

GENDER DIFFERENCES AND CLASSROOM OUTCOMES OF UNDERGRADUATES IN THE INSTITUTES OF HIGHER LEARNING

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Abstract

This conceptual study undertakes an exploratory approach to investigate the role gender differences play in the classroom outcomes of undergraduates. It is based on the premise that despite the existence of replete studies on gender difference it has mostly been discussed about variables such as performance, career advancement or family business with little to none about classroom outcomes especially as it concerns undergraduates of institutions of higher learning. This study therefore relied on literature data in its inference-making and conclusion. Findings reveal that a major influence on the classroom outcomes of undergraduates in higher learning institutes is gender differences. The reality is that education in modern times has evolved, thus demanding a holistic understanding, and a direct approach to addressing gender roles in classroom outcomes, as it remains foundational to both individual growth and academic effectiveness of undergraduates.

Keywords: Classroom Outcome, Gender Differences, Institute Higher Learning, Personalised Learning, Undergraduates.

BACKGROUND STUDY

Education is often seen as the primary indicator of a country's development. In addition to transmitting and preserving knowledge from one generation to the next, it also creates new opportunities for modernisation that preserves attitudes, and values and improves capabilities, beliefs, culture, traditions, and customs (Mahmood & Husain, 2022). The formative years of an individual's life are critical to the learning process because it is during this time that the groundwork for various facets of life is established. Therefore, as education is regarded as a vital instrument for improving a community's status, there have been initiatives to enhance access to it.

Academic achievement is influenced by a multitude of demographic factors, according to research, including age, gender, caste, family, environment, parents' educational background and occupation, socioeconomic status, residential background, religion, school types and administration, and teacher experiences.

Ultimately, among these demographic characteristics, the gender variable is the most significant. Gender refers to the socially constructed differences between men and women, according to Mahmood and Husain (2022). The significant effects that socially constructed differences between men and women have on people's lives have been seen by academics, policymakers, and practitioners, and these observations seem to agree.

Research conducted globally with students enrolled in varying educational programmes revealed a noteworthy disparity in academic achievement across genders. Several studies (Dayioglu & Turut, 2007; Khwaileh & Zaza, 2010) indicate that female students outperform male students in academic subjects. Ghazvini and Khajehpour (2011) further argued that the application of cognition in the academic setting varies by gender. Women tend to be more adaptive when learning in a new environment. However, Wangu (2014) discovered that in studies involving Kenyan secondary school students, men passed more often than girls. Nonetheless, Goni et al. (2015) examined a sample of college-bound students and found no evidence of a gender difference in academic achievement.

Additionally, studies have demonstrated that gender imbalance in the classroom during the teaching and learning process is influenced by instructional design. Teachers might unwittingly adopt gender-segregating routines and practices. According to Anandan (2013) and Knupfer (1997), teachers continue to assign students to groups based on gender, have them recite lines, and give out prizes based on gender. Similar claims have been made about how teachers typically treat males and females differently. It is stated that women are complimented on their good looks, manners, and neat work.

In the classroom, men talk more than women, according to Khwaileh and Zaza (2010). Even the values of an individual or community seem to be connected to it. When a woman calls out a teacher, for instance, she may receive criticism and be informed that it is inappropriate behaviour, but when a man calls out a teacher, it is assumed to be normal. It is clear from this that men should be more assertive and women should be more submissive, which could cause women to perform poorly and fail. Gender differences are glaringly apparent in the majority of African nations where patriarchy still rules many facets of society.

There have been differing findings from studies comparing achievements based on gender. Research by Suneetha and Mayuri (2001) found that women fared better academically than men did, indicating that gender has a big impact on academic success and classroom outcomes. Raychaudhuri, Debnath, Sen, and Majumder (2010) looked at the classroom results of elementary school students on yearly exams. According to Grewal's (2014) research, there exists a noteworthy association between a student's gender and their performance in the classroom. However, despite research suggesting that the use of artificial intelligence apparatuses may be the key to gender differences in academic performances among higher learning institutions, there is no appreciable difference in the academic achievement of males and females in South-Eastern Nigeria (Nwadinobi, Etele, Ezebube, Monyei & Ukpere, 2024). Research on the relationship between achievement and location revealed mixed results.

Teenage classroom outcomes and reasoning abilities were studied about stress, gender, geography, and self-concept by Gakhar and Aseema (2004). The findings indicate a positive correlation between academic achievement and students' location, as urban pupils tend to have greater exposure than their rural counterparts. In the urban areas of Varanasi city, Singh (2011) examined and contrasted the classroom outcomes of primary school pupils.

The results of the study demonstrated that Varanasi's urban areas had greater levels of achievement than the city's rural regions. Moreover, students at private schools reported greater learning outcomes than those in public schools. Private educational institutions may have more committed employees and stricter management than any other sort of organisation. In Sub-Saharan Africa, women have a poor social position (Parajuli & Thapa, 2017). This is because power and resources are distributed differently between genders in the household and society.

Due to a variety of factors, including poverty, ill health, traditional views towards women, and limited access to information, technology, and productive resources, women in this region have not, on the whole, participated fully in development initiatives. Starting at birth, discrimination against women occurs. Such discrimination is encouraged by political environments as well as religious, cultural, and traditional views.

Consequently, there is a significant gender gap in every area of national growth. Promoting education for all has been expertly handled by the government of these communities. Furthermore, the education sector, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, has made it a mission to increase female access to and opportunities in education under several national development programs. Several international organisations, such as the Department for International Development (DFID), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the World Bank, the Government of Finland, and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), have awarded grants to the government in this region to promote gender equality in a variety of areas of national life.

Under this framework, the region's government and a few non-governmental organisations have been focusing on making sure that primary and secondary education is fully free, equitable, and of high quality, to achieve relevant and successful classroom outcomes for all genders as of 2030, by Sustainable Development Goals (UNO, 2015). Notwithstanding the considerable efforts made by the government and non-governmental sectors to ensure gender equality in education, there remains a notable discrepancy in the academic performance and achievements of males and girls. Studies on the subject of gender variations in pupils' classroom outcomes are extremely rare.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, several gender differences in education-related questions remain mostly unanswered, such as how well pupils perform academically in tests. Does a person's gender affect their academic success? Are there any differences in the academic performance of pupils attending public versus private schools? Do the environments in which children grow up and attend school significantly influence the disparities in their academic performance according to gender? Thus, the goal of this research is to examine how gender variations affect undergraduate student's academic performance in higher education institutions.

Study Objective

Analyse the role of gender differences in classroom outcomes of undergraduates in higher learning institutes.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Foundation

The Theory of Personalised Learning

According to Hughey (2020), students who need customised attention in terms of instruction pace and style are considered to be enrolled in customised learning. Depending on the individual needs of every student, it could be required to modify the learning objectives, instructional strategies, and course content. Furthermore, learning activities are often relevant to the student's interests, self-initiated, and meaningful. A person-centred approach, flexible learning, demonstrated competency mastery and an individual's holistic perspective are traits shared by the majority of empirical works that explain personalised learning (Hughey, 2020). The self-determination theory and Gardner's (2011) theory of multiple intelligences are generally recognised as the theoretical underpinnings and sources of personalisation. Peng, Ma, and Spector (2019) establish a connection between Dewey, Socrates, and Confucius and personalised learning. The two forms of intellect that are most frequently observed in educational settings—linguistics and logic—are not the only ones that exist, according to multiple intelligence theory.

Alternatively, they can connect the curriculum to eight different intelligences. One humanistic viewpoint that provides a foundation for comprehending an individual's motivations and personalities is self-determination theory. There have also been claims that the psychological norms of relatedness, competence, and autonomy serve as the foundation for this idea. The instructional strategy used to effectively apply personalised learning is directly tied to the two philosophies that were previously described. By combining the two, a layer of personal development that takes into account both the perspective of data-informed decision-making and an individual's vision and judgement can be created.

One hopes that personalised learning can help close the all-too-common widening classroom outcomes gaps and address undergraduate disengagement. Personalised learning aims to develop an intrinsic drive for success by involving individuals/students and utilising their aptitudes, interests, and talents. People who work together to create objectives and reach conclusions feel more in control. Actively engaging with one's surroundings to foster people's innate curiosity is a crucial component of effective tailored learning.

This learning paradigm's activities should promote personal growth in addition to being significant and relevant. To engage and empower individuals in this learning process, a strong emphasis on their skills is required. The ubiquitous usage of videos in teaching sessions covering almost any topic is a perfect example of how paradigms are evolving and learning opportunities are growing. To improve their knowledge, skills, and competencies, students can employ a range of learning settings and technologies in the twenty-first century, according to Detlor, Booker, Serenko, and Julien (2012). The learning chances in post-secondary education can be improved by using web-based resources including YouTube sessions, ChatGPT, podcasts, and product and service reviews, amongst others. Various digital tools and incentives are used, depending on the individual's demographics and needs. Personalised learning can

take place in a variety of contexts and methods. There are now more outlets and possibilities available to satisfy a person's needs because of technology. Education has undergone a significant transformation thanks to the ability to customise instruction in flexible settings. The convergence and expansion of information technology, according to Hughey (2020), also removes obstacles to knowledge and information sharing as well as the learning boundary.

People with cognitive and physical disabilities have unique possibilities thanks to digitalised curricula and technology applications, which enable them to realise their full potential. To further broaden people's perspectives, technology offers a framework through which they can access opportunities for global learning. Higher education staff can use technology to support personalised courses that provide them with a virtual classroom. The primary objective of this type of individualised learning may be to support cross-cultural groups in their interactions and cognitive processes. Like other approaches, personalised learning aims to foster a deeper awareness of other people's viewpoints, which in turn improves employability, performance, critical thinking, communication, and tolerance for diversity.

Conceptual Understanding

Gender Difference

Individual beliefs, attitudes, and traditional viewpoints about men and women contribute to the inclination towards gender differences. When terms like gender difference, gender conflict, or sexual orientation are discussed, the predisposition is typically about the issue of female victims of employment segregation (Monyei, Ezinwa, Agbaeze, Ukpere, Ugbam & Ndu, 2023). Gender disparities are widespread in competitive high-positioning, even though equal opportunities for men and women have been mandated in numerous nations. According to Ghazvini and Khajehpour (2011), the primary factor influencing the gender pay disparity is the fact that males are still largely favoured for high-profile jobs regardless of gender. In a large informational index of U.S. corporations, Parajuli and Thapa (2017) discovered that 2.5 per cent of the five most attractively compensated executives are women. What is likely to happen to women who quit their employment is an important yet fascinating subject related to gender differences in the workplace.

The idea is that the various employment transferability, which slopes between women, is the reason for the astounding outcomes. According to Khwaileh and Zaza (2010), factors that influence this possibility include opportunities for progress, the development of human capital, and income earnings. There are two broad categories into which the different attempts to make sense of this reality might be placed. The main explanation is that gender differences exist in capabilities or preferences, and consequently in word-related self-selection. The second explanation points out that discrimination occurs in the workplace when men and women with similar preferences and capabilities are treated differently.

Nonetheless, according to Parajuli & Thapa (2017), most international campaigns promoting a women-friendly workplace make it clear that discrimination based on gender or sex refers to how individuals are treated in their place of employment. It is considered sex or gender discrimination if a person has been denied employment, had their contract terminated, or has

been mistreated at work because of their gender. To be treated unfairly based on one's gender is to be in gender inequality. According to Detlor et al. (2012), there is typically a gender gap that affects women in the workplace.

Classroom Outcome

As the endpoint of every learning activity within an institution of higher learning, either individually or collectively, classroom outcomes form the cornerstone of that entity or offer increased stability and long-term benefits. The phrase "classroom outcome" has many definitions. It describes how well a person meets the requirements of their studies and learning objectives and relates to the extent of achievement and satisfaction of the tasks that comprise their academic career. Sometimes, performance and outcomes in the classroom might be contradicted or confused; performance is determined by the outcomes that a person obtains, while the outcome is the amount of work that is done (Monyei et al., 2023; Pradhan & Jena, 2017).

Classroom outcomes serve as a gauge of an individual's capacity to meet learning objectives in a way that promotes the aims of the learning process. Ramdani, Marliani, and Rahman (2019) assert that these activities also involve physical and mental endeavours, such as cognitive tasks and problem-solving. Additionally, classroom outcomes are assessed based on a culture and conduct that is comprehensive and in line with learning objectives, as opposed to concentrating only on results. While there are some parallels between other concepts and classroom outcomes, Koopmans, Bernards, Hildebrandt, De Vet, and Van der Beek (2012) contend that they should be distinguished by making an effort to establish their boundaries. The way an individual meets the requirements of the activities they accomplish is what determines their routines, grades, and productivity. Those concepts are also covered by this definition.

Furthermore, as stated by Muda, Rafiki, and Harahap (2014), each individual's classroom outcomes are the result of completing all of the learning tasks that have been assigned to them. Through this process, all objectives, experiences, abilities, and consciousness are converted into outputs, which is the flawless completion of learning at the required level. However, it is also claimed that motivation, effort, experience, competence, and learning goals-oriented endeavours are to blame (Muda et al., 2014). Classroom outcomes are thus defined as a person's ability to successfully and efficiently accomplish tasks and assignments allocated to them to satisfy the requirements placed on them by the institution's learning guidelines. By combining these—which are specified for each class/level and its duties—the higher education institution's ultimate goal is achieved.

While bearing in mind how long it will take to finish. Abusalma (2021) emphasised the importance of academic tasks and their relevance in achieving the learning objectives, notwithstanding the related costs. The effectiveness of any educational institution can be evaluated by comparing the ratio of inputs to outputs, the results to the techniques used, and how well it makes use of the resources available for the least amount of money.

METHODOLOGY

This present study adopts the conceptual analysis of the literature to elucidate gender differences and their influence on the classroom outcomes of undergraduates in institutes of higher learning. Taking into account the propositions of the personalized learning theory; the potential repercussions of gender on learning outcomes, also determining the constituents for the persistent problems with learning outcomes with regards to gender disparity. Furthermore, an overview of the global classroom outcomes of undergraduates in institutions of learning was ascertained. These gave significant insights into the study's inference-making and formed the basis for its findings.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study employs a narrative analysis approach. Drawing from prior empirical research findings and the conceptual overview of the study, it is demonstrated that gender differences play a significant role in undergraduate learning outcomes in higher education institutions. To counter this, however, Mueller and Wallace's (1996) study on job happiness in the legal sector found a negative correlation between gender differences and job satisfaction outlooks. Proving the unhappiness of female lawyers with their jobs, especially considering the limited prospects for advancement in the sector. On the other hand, research by Khwaileh & Zaza (2010), Dayioglu & Turut (2007), and Orabi (2007) has discovered a significant relationship between gender and student performance in the classroom, with females outperforming males in this area. Goni and colleagues (2015) posited that there is no noteworthy gender disparity in students' academic achievement, but Wangu (2014) maintained that male students outperformed female students.

Additionally, Thabo, Fako, Stoffel, Moeng, and Ntonghanwah (2009) looked at the gender disparities in terms of satisfaction with the type of work that University staff members at the University of Botswana perform. The poll indicates that there are gender disparities in the degree of job satisfaction between male and female employees, especially when it comes to age, marital status, citizenship, and years of service at the organisation. Additionally, Grewal (2014) examined how the academic achievement of adolescents affects employability in family-owned businesses. It was discovered that academic achievements significantly impact on employment opportunities of adolescents, especially in family-owned establishments.

Another study by Collins and Ponniah (2014) examined the relationship between gender and retention factors in the workplace and discovered a favourable correlation, especially regarding demographic traits. Stressing that important employee voluntary turnover has several negative effects on retention, including decreased profitability and productivity. Women reported significantly higher levels of job satisfaction, while Clark (1997), using panel data, found that the gender gap in job satisfaction was influenced by age, education level, and kind of occupation. Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2000) found that, out of the 21 countries they examined, the US, UK, and Switzerland were the only countries where gender disparities in work satisfaction were significant and influenced by well-being.

CONCLUSION

The results of previous research showing that women outperform men seem thought-provoking, even if patriarchy predominates in Sub-Saharan African societies. Such symptoms and outcomes could be the result of numerous factors. For instance, several government programs, non-governmental organisations, and civil societies have worked over the past thirty years to raise women's awareness of a variety of topics, including education, skill development, career advancement, women's rights, and women's independence. Along with the growing emergence of gender sensitisation and development awareness in recent times, policymakers, bureaucrats, consultants, practitioners, and social scientists worldwide have turned their attention to the application of the gender perspective in policymaking, implementation, and evaluation as well as in conducting social research.

In the classroom, women perform better academically than men because they can study at home and school, have more time after school to complete assignments or tasks assigned by lecturers, and are more likely than men to participate in a variety of extracurricular activities. Academics are no different, as several local, national, and worldwide initiatives are underway to provide equitable access to high-quality education for underprivileged, marginalised, and minority groups. Gender differences and undergraduate learning outcomes in higher learning institutions are examined in this context using data from the existing literature. The study found that while most undergraduates—male and female—performed admirably and produced remarkable outcomes in areas like assertiveness, task completion, attendance, and continuous assessments, there were some circumstances in which female students outperformed their male counterparts. Consequently, gender has an impact on undergraduates' academic achievement.

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