discusses the findings generated which were analysed using appropriate statistical tools and interpreted accordingly. Using a population of 45,500 (35,436 in University of Lagos and 10,064 in Babcock University), the study utilized the Taro Yamane formular to arrive at the sample size of 397. Three hundred and ninety-seven copies of questionnaire were administered (397), while three hundred and sixty-eight (368) responses were found valid and usable for the study.

Literature Review

Concept of Gender

The concept of gender is multifaceted, and characterized by dynamic definitions and developing interpretations. Gender, in its most fundamental sense, encompasses the attributes that a given community or culture designates as either masculine or feminine (Lindqvist, Sendén & Renström, 2021). Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the notion of gender is contingent upon cultural and historical contexts and has undergone transformations throughout history. Historically, gender has been conventionally delineated based on an individual's biological sex assigned at the time of birth, categorizing them as either male or female. An individual was deemed to be of the male gender if they were assigned male at birth, whereas they were classified as female if they were assigned female. Current definitions recognize that gender extends beyond the dichotomous classifications of male and female. The existence of intersex and transgender people poses a challenge to the rigid categorization of gender that is traditionally linked only to biological sex (Hyde et al., 2019).

Academic scholars have advocated for the use of a multi-dimensional perspective when examining gender, which encompasses many key components. According to Vamvaka (2020), the idea of gender has three dimensions: identity, behaviour, and relationships. The identification component refers to how individuals self-identify in terms of their gender; the behaviour dimension pertains to the gendered behaviours and appearances shown by individuals. Also, the relationship dimension concerns how individuals are seen by others in connection to their gender. The aforementioned paradigm acknowledges the existence of gender as an inherent aspect of one's identity while simultaneously acknowledging that it is shaped and influenced by social interactions and performances. Advocates contend that gender is a multifaceted construct that encompasses a spectrum, hence, challenging the notion that a single definition can adequately capture the vast array of human experiences.

Factors that affect Students Academic Performance

Academic performance is influenced by various factors, ranging from individual motivation and self-perception to the availability of educational resources and support systems. Motivation, however, plays a pivotal role in academic achievement, as it drives students to set goals, persist through challenges, and engage in learning activities. Motivation levels can vary significantly among individuals and across genders. Research suggests that males often exhibit higher levels of extrinsic motivation, driven by external rewards or recognition, while females tend to demonstrate greater intrinsic motivation, deriving satisfaction from the learning process itself. Self-perception also influences academic performance, with individuals' beliefs about their abilities shaping their efforts and persistence in academic tasks.

Confidence levels significantly affect students' willingness to take on academic challenges and pursue opportunities for growth. Gender differences in confidence and risk-taking behaviours are well-documented, with males often exhibiting higher levels of confidence and a greater propensity for risk-taking compared to females. In the academic context, confidence impacts students' participation in class discussions, willingness to ask questions, and engagement in challenging coursework. Male gender may be more likely to volunteer answers and take academic risks, potentially leading to higher achievement in certain subjects. Conversely, females' reluctance to take risks or speak up in class may hinder their academic performance, particularly in environments

where participation and assertiveness are valued (Onyedikachi, 2021).

Also access to educational resources and support systems is always significantly impact academic performance, with disparities in resource allocation often exacerbating existing inequalities. Gender biases may influence the distribution of resources and support, further perpetuating disparities in educational outcomes. For example, schools may allocate more funding and attention to traditionally male-dominated fields, neglecting the needs of female students in education (Ogunsola et al., 2021). It is essential to recognize that these factors do not operate in isolation but intersect in complex ways to shape students' academic experiences. Gender interacts with motivation, self-perception, confidence, and access to resources to influence learning styles and academic performance. Moreover, the intersectionality of gender with other identities, such as race, socioeconomic status, and cultural background, further complicates their performance. McCoy et al., (2022) submitted that students from marginalized groups may face compounded barriers to academic success, requiring targeted interventions and support systems to address their unique needs.

Family background characteristics, such as financial position, parental education levels, and the quality of the home environment, also have influence. According to Shing (2020), there is a correlation between students' academic performance, as measured by grades, test scores, and graduation rates, and the socioeconomic background of their families, namely the level of financial resources and parental education. Nevertheless, the impact of these contextual factors are often mitigated when children experience more parental support, have opportunities to participate in advanced placement and gifted programmes, or are enrolled in schools that have high expectations for academic success.

Health and well-being are also integral components of the whole picture. The detrimental effects of suboptimal diet, insufficient sleep, elevated stress levels, and mental health disorders on attention, motivation, and academic performance have been well documented in previous studies. Conversely, participation in physical exercise and the use of self-care strategies have been shown to enhance cognitive functioning, facilitate learning, and contribute to overall academic achievement (Jenkins, 2019).

Gender and Academic Performance

Research has been conducted over a significant period of time to examine the correlation between gender and academic achievement; it was observed that boys and girls generally exhibit comparable levels of achievement in aggregate, discernible disparities emerge when examining certain academic disciplines and educational levels. Throughout history for instance, Reilly (2019) said “there has been a tendency for males to exhibit higher levels of achievement in mathematics and sciences, while females have shown more proficiency in reading and writing he posits”. According to Loyalka (2019), females in the United States consistently get a greater number of bachelor's and master's degrees each year compared to their male counterparts. Nevertheless, there exists a disproportionate representation of men in academic disciplines such as engineering, computer science, and physics, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The influence of socioeconomic position was seen to mitigate some tendencies. For instance, research has shown a connection between family characteristics, such as the educational attainment of parents and the availability of resources within the home, and the observed disparities in academic performance across genders. Moreover, the perpetuation of gender stereotypes about abilities and job choices in society might inadvertently impact students' self-perceptions, course preferences, and academic achievements (McCoy & Byrne, 2022). Evidently, gender is only one of many factors that have an impact on academic performance. Additional elements to consider include cognitive ability, goals, learning settings, teacher and peer relationships, as well as physical and mental health (Evans, 2018). In general, it is advisable to refrain from making broad gender generalizations due to the intricate interplay of several factors that impact individual' learning results.

Gender Differences in Learning Styles

Understanding how gender influences learning styles is essential for creating inclusive educational environments and ensuring equitable opportunities for all learners. Over the

years, research has shed light on the cognitive, behavioural, and societal factors that contribute to gender differences in learning styles. One of the key factors contributing to gender differences in learning styles is cognitive variances. For instance, Voyer et al., (2017) suggested that males and females may exhibit divergent cognitive strengths and preferences. Their study has shown that males tend to outperform females in spatial tasks, while females often excelled in verbal tasks. These cognitive disparities can influence learning approaches, with males gravitating towards visual or hands-on learning methods, and females favouring verbal or collaborative learning experiences. Understanding these cognitive differences can help educators tailor their teaching strategies to accommodate diverse learning preferences and promote better learning outcomes for all students.

Behavioural patterns also play a significant role in shaping gender differences in learning styles. Boys and girls may demonstrate distinct behavioural tendencies in the classroom, which can impact their learning experiences. For example, Halpern et al., (2012) noted that boys are more likely to engage in competitive or active learning activities, whereas girls may prefer cooperative or reflective learning environments. These behavioural variances can influence classroom dynamics and teaching methodologies, highlighting the importance of creating inclusive learning spaces that cater to diverse learning behaviours.

Furthermore, societal expectations and gender stereotypes contribute to the perpetuation of gender differences in learning styles. From a young age, children are exposed to societal norms and expectations regarding gender roles and behaviours. These stereotypes can influence their self-perception, academic interests, and learning preferences. For instance, Eccles (2015) posited that boys may feel pressure to excel in subjects traditionally associated with masculinity, such as math or science, while girls may face expectations to prioritize nurturing or social skills over academic pursuits. It is essential to recognize that gender differences in learning styles are not static or uniform but intersect with other factors such as race, socioeconomic status, and cultural background.

Strategies for Addressing Gender Disparities

Gender disparities in learning styles have long been acknowledged within educational settings. Lauwo, (2018) submitted that these disparities can lead to unequal opportunities and outcomes for individuals based on their gender identity. Recognizing and addressing these differences is essential for creating inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of all students. One effective strategy for addressing gender disparities in learning styles is to adopt gender-inclusive teaching methods. Traditional teaching approaches may inadvertently favour certain learning styles over others, perpetuating gender biases. Gender-inclusive teaching methods aim to create a learning environment that accommodates a wide range of learning styles, regardless of gender.

One approach is to incorporate collaborative learning activities that encourage teamwork and communication. King et al., (2017) suggests that females tend to excel in collaborative settings, while males may thrive in competitive environments. By fostering collaboration, educators can create an inclusive space where all students can contribute and learn from one another, regardless of their gender. Furthermore, incorporating diverse teaching materials and examples can help address gender disparities in learning styles. Ismayilova & Klassen, (2019) posited that this not only promotes diversity but also helps students relate to the material in a meaningful way, regardless of their gender identity.

Another crucial aspect of addressing gender disparities in learning styles is promoting diversity inclusion within educational settings. Creating a supportive and inclusive environment where all students feel valued and respected is essential for fostering academic success. Educators can promote diversity and inclusion by actively challenging stereotypes and biases in the classroom (Eriksson et al., 2020). Policy interventions and institutional support also play a crucial role in addressing gender disparities in learning styles. Educational institutions must enact policies that promote gender equity and support initiatives aimed at creating inclusive learning environments. One policy intervention is the implementation of gender-inclusive curriculum guidelines that promote diversity and representation across all subject areas. Furthermore, educational institutions can provide training and professional development

opportunities for educators to help them recognize and address gender disparities in learning styles effectively (González-Pérez et al., 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Social constructivist theory is adopted for this study, and the efficacy of the theory is to examine how individuals actively construct their knowledge of gender through social interactions and contribute to the dynamics of academic performance. The social constructivist theory, which was introduced by prominent thinkers such as Fischer (2019), posits that meanings are not inherently found but rather formed, and that knowledge is built via social interactions. The central concept is that gender is not an inherently fixed biological characteristic but rather a socially constructed classification that exhibits variability across different cultures and undergoes transformation over the course of time via social mechanisms and interactions. According to Bonvillain (2020), gender is not an inherent quality but rather a construct that is actively shaped and reinforced by various social behaviours, language use, cultural symbols, and societal institutions in daily life.

One of the fundamental assumptions is that gender identities are shaped by contextual sociocultural norms rather than being inherent and universally determined by nature. Birindelli, Iannuzzi and Savioli (2019) asserted that gender plays a significant role in shaping socioeconomic opportunities and connections, leading to uneven outcomes. Gender essentialist ideologies are generated and perpetuated as epistemological frameworks via processes of social acquisition and transmission.

Critics contend that the theory fails to acknowledge the impact of biological factors on human behaviour. The approach in question poses a potential challenge in the form of cultural relativism, since it tends to see all ideologies as equally legitimate without engaging in an evaluation of their implications for social justice. According to Preece and Bullingham (2022), language may serve as a means to reinforce static gender tropes instead of challenging them. They further posited that promotion of gender stereotypes in Nigeria is influenced by cultural, religious, and linguistic factors, which shape distinct roles, behaviours, and self-perceptions that have an impact on schooling. According to Kiker (2019), private institutions have the potential to promote less rigorous socialisation of gender compared to public institutions, hence reinforcing patriarchal beliefs. The theory of social constructivism provides insight into the origins of gender differences in academic achievement, attributing it to societal constructs of masculinity and femininity rather than inherent individual characteristics.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: The Impact of Gender Discrimination on Progress/Completion Rate among Male and Female Students

		SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Gender discrimination influence expectations of different academic progress between males and female students	6 (1.5%)	50 (12.7%)	134 (34%)	202 (51.2%)	1.63	1.451
2	Gender discrimination leads to low self-esteem among male and female students	170 (43.1%)	196 (49.7%)	14 (3.6%)	14 (3.6%)	3.32	0.925
3	Gender discrimination makes some students to outperform the others in all disciplines at various levels of the educational ladder	176 (44.7%)	150 (38.1%)	20 (5.1%)	48 (12.2%)	3.15	1.182

4	Gender discrimination affects both male and female students' study paths	118 (29.9%	176 (44.7%	40 (10.2%)	60 (15.2%)	2.89	0.825
5	Gender discrimination affect both male and female students' career choices	232 (58.9%	134 (34%)	18 (4.6%)	10 (2.5%)	3.49	1.329
	Grand Mean = 2.88						

Source: Researcher's field work 2024

Table 2, shows that 1.5% of the respondents strongly agreed to "gender discrimination influence expectations of different academic progress between males and female students" 12.7% of the respondents agreed, 34% disagreed while 51.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 1.63, it shows that the respondents disagreed with the notion. The table also shows that 43.1% of the respondents strongly agreed to "gender discrimination leads to low self-esteem among male and female", 49.7% of the respondents agreed, 3.6% disagreed, while 3.6% strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 3.32, it shows that the respondents agreed with the notion that gender discrimination leads to low self-esteem among male and female students. Table also shows that 44.7% of the respondents strongly agreed to "gender discrimination makes some students to outperform the others in all disciplines at various levels of the educational ladder", 38.1% of the respondents agreed, 5.1% disagreed while 12.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 3.15, it can be confirmed that most of the respondents agreed with the notion that classes are not overcrowded in Lagos State. Also, the table shows that 29.9% of the respondents strongly agreed to "gender discrimination affects both male and female students' study paths" 44.7% of the respondents agreed, 10.2% of the respondents disagreed, while 15.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 2.89, it can be confirmed that most of the respondents agreed gender discrimination affects both male and female students' study paths. Table also shows that 58.9% of the respondents strongly agreed to "gender discrimination affects both male and female students' career choices", 34% of the respondents agreed, 4.6% of the respondents disagreed, while 2.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed to this. The mean score of 3.49, it can be confirmed that most of the respondents agreed that gender discrimination affects both male and female students' career choices.

Decision rule criterion: Where the overall mean is less than 2.50, it means that gender discrimination does not have an impact on progress/completion rate among male and female students. However, if it is above 2.50, it means that the impact of gender discrimination on progress/completion rate among male and female students. Therefore, from the results in table 6, the overall mean score for the impact of gender discrimination on progress/completion rate among male and female students is 2.89. Hence, it can be noted that gender discrimination has an impact on progress/completion rate among male and female students.

Table 2: Influence of Socio-economic Factors on Gender Performances in both Private and Public Universities

		SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	The parental level of education contribute to the students' performance in the school	8 (2%)	4 (1%)	270 (68.5%)	112 (28.4%)	1.76	1.219
2	The parental income affects students' performance in the school	216 (54.8%)	150 (38.1%)	8 (2%)	20 (5.1%)	3.42	1.105

3	Parental involvement in education have a contributory effect on students' performance in the school	232 (58.9%	134 (34%)	18 (4.6%)	10 (2.5%)	3.49	1.329
4	The accommodation of the students influenc3 their performance in the school	170 (43.1%)	196 (49.7%)	14 (3.6%)	14 (3.6%)	3.32	0.925
5	The health of the students is one of the determinants of their academic performance in the school	176 (44.7%)	150 (38.1%)	20 (5.1%)	48 (12.2%)	3.15	1.182
	Grand Mean = 3.02						

Source: Researcher's field work 2024

Table 2 shows that 2% of the respondents strongly agreed to "the parental level of education contribute to the students' performance in the school", 1% of the respondents agreed, 68.5% disagreed, while 28.4% strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 1.76, it shows that the parental level of education contribute to the students' performance in the school. Table shows that 54.8% of the respondents strongly agreed to "The parental income affects students' performance in the school3, 38.1% of the respondents agreed, 2% disagreed while 5.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 3.42, it can be confirmed that the parental income affects students' performance in the school. Also, the table shows that 58.9% of the respondents strongly agreed to "Parental involvement in education have a contributory effect on students' performance in the school", 34% of the respondents agreed, 4.6% of the respondents disagreed, while 2.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 3.49, it can be confirmed that most of the respondents agreed that parental involvement in education have a contributory effect on students' performance in the school. The table also shows that 43.1% of the respondents strongly agreed to "the accommodation of the students influence their performance in the school", 49.7% of the respondents agreed, 3.6% of the respondents disagreed, while 3.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed to this. The mean score of 3.32, it can be confirmed that the accommodation of the students influence their performance in the school. Table also shows that 44.7% of the respondents strongly agreed to "the health of the students is one of the determinants of their academic performance in the school", 44.7% of the respondents agreed, 38.1% of the respondents disagreed, while 12.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed to this. The mean score of 3.15, it can be confirmed that the health of the students is one of the determinants of their academic performance in the school.

Decision rule criterion: Where the overall mean is less than 2.50, it means that socio-economic effects have no effect on gender performance in both private and public universities. However, if it is above 2.50, it means that socio-economic factors have no effect on gender performance in both private and public universities. From the table, it shows the mean score is at 3.02. Hence, it can be noted that socio-economic factors has an influence on gender performances in both private and public universities.

Table 3: Teaching and Curriculum Contents' influence on Gender in Both Private and Public Universities

		SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	The teaching ensures that content of instruction is non-discriminatory to both gender	216 (54.8%)	150 (38.1%)	8 (2%)	20 (5.1%)	3.42	1.105
2	The content of instruction in the teaching does not favour one gender against the other.	232 (58.9%)	134 (34%)	18 (4.6%)	10 (2.5%)	3.49	1.329
3	The curriculum is organized in a way that one gender is not favour over the other in learning of tasks	240 (60.9%)	142 (36%)	4 (1%)	8 (2%)	3.55	1.019
4	The curriculum ensures both genders are given considerations for participation in classroom instruction.	202 (51.3%)	172 (43.7`%)	8 (2%)	12 (3.1%)	3.43	0.974
5	The curriculum suggests taking a more subtle, cultural position around gender	96 (24.4%)	182 (46.2%)	28 (7.1%)	86 (21.8%)	2.72	0.825
	Grand Mean = 3.32						

Source: Researcher's field work 2024

Table 3 shows that 54.8% of the respondents strongly agreed to "the teaching ensures that content of instruction is non-discriminator to both gender", 38.1% of the respondents agreed, 2% disagreed, while 5.1% strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 3.42, it shows that respondents agreed with the notion the teaching ensures that content of instruction is non-discriminatory to both genders. Table shows that 58.9% of the respondents strongly agreed to "the content of instruction in the teaching does not favour one gender against the other", 34% of the respondents agreed, 4.6% disagreed, while 2.5% strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 3.49, it shows that the content of instruction in the teaching does not favour one gender against the other.

Table also shows that 60.9% of the respondents strongly agreed to "the curriculum is organized in a way that one gender is not favoured over the other in learning of tasks", 36% of the respondents agreed, 1% disagreed while 2% of the respondents strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 3.55, it can be confirmed that the curriculum is organized in a way that one gender is not favoured over the other in learning of tasks. Also, the table shows that 51.3% of the respondents strongly agreed to "The curriculum ensures both genders are given considerations for participation in classroom", 43.7% of the respondents agreed, 2% of the respondents disagreed, while 3.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 3.43, it can be confirmed that most of the respondents agreed that the curriculum ensures both genders are given considerations for participation in classroom. Table also shows that 24.4% of the respondents strongly agreed to "the curriculum suggests taking a more subtle, cultural position around *gender"*, 46.2% of the respondents agreed, 7.1% of the respondents disagreed, while 21.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed to this. The mean score of 2.72 showed that the curriculum suggests taking a more subtle, cultural position around *gender.*

Decision rule criterion: Where the overall mean is less than 2.50, it means that teaching and curriculum contents do not ensure gender equality in both private and public universities. However, if it is above 2.50, it means that teaching and curriculum contents ensures gender equality in both private and public universities. Therefore, from the results in table 8, the overall mean score for teaching and curriculum contents' influence on gender equality in both private and public universities is

3.32. Hence, it can be noted that teaching and curriculum contents ensures gender equality in both private and public universities.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that gender discrimination has an impact on the progress and completion rate among male and female students in Nigerian universities. Respondents observed that gender discrimination leads to low self-esteem among male and female students. It makes some students to outperform the others in all disciplines at various levels of the educational ladder, and affects the engagement and study time of male and female students, and their career choices. This aligned with Onyedikachi (2021) who earlier found that gender discrimination tends to affects student growth in academics, and it influenced the expectations of different academic progresses between male and female students. Similarly, Ketchiwou and Dzansi (2024) found that gender discrimination tends to affect women's progress and skills development in organizations. Also, Nakpodia and James (2012) found that gender discrimination exists in the Nigerian school system is highly evident among female students.

The study found that socio-economic factors tend to affect gender performance in both private and public universities. The study showed that the parent level of income and involvement in education contributes to the students' performance in the school. It was also observed that the accommodation and health of students are determinants of academic performance in schools. This is also in line with the findings of Amao and Gbadamosi (2015) who discovered that gender, school location, and socioeconomic status of students and their parents alike have effects on students' performance in agricultural science as a subject. In the same vein, Alordiah et al. (2015) noted that school location and economic status tends to affect the gender performance of individuals in Mathematics. Kola and Taiwo (2013) noted that financial status, school location and parental factors tend to affect the gender performance of students in Physics.

The study further found that teaching and curriculum content has improved gender equality in private and public universities. Teaching ensures that content of instruction is non-discriminatory to both genders. It was found that the curriculum is organized in a way that one gender is not favoured over the other in learning of tasks, and it ensures both genders are given considerations for participation in classroom instruction. This is in consonance with the findings of Akpawu and Terhile (2014) who found that schools provide ways of educating students to promote gender equality in their teaching in the new millennium, using a gender-equitable approach to learning. Mustapha (2014) found that curriculum was implemented in way to identify whether the representation of females are biased or fair, that is to say, that the curriculum is not discriminatory. Similarly, Shakeshafi (2015) noted that the curriculum has been design to include both girls and boys into education, contrary to the previous decades.

Conclusion

In conclusion, gender discrimination significantly impacts the academic experiences of male and female students in Nigerian universities, leading to lower self-esteem, unequal performance, and career choices. While institutional policies generally support gender equality, government policies fall short in addressing gender disparities effectively. Teaching and curriculum content play a crucial role in promoting gender equality, and socio-economic factors also influence academic performance. To improve the academic experience for all students, there is a need for more effective government policies, continued support for gender equality in institutional practices, and addressing socio-economic factors that affect students' performance. By implementing the study recommendations, educational institutions and policymakers can work together to promote gender equality and create a more inclusive and supportive academic environment for all students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. There is need to review and strengthen policies aimed at promoting gender equality in education which should include the development of gender-responsive frameworks that will address disparities in educational institutions. Educational institutions should conduct regular awareness campaigns and sensitization programs to educate students, teachers, and administrators

about the importance of gender equality and the negative effects of discrimination in the educational sector.

2. Efforts should be made by all stakeholders to provide socio-economic support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including scholarships, grants, and other financial assistance, to ensure that they have equal opportunities for academic success.

3. Nigerian Universities should review their curriculum and teaching contents to ensure it is non-discriminatory and provides equal opportunities for both genders. This should include the incorporation of gender perspectives in teaching materials and methodologies.

References

Birhanu, M. N. (2019). The influence of university entrance examination results, gender and field of study on semester cumulative grade-point averages (CGPAs) of first year students: The case of Raya University.

Birindelli, G., Iannuzzi, A. P., & Savioli, M. (2019). The impact of women leaders on environmental performance: Evidence on gender diversity in banks. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 26(6), 1485-1499.

Bonvillain, N. (2020). Women and men: Cultural constructs of gender. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Eccles, J. S. (2015). Gendered socialization of STEM interests in the family. *International Journal of Gender, Science and Technology*, 7(2), 120-134.

Eriksson, K., Björnstjerna, M., & Vartanova, I. (2020). The relation between gender egalitarian values and gender differences in academic achievement. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 236.

González-Pérez, S., Mateos de Cabo, R., & Sáinz, M. (2020). Girls in STEM: Is it a female role-model thing?. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 2204.

Essel, H. B., Vlachopoulos, D., & Tachie-Menson, A. (2021). The relationship between the nomophobic levels of higher education students in Ghana and academic achievement. *Plos One*, 16(6), e0252880.

Evans, D., Borriello, G. A., & Field, A. P. (2018). A review of the academic and psychological impact of the transition to secondary education. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 1482.

Fischer, F. (2019). Knowledge politics and post-truth in climate denial: On the social construction of alternative facts. *Critical Policy Studies*, 13(2), 133-152.

Halpern, D. F., Eliot, L., Bigler, R. S., Fabes, R. A., Hanish, L. D., Hyde, J. S., ... & Martin, C.

L. (2012). The pseudoscience of single-sex schooling. *Science*, 333(6050), 1706-1707.

Hyde, J. S., Bigler, R. S., Joel, D., Tate, C. C., & van Anders, S. M. (2019). The future of sex and gender in psychology: Five challenges to the gender binary. *American Psychologist*, 74(2), 171.

Ismayilova, K., & Klassen, R. M. (2019). Research and teaching self-efficacy of university faculty: Relations with job satisfaction. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 98, 55-66.

Jenkins, E. K., Slemon, A., O'Flynn-Magee, K., & Mahy, J. (2019). Exploring the implications of a self-care assignment to foster undergraduate nursing student mental health: Findings from a survey research study. *Nurse Education Today*, 81, 13-18.

Keller, L., Preckel, F., Eccles, J. S., & Brunner, M. (2022). Top-performing math students in 82 countries: An integrative data analysis of gender differences in achievement, achievement profiles, and achievement motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 114(5), 966.

King, K., Porr, C., & Gaudine, A. (2017). Fostering academic success among English as an additional language nursing students using standardized patients. *Clinical Simulation in Nursing*, 13(10), 524-530.

Kiker, D. S., Callahan, J. S., & Kiker, M. B. (2019). Exploring the boundaries of servant leadership: A meta-analysis of the main and moderating effects of servant leadership on behavioral and affective outcomes. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 172-197.

Lauwo, S. (2018). Challenging masculinity in CSR disclosures: Silencing of women's voices in Tanzania's mining industry. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 149, 689-706.

Lindqvist, A., Sendén, M. G., & Renström, E. A. (2021). What is gender, anyway: a review of the options for operationalizing gender. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 12(4), 332-344.

Loyalka, P., Liu, O. L., Li, G., Chirikov, I., Kardanova, E., Gu, L., & Tognatta, N. (2019). Computer Science Skills Across China, India, Russia, and the United States. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(14), 6732-6736.

Pardo, A., Jovanovic, J., Dawson, S., Gašević, D., & Mirriahi, N. (2019). Using learning analytics to scale the provision of personalized feedback. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 50(1), 128-138.

Reilly, D., Neumann, D. L., & Andrews, G. (2019). Gender differences in reading and writing achievement: Evidence from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). *American Psychologist*, 74(4), 445.

Shing, L. S., & Rameli, M. R. M. (2020). The influence of self-regulation towards academic achievement in English among Malaysian upper primary students. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(5), 44-56

McCoy, S., Byrne, D., & O'Connor, P. (2022). Gender stereotyping in mothers' and teachers' perceptions of boys' and girls' mathematics performance in Ireland. *Oxford Review of Education*, 48(3), 341-363.

Ogunsola, O. A., Adelana, O. P., & Adewale, K. A. (2021). Effect of problem-based learning approach on students' academic performance in senior secondary Mathematics. *Journal of Science and Mathematics Letters*, 9(2), 75-85.

Onyedikachi, C. G. (2021). Influence of gender discrimination on students' academic achievement in senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis. *International Journal of Innovative Psychology & Social Development*, 9(4), 39-53.

Ozturk, M. B., Rumens, N., & Tatli, A. (2020). Age, sexuality and hegemonic masculinity: Exploring older gay men's masculinity practices at work. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 27(6), 1253-1268.

Pitan, O. S., & Muller, C. (2020). Students' self-perceived employability (SPE) Main effects and interactions of gender and field of study. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, 10(2), 355-368.

Preece, S., & Bullingham, R. (2022). Gender stereotypes: The impact upon perceived roles and practice of in-service teachers in physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*, 27(3), 259-271.

Wrigley-Asante, C., Ackah, C. G., & Frimpong, L. K. (2023). Gender differences in academic performance of students studying Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects at the University of Ghana. *SN Social Sciences*, 3(1), 12.

Vamvaka, V., Stoforos, C., Palaskas, T., & Botsaris, C. (2020). Attitude toward entrepreneurship, perceived behavioral control, and entrepreneurial intention: dimensionality, structural relationships, and gender differences. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 9(1), 1-26.

Voyer, D., Voyer, S., & Bryden, M. P. (2017). Magnitude of sex differences in spatial abilities: A meta-analysis and consideration of critical variables. *Psychological Bulletin*, 143(2), 198-222.