Exploring the Relationship Between Social Identity Factors and Academic Performance: Insights from Nigerian Colleges of Education

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of social identity factors—age, gender, and socioeconomic status—on the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State, Nigeria. Using a correlational design, data were collected from a purposive sample of 80 students, drawn from a population of 253 across two institutions. The Social Identity Group and Academic Performance Test (SIGAPT) and an academic test were used as instruments. Data analysis was conducted using the coefficient of determination for research questions and linear regression for hypothesis testing at a 0.05 significance level, with SPSS software. The findings revealed that age significantly influences academic performance (R^2=0.166), accounting for 16.6% of the variance. This underscores the importance of cognitive development and maturity associated with age in educational success. In contrast, gender and socioeconomic status showed no significant relationship with academic performance, suggesting that institutional equality measures may mitigate traditional disparities. This study contributes uniquely to the field by addressing the underexplored domain of higher education, particularly in Colleges of Education, which are critical for teacher preparation. The findings highlight the need for age-sensitive educational interventions and sustained equity-focused policies to optimize academic outcomes. These insights are valuable for educators and policymakers in fostering inclusive and effective learning environments.

Keywords: Social identity group; Academic performance; Age; Gender; Socioeconomic status; Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental driver of individual and national development, equipping individuals with the skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes necessary for societal contribution. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2014) underscores education as a tool of excellence, essential for fostering national growth, development, and social transformation. However, the realization of education's potential depends on understanding factors that influence academic performance, a key determinant of educational and societal progress. Among these factors, social identity—encompassing attributes like age, gender, and socioeconomic status (SES)—plays a pivotal role in shaping students' academic outcomes, especially in higher education. Recent studies have consistently

shown that these social identity factors significantly affect academic engagement and performance (Ali et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2024; Masud et al., 2019).

Social identity refers to an individual's perception of themselves as members of specific social groups, imbued with emotional and evaluative significance (Hoy, 2019). This concept, grounded in Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1974), posits that group memberships shape self-concept and behavior. While prior research has extensively investigated the impact of social identity in various educational settings, its implications for academic performance in Nigerian Colleges of Education remain underexplored (Veldman et al., 2019; Verkuyten et al., 2019). For instance, students from lower SES backgrounds may face compounded disadvantages, such as limited access to resources and parental involvement, further exacerbated by age or gender-based challenges (Cadenas & Kiehne, 2021). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing disparities in academic performance within higher education.

This study is novel in its examination of the intersectionality of social identity factors—how age, gender, and SES interact to influence academic outcomes in Colleges of Education. Emotional stability, linked to a positive sense of identity, is vital for academic achievement. Students with fragmented or negative identities may struggle academically, ultimately jeopardizing their future roles as educators. Conversely, fostering positive identity affiliations can enhance self-esteem and academic success. By focusing on these dynamics, this study contributes to both scholarly literature and practical efforts to improve educational equity in Nigeria.

Age is a particularly salient factor, as students' academic pressures and responsibilities often vary across life stages. Older students may experience different challenges, including balancing academic and personal responsibilities, which can impact performance (Atif, 2022). Gender also plays a significant role; while societal progress toward equity has reduced disparities, deeply rooted stereotypes still influence academic experiences, with male students often facing unique challenges compared to their female counterparts (Niromand et al., 2020; Vuong et al., 2019). Furthermore, SES remains a critical determinant of academic success, as lower SES is frequently associated with limited access to educational resources and support systems (Jikamshi et al., 2021; Masud et al., 2019).

Positive social identity has been shown to improve academic performance by fostering a sense of belonging and motivation. However, the intersection of negative identity factors, such as low SES and age-related challenges, can exacerbate academic struggles (Cadenas & Kiehne, 2021). Addressing these issues through targeted interventions is essential, particularly in Colleges of Education, where students are being prepared to shape future generations.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the critical role of academic performance in determining students' future opportunities, significant disparities persist among individuals from diverse social identity groups, including age, gender, and socioeconomic status (SES). Certain groups consistently outperform others, highlighting a persistent achievement gap that raises questions about the role of social identity in shaping students' academic motivation, beliefs, and outcomes. These disparities are particularly concerning in higher education settings such as Colleges of Education, which prepare future educators whose academic success is vital for societal advancement.

Many students struggle to balance the pressures associated with their social identity groups and academic responsibilities. For example, students may prioritize aligning with the perceived lifestyles of their peer groups over academic commitments, leading to negative behaviors such as excessive socializing, neglecting studies, and diminished self-esteem. This often results in lower academic performance. Students from lower SES backgrounds may also lack access to essential resources, such as books or tutoring, further exacerbating their academic struggles. Similarly, age and gender-based stereotypes can affect cognitive engagement and self-confidence, ultimately influencing academic outcomes.

The intersectionality of these social identity factors can compound challenges. For instance, older students from lower SES backgrounds may face additional burdens, including balancing familial or work obligations with academic demands. Such compounded disadvantages create barriers to equitable academic success and underscore the need for targeted interventions to address the unique needs of diverse student populations.

Personal observations and anecdotal evidence suggest that social identity issues—such as age, gender, and SES—directly impact students' physical, cognitive, and academic performance in Social Studies. However, despite their importance, there is limited empirical research examining the collective impact of these factors on academic outcomes in Nigerian Colleges of Education. Addressing this gap is essential to provide actionable insights for fostering equity in higher education.

Thus, this study investigates the relationships between age, gender, SES, and academic performance among Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State. By exploring these dynamics, the research aims to offer a nuanced understanding of how social identity factors influence academic achievement and inform strategies to improve educational outcomes in Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions.
1. What is the relationship between age and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education?
2. What is the relationship between gender and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education?
3. What is the relationship between socioeconomic status and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide this study:
1. There is no significant relationship between age and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education.
2. There is no significant relationship between gender and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education.
3. There is no significant relationship between socioeconomic status and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education.

Review of Related Literature

Social Identity Group

Social identity, as posited by Becker and Tausch (2014) and Haslam et al. (2022), is intricately tied to the ways individuals claim membership in specific social groups, adhering to group norms and values. This identification imbues individuals with a sense of belonging and influences their behavior and decision-making processes. Ikegami (2010) further emphasized that poor social identification can destabilize students' psychological well-being and mobility, though its direct impact on academic performance remains underexplored. Such gaps highlight the importance of understanding how social identity affects educational outcomes, especially in Nigerian higher education contexts.

Peer relationships and familial influence also play critical roles in academic success. Tabit et al. (2015) and Spears (2021) observed that female students often rely heavily on peer validation, which can either motivate or distract them from academic pursuits. Motivated peers and siblings create a supportive environment that fosters academic competition and collaboration (Zamiri & Esmaeili, 2024). However, educators and parents must guide students to avoid adopting detrimental behaviors through these interactions (Taylor, 2016).

Research further supports the notion that positive social identity promotes better academic outcomes. Manevse and Seker (2020) demonstrated that social identity positively correlates with verbal and academic performance, while Brown (2020) found that students aligned with constructive social groups develop higher self-esteem and resilience. These positive self-perceptions translate into improved problem-solving and academic performance. Therefore, fostering positive social identity is essential for enhancing academic achievement.

Age as a Social Identity Factor and Academic Performance

Age serves as a significant moderating factor in academic performance, influencing cognitive development and maturity. As students grow older, their developmental changes affect their capacity to perform academically (Wehlburg, 2011). Younger students often benefit from fewer external responsibilities, enabling greater academic focus. Conversely, older students may face challenges such as balancing work, family, and studies, which can hinder their performance (Atif, 2022).

Peer influence further amplifies the role of age. Olalekan (2016) and Zacher et al. (2019) found that students surrounded by peers with strong academic tendencies often emulate these behaviors, leading to improved performance. However, age groups characterized by a lack of focus on academics may negatively impact their members' performance. Social groups with a supportive and academically oriented ethos can drive positive outcomes, while those that neglect academics may create distractions and reduce motivation (Auberry, 2018; Charness & Chen, 2020).

Understanding the complexities of age as a social identity factor is crucial, as it directly influences students' self-identification and academic success. Encouraging positive peer influences within age groups can mitigate academic disparities and promote better outcomes.

Gender as a Social Identity Group and Academic Performance

Gender encompasses biological, physical, and behavioral distinctions between males and females. These differences are often culturally constructed, with societal

norms assigning specific roles to each gender (Jin et al., 1997). Historically, Nigerian females have faced educational disadvantages due to deeply ingrained stereotypes. For instance, careers in science, engineering, and architecture are often deemed masculine, whereas teaching and caregiving are associated with femininity (Vuletich et al., 2019).

These societal constructs continue to influence academic experiences. Female students may excel in academics due to increased encouragement toward gender equity initiatives, while male students may face unique challenges, such as the pressure to conform to traditional gender roles. The ABC of Women's Rights and Gender Equality (International Labour Organization, 2023) highlights the importance of distinguishing gender as a socially constructed concept distinct from biological sex, emphasizing the evolving societal perceptions that impact educational outcomes.

Examining how gender influences social identity in educational settings provides insight into addressing systemic inequities. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing inclusive policies that cater to the unique needs of both male and female students.

Socioeconomic Status as a Social Identity Group and Academic Performance

Socioeconomic status (SES) encompasses individuals' economic and social positioning based on income, education, and occupation (Veldman et al., 2019). SES significantly affects students' academic performance by influencing access to resources, parental involvement, and overall learning environments. Families from lower SES backgrounds often lack the financial capacity to support academic activities, creating barriers to student success (Bhat et al., 2016).

Research suggests that initial literacy and cognitive development are tied to the availability of resources such as books, tutoring, and technology. Children from high SES families are more likely to have access to these tools, though they may still face risks like disengagement or reduced motivation (Matschke et al., 2023; Ross, 2013). Conversely, low SES students often experience limitations in academic growth due to restricted access to resources (Stewart, 2019).

The role of parental education and socioeconomic background is equally critical. Higher parental education levels correlate with improved academic outcomes for children due to better support systems (Castellanos & Cole, 2015; Williams et al., 2022). However, addressing disparities caused by SES requires tailored interventions to provide equitable opportunities for all students.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Social Identity Theory (SIT) by Tajfel and Turner (2004) and Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977). SIT explains how individuals derive self-concept from group memberships, with these affiliations influencing their behaviors and outcomes. Students' alignment with identity groups can either enhance or diminish their academic engagement. For instance, groups fostering positive values promote academic success, while those emphasizing non-academic priorities may hinder performance (Tajfel, 1974).

Bandura's Social Learning Theory complements SIT by emphasizing the interaction between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. The theory highlights how students' environments, such as social identity groups, influence their behaviors. These interrelated factors, including age, gender, and SES, interact

dynamically to shape academic outcomes (Rumjaun & Narod, 2020). By examining these theoretical perspectives, this study seeks to understand the collective impact of social identity factors on student performance.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a correlational research design to explore the relationships between social identity factors—age, gender, and socioeconomic status (SES)—and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State, Nigeria. Correlational design was deemed appropriate because it allows for the examination of relationships between independent variables and a dependent variable without manipulating any factors. The approach aligns with the study's objective of understanding the extent to which social identity factors predict academic performance, focusing on their strength and direction (Trisatya & Absah, 2022). The study did not aim to establish causation but rather sought to provide insights into patterns and associations relevant to educational contexts.

Population and Sampling

The population for the study comprised all 253 Social Studies students enrolled in the two public Colleges of Education in Delta State: College of Education, Warri, and College of Education, Mosogar. These institutions were selected due to their representation of the region's geographic and demographic diversity, which enhances the generalizability of the findings (Aregbesola & van der Walt, 2024).

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 80 third-year Social Studies students. This sampling approach was chosen because it allowed the researchers to focus on participants most relevant to the study's objectives, particularly students with significant academic and social experiences. Third-year students were considered suitable as they are presumed to have had sufficient exposure to both academic coursework and the social dynamics of higher education, making them well-positioned to provide meaningful data (Suryathi et al., 2022). The sample size, representing 32% of the total population, was considered adequate to ensure statistical reliability while balancing resource constraints. Efforts were made to address potential biases inherent in purposive sampling by ensuring that the selected participants reflected a diverse demographic profile, including variation in age, gender, and SES (Omona, 2013; Sykes et al., 2018).

Instrumentation

Data collection was conducted using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled the Social Identity Group and Academic Performance Test (SIGAPT) and an academic achievement test. The SIGAPT consisted of two sections: Section A, which captured demographic information such as age, gender, and SES, and Section B, which measured perceptions of social identity and its influence on academic performance. Questions in Section B were structured using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (4 points) to Strongly Disagree (1 point).

The academic achievement test assessed students' knowledge of Social Studies through objective questions aligned with the curriculum. The test was designed to measure higher-order cognitive skills and was guided by a table of specifications that

ensured coverage of six cognitive domains. These domains were distributed as follows: Knowledge (38%), Comprehension (40%), Application (14%), Analysis (4%), Synthesis (2%), and Evaluation (2%). This structure was intended to provide a balanced and comprehensive assessment of academic performance, reflecting the complexity of learning in Social Studies (Bauer et al., 2021).

Validity and Reliability

The instruments underwent rigorous validation to ensure their appropriateness for the study. Content validity was established through expert reviews conducted by a professor in Social Studies and an expert in measurement and evaluation from Delta State University, Abraka. These experts evaluated the instruments for clarity, alignment with the study's objectives, and relevance to the research variables. Feedback from the reviews informed revisions that enhanced the instruments' precision and suitability.

Reliability testing was conducted through a pilot study involving 20 students from Micheal Cecilia Ibru College of Education. The results were analyzed using the Kuder-Richardson Formula 21 (KR-21), which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.91. This high reliability score indicated that the instruments were consistent in measuring the constructs of interest. The combination of content validation and reliability testing ensured that the data collection tools were robust and capable of producing trustworthy results (Campbell et al., 2020).

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was carefully planned and implemented to minimize biases and ensure the integrity of the results. Prior to data collection, research assistants were trained on the proper administration of the SIGAPT and academic achievement test. Participants were provided with informed consent forms that outlined the purpose of the study, guaranteed confidentiality, and emphasized their right to withdraw at any time. The instruments were administered during scheduled class sessions to reduce disruptions and to maximize response rates. Students were assured that their responses would remain anonymous, which was critical for encouraging honesty and minimizing social desirability bias (Brownell et al., 2013). The completed questionnaires and tests were collected immediately after administration to prevent data loss and ensure consistency.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS software, which provided advanced statistical capabilities for the study's objectives. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic data, providing insights into the distribution of age, gender, and SES among the participants. Inferential statistics were then applied to examine the relationships between social identity factors and academic performance.

The coefficient of determination was calculated to evaluate the extent to which the independent variables—age, gender, and SES—predicted academic performance. This measure provided a quantitative assessment of the proportion of variance in academic performance explained by social identity factors. Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to test the hypotheses, allowing for an examination of both the combined and individual effects of the independent variables on academic performance. The analyses were conducted at a 0.05 significance level, and confidence intervals were included to add rigor and precision to the interpretation of results. These

statistical tools were selected for their suitability in analyzing the complex relationships between multiple variables in correlational studies (O'Donnell & Oyserman, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between age and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education?

The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.407, suggesting a moderate positive relationship between age and academic performance. This indicates that as students' age increases, their academic performance tends to improve. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.166, meaning that 16.6% of the variation in academic performance could be explained by age. Table 1 summarizes these findings.

Table 1. Coefficient of Determination for the Relationship Between Age and Academic Performance

Variable	N	r	R^2	R^2 (%)	Decision
Age	80	0.407	0.166	16.6	Positive

Significance $P \leq 0.05$; R^2=coefficient of determination

The moderate positive relationship suggests that age, as a social identity factor, has a meaningful impact on students' academic performance. This could be attributed to greater maturity and improved cognitive development often associated with older students, as supported by Razak et al. (2018). However, the analysis also shows that 83.4% of the variance in academic performance is influenced by other factors, such as instructional methods, study habits, and peer interactions. These results align with findings in educational research that highlight age as an influential factor, particularly in contexts where academic rigor increases with levels of maturity.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between gender and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education?

The correlation analysis revealed a weak positive correlation coefficient (r) of 0.223 between gender and academic performance. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.050, indicating that only 5% of the variation in academic performance could be attributed to gender. This is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Coefficient of Determination for the Relationship Between Gender and Academic Performance

Variable	N	r	R^2	R^2 (%)	Decision
Gender	80	0.223	0.050	5.0	Positive

Significance $P \leq 0.05$; R^2=coefficient of determination

The results suggest that gender has a minimal influence on academic performance in this context. The remaining 95% of the variance in academic performance is likely explained by other factors, such as teaching quality, access to resources, or institutional policies. The weak relationship may reflect reduced gender disparities in educational access and outcomes due to societal progress and institutional efforts toward gender equity. This aligns with studies like those by Hassan and Sen (2018),

which attribute the limited influence of gender on academic outcomes to evolving educational practices and cultural shifts promoting equality.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education?

The correlation coefficient (r) for SES and academic performance was 0.256, indicating a weak positive relationship. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.065, meaning that only 6.5% of the variance in academic performance could be attributed to SES, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Coefficient of Determination for the Relationship Between SES and Academic Performance

Variable	N	r	R^2	R^2 (%)	Decision
Socioeconomic Status	80	0.256	0.065	6.5	Positive

Significance P≤0.05; R^2=coefficient of determination

These findings suggest that while SES contributes slightly to academic performance, other factors such as teacher support, engagement, and institutional quality play a more significant role. The weak relationship between SES and academic performance aligns with findings by Fateel et al. (2021), who emphasize the importance of mediating factors such as cultural and institutional environments. The relative homogeneity of the sample, where most students come from middle or lower socioeconomic backgrounds, may have limited the observed impact of SES, as noted by Rahman et al. (2023).

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between age and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education

Regression analysis produced an F-ratio of 7.641 with a p-value of 0.001, as shown in Table 4. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, confirming a significant relationship between age and academic performance. The results reinforce the importance of age as a social identity factor in shaping academic performance, possibly through enhanced maturity and cognitive abilities.

Table 4. Regression Analysis for the Relationship Between Age and Academic Performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	378.232	2	189.116	7.641	0.001	Positive
Residual	1905.756	77	24.750			
Total	2283.988	79				

Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between gender and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education

An F-ratio of 2.010 with a p-value of 0.141 was obtained, as shown in Table 5. Since the p-value exceeds 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected, indicating no sig-

nificant relationship between gender and academic performance. The lack of significance highlights the evolving equality in educational contexts, with gender having limited influence on academic outcomes.

Table 5. Regression Analysis for the Relationship Between Gender and Academic Performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	550.433	2	56.670	2.010	0.141	Negative
Residual	1733.555	77	28.190			
Total	2283.988	79				

Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between SES and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education

Regression analysis yielded an F-ratio of 2.690 with a p-value of 0.074, as shown in Table 6. Since the p-value exceeds 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected, indicating no significant relationship between SES and academic performance. The non-significant result may reflect the mediating roles of factors such as institutional quality and teacher engagement, as suggested by Fateel et al. (2021).

Table 6. Regression Analysis for the Relationship Between SES and Academic Performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	149.144	2	74.572	2.690	0.074	Negative
Residual	2134.843	77	27.725			
Total	2283.988	79				

Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

Discussion of the Findings

Age and Academic Performance

The study identified a significant positive relationship between age and academic performance among Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State. The correlation coefficient (r=0.407) and coefficient of determination (R2=0.166) indicate that 16.6% of the variance in academic performance can be attributed to age, as presented in Table 1. This finding highlights the critical role of cognitive and psychosocial development associated with age in shaping academic outcomes.

Developmental psychology offers a robust framework for interpreting this relationship. As individuals mature, their cognitive abilities, including metacognition, problem-solving, and critical thinking, become more advanced, which enhances their ability to engage with complex academic material (Kahando & Mungai, 2018). Older students also tend to exhibit greater self-regulation, persistence, and time management skills, which are essential for succeeding in higher education (Curtis, 2020). These traits may stem from life experiences that instill a sense of responsibility and resilience, allowing older students to approach their studies with focus and discipline.

Learning preferences and styles associated with different age groups may also contribute to this relationship. Research suggests that older students often prefer ap-

plication-based and structured learning approaches, which align well with the expectations of tertiary education (Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2021). Younger students, by contrast, may still be developing these preferences, potentially limiting their ability to excel in academically rigorous environments.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Rumjaun & Narod, 2020) provides additional insights into these findings. The theory emphasizes the interaction between personal characteristics, such as age, and environmental influences, such as teaching methods and institutional support, in shaping behavior and outcomes. Older students may better leverage institutional resources, such as academic counseling and library facilities, due to their enhanced problem-solving skills and confidence in seeking help. Moreover, they often serve as role models within their peer groups, fostering a culture of academic diligence that benefits others.

These findings align with prior research by Olalekan (2016), Zacher et al. (2019), and Charness and Chen (2020), which similarly identified age as a significant predictor of academic performance. However, the R2 value of 16.6% suggests that age, while important, is not the sole determinant of academic success. Other factors, such as teaching quality, socioeconomic background, and institutional resources, account for the remaining 83.4% of the variance.

Practical implications of this finding include the need for age-sensitive academic interventions. For younger students, mentorship programs led by older peers could provide valuable guidance and motivation. Structured workshops focusing on study skills and self-regulation may help younger students bridge developmental gaps. For older students, flexible learning schedules and curricula designed to accommodate nontraditional learners could enhance engagement and performance.

The study's reliance on a purposive sample limits the generalizability of these findings. Future research should expand the sample size and include diverse educational contexts to validate the observed age-academic performance relationship. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how age interacts with other social identity factors, such as gender or SES, over time.

Gender and Academic Performance

The study found no significant relationship between gender and academic performance, with a low correlation coefficient (r=0.223) and coefficient of determination (R2=0.050), as shown in Table 2. These results suggest that gender accounts for only 5% of the variance in academic performance, indicating minimal influence in this context.

This finding reflects broader trends in educational research, where systemic efforts to promote gender equity have mitigated traditional disparities in academic outcomes (Mustofa et al., 2021). Male and female students in Delta State Colleges of Education likely experience similar access to resources, support systems, and academic opportunities, reducing the potential for gender-based differences in performance.

Cultural shifts toward gender equality further contextualize this result. Historically, gender roles and societal expectations often constrained women's educational aspirations and participation (Vuletich et al., 2019). However, increased awareness and proactive measures, such as mentorship programs and scholarship opportunities for female students, have helped bridge the gender gap in higher education. These efforts align with the broader global push for gender equity, as highlighted by Anicha

et al. (2020), which emphasizes the role of institutions in fostering inclusive environments.

Contrary to the current findings, studies such as those by Jin et al. (1997) and Oyserman and Destin (2010) have reported significant gender disparities in academic performance. These discrepancies may stem from differences in the contexts or fields of study examined. For example, Jin et al. (1997) focus on STEM disciplines, which have historically been male-dominated, may explain the observed disparities, while Social Studies, the subject of this study, traditionally exhibits more gender balance.

Social Identity Theory provides a lens through which this result can be interpreted. Male and female students in this study may identify strongly with their academic environment rather than their gender group, diminishing the salience of gender as a distinguishing factor. Additionally, Bandura's Social Learning Theory suggests that shared institutional resources and peer support can equalize the influence of gender on academic performance.

Despite the lack of a significant relationship, institutions should not become complacent. Gender equity initiatives must be sustained and adapted to ensure that any emerging barriers to academic success are addressed. Programs promoting mentorship, especially in disciplines where gender disparities persist, can further support equitable outcomes. Future research should explore gender dynamics in specific academic fields or among subpopulations, such as first-generation college students, to identify areas where disparities may still exist.

Socioeconomic Status and Academic Performance

The study revealed no significant relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and academic performance, with a weak correlation coefficient (r=0.256) and coefficient of determination (R2=0.065), as shown in Table 3. This result suggests that SES accounts for only 6.5% of the variance in academic performance, with the remaining 93.5% influenced by other factors.

These findings challenge the traditional view that SES is a dominant determinant of academic outcomes. In the context of subsidized public education, where resources and opportunities are standardized, the influence of SES may be diminished (Jurado de los Santos et al., 2020). The relative homogeneity of the sample, where most students came from middle or lower socioeconomic backgrounds, may have further limited the observed impact of SES (Rahman et al., 2023).

However, the result contrasts with studies such as those by Matschke et al. (2023) and Veldman et al. (2019), which emphasize the significant role of SES in shaping academic success. Discrepancies may arise from differences in contextual factors, such as parental involvement, availability of extracurricular resources, or institutional quality. For instance, students from higher SES backgrounds may benefit from additional tutoring or enrichment activities, while public colleges aim to equalize opportunities across socioeconomic groups.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory offers insights into these findings. The theory suggests that environmental factors, such as institutional support and peer networks, can mitigate the effects of individual differences, including SES. In this study, institutional factors like quality teaching staff, financial aid programs, and supportive academic environments may have buffered the impact of SES on academic performance (Fateel et al., 2021).

The findings highlight the importance of maintaining robust institutional support systems to ensure equitable academic outcomes. Colleges should continue to invest in tutoring programs, counseling services, and financial aid to address any residual SES-related disparities. Additionally, targeted interventions, such as mentorship programs for students from low-income families, can further support academic success.

Future research should consider broader samples that include private institutions or rural settings to capture the full spectrum of SES influences on academic performance. Moreover, qualitative studies exploring students' lived experiences could provide deeper insights into the nuanced ways SES interacts with educational outcomes.

Broader Implications and Theoretical Context

The findings highlight the nuanced interplay of social identity factors—age, gender, and SES—in shaping academic performance. While age emerged as a significant predictor, gender and SES showed limited influence, underscoring the evolving landscape of equity in education. Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Social Identity Theory provide valuable frameworks for interpreting these results, emphasizing the role of personal attributes and environmental influences in shaping behavior and outcomes.

Educational institutions must leverage these insights to create inclusive environments that address the diverse needs of students. By implementing targeted interventions and sustaining equity-focused policies, colleges can foster academic success across all social identity groups.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study suggest several actionable strategies for improving academic outcomes through targeted institutional and policy interventions. Educational institutions should prioritize the development of age-sensitive interventions that address the unique needs and challenges faced by students across different age groups. For younger students, mentorship programs led by older peers can provide valuable guidance and foster a sense of belonging. These programs can help younger students develop time management, self-regulation, and study skills, which are often underdeveloped at earlier stages of cognitive and psychosocial maturity. Conversely, for older students, institutions can implement flexible learning schedules, such as evening classes or online modules, to accommodate their diverse responsibilities, including work and family commitments. Adult-focused pedagogical approaches that emphasize application-based learning and collaborative problem-solving can further enhance engagement and academic performance.

Promoting gender equity remains an essential area of focus. Although this study found no significant relationship between gender and academic performance, the absence of disparities should not lead to complacency. Institutions must continue implementing mentorship initiatives that address persistent gender imbalances in specific fields. For example, mentorship programs encouraging female students to enter traditionally male-dominated disciplines, such as STEM, can help dismantle stereotypes and inspire broader participation. Similarly, male students could benefit from representation and support in areas where they are underrepresented, such as teaching and

caregiving professions. By fostering an inclusive culture where all genders feel supported and valued, institutions can maintain and further progress toward gender equity in academic outcomes.

Enhancing support systems for students from lower socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds is equally critical. Institutions should invest in need-based financial aid programs, subsidized housing, and accessible academic resources, such as textbooks and technology. Partnerships with community organizations and private stakeholders could provide internships, job placements, and scholarships tailored to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Additionally, educators should employ differentiated instruction techniques that accommodate students' varying financial circumstances, such as offering low-cost or open-access learning materials and flexible deadlines for assignments.

Policymakers also play a vital role in sustaining these efforts. Increased public funding for subsidized colleges of education can improve facilities, expand access to support services, and enhance teaching quality. Regular assessments of institutional equity policies can help identify and address barriers that disproportionately affect students from marginalized social identity groups. By combining institutional strategies with robust policy support, these practical measures can foster a more equitable and effective educational environment for all students.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the nuanced relationships between social identity factors—age, gender, and socioeconomic status (SES)—and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State. The findings underscore the significant impact of age, revealing it as a critical social identity factor influencing academic success. Older students, with their advanced cognitive development and maturity, demonstrated greater academic engagement and performance, affirming the importance of age-sensitive interventions in educational planning and practice.

In contrast, the study found no significant relationship between gender and academic performance. This result reflects the success of equity-focused educational initiatives and cultural shifts toward gender equality, which have reduced traditional disparities in academic opportunities for male and female students. Similarly, no significant relationship was observed between SES and academic performance. This outcome may be attributed to the standardized resources and institutional support available in public colleges, which appear to buffer the potential disadvantages associated with lower SES.

These findings contribute to the broader understanding of social identity in education, emphasizing the importance of creating inclusive academic environments that address the diverse needs of students. The study calls for sustained efforts to design tailored interventions that maximize the strengths of various social identity groups. Educational institutions should implement age-sensitive programs, promote mentorship initiatives to reinforce gender equity, and enhance support systems for students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.

Beyond practical applications, this study also highlights the need for further research to explore the intersectionality of social identity factors and their combined effects on academic performance. By adopting more comprehensive methodologies and diverse samples, future studies can deepen the understanding of how social

identities shape educational outcomes and inform strategies for fostering equity and excellence in higher education.

This study reinforces the critical role of social identity in shaping academic success while underscoring the importance of equitable educational practices. Institutions and policymakers must work collaboratively to implement inclusive and adaptive strategies that empower all students to achieve their academic potential, regardless of age, gender, or socioeconomic background.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance educational outcomes and deepen the understanding of social identity factors in academic performance. These recommendations address practical applications for educational institutions, curriculum developers, and policymakers while identifying future research opportunities.

First, schools and educational stakeholders should implement structured sensitization programs to educate students about the potential negative impacts of certain social identity group behaviors on academic performance. These programs can focus on raising awareness of how excessive engagement in non-academic social identity activities can detract from academic priorities. Sensitization campaigns should be designed to resonate with students, using relatable examples and peer-led discussions to foster critical reflection on their social identities and academic goals.

Second, school authorities and educational policymakers should organize regular orientation sessions to educate students on the side effects of negative social identity group activities. These sessions should emphasize the importance of balancing social identity group affiliations with academic responsibilities, encouraging students to align their group behaviors with positive values that support learning and personal growth. Collaboration between educators, counselors, and parents in these orientation programs will ensure a holistic approach to student engagement.

Additionally, Social Studies textbook authors should integrate contemporary information on social identity factors into educational materials. Textbooks should include content on self-concept, self-esteem, gender identity, social class, and ethnicity to provide students with a nuanced understanding of social identity dynamics. Incorporating real-life case studies, interactive activities, and reflective exercises can make this content more relatable and impactful, helping students critically assess how their identities shape their interactions and achievements.

Future Implications for Research

While this study has contributed valuable insights into the role of social identity factors in academic performance, several gaps remain that warrant further exploration. Future research should address the limitations of this study by employing larger and more diverse sample sizes to improve generalizability. Comparative studies across different educational levels, such as secondary schools, universities, and vocational training institutes, can provide a broader perspective on how social identity factors influence academic outcomes in varying contexts.

Another critical area for future investigation involves exploring strategies to enhance students' self-concept and self-esteem, particularly within the framework of academic identity. Longitudinal studies tracking the development of self-concept over

time and its impact on academic performance would offer deeper insights into effective interventions. Furthermore, cross-cultural studies examining the interplay of social identity factors in different regions of the world could reveal how cultural, economic, and institutional contexts shape these dynamics.

By implementing these recommendations and pursuing targeted research initiatives can foster a more inclusive and effective educational environment. By addressing the complexities of social identity and its influence on academic performance, stakeholders can ensure that all students are empowered to achieve their full academic potential.

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APPENDIX

Table of Specification for "Social Identity Group and Academic Performance Test (SIGAPT).

Syllabus/ Scheme	Know-ledge	Compre-hension	Appli-cation	Analysis	*Synthesis*	Evaluation	Total
Meaning and objective of Social Studies	3	2	1	-	-	-	6
Family	2	1	1	-	-	-	4
Marriage	3	2	-	1	-		6
Origin of man	2	2	1	-	-	-	5
Social institutions	2	3	-	-	1	-	6
Man and his social environment	2	2	1	-	-	-	5
Man and his physical environment	1	2	1	-	-	1	5
Research method and statistics in Social Studies	2	2	-	1	-	-	5
Culture	1	2	1	-	-	-	4
Conflict and interdependence of man	1	2	1	-	-	-	4
Total	19	20	7	2	1	1	50
%	38%	40%	14%	4%	2%	2%	100%

Social Identity Group and Academic Performance Test (SIGAPT)

Research question 1: What is the relationship between unemployment anxiety and academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education with regard to their age?				
I am sure that the students below 25 years of age perform better academically than the older students above 25 years due to their less concern about unemployment anxiety.				
I believe that as the students grow older in age, their concern about unemployment anxiety become increased which may in turn affect their performance academically.				
I agree that age of students has a role to play in displaying unemployment anxiety.				
I am sure that students respond to unemployment anxiety more as they grow older.				
I believe that older students will encourage the younger students to give more attention to academic work when they are sure of employment opportunity after graduation				
Research question 2: What is the relationship between social identity group and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State with regard to gender?				
My positive self-image helps me to strive harder as a female.				
I perceived that most of the male students are involved in social vices as a result of their involvement with negative social identity group.				
I perceived that social identity group has negative influence over female students academic performance .				

I assumed that female students react to social identity group's influence than the male students.				
I believe that social identity group can disrupt male students academic commitment than the female students				
Research question 3: What is the relationship between social identity group and academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State as regard socioeconomic status?				
I care less about social identity group in school because my parents are wealthy and they can provide all my school need. .				
Students from low socioeconomic background are more concerned with social identity group activities because of what they will benefit from the group membership.				
I think that socioeconomic status is a determining factor of student's academic performance.				
I believe that students from good socioeconomic status will be able to avoid the influence of social identity group over their academic work.				
I know that students from low socioeconomic status can be distracted from academic work due to lack of provision by their parents.				