

## Social Identity Groups and the Academic Performance of Social Studies Students in Colleges of Education in Delta State, Nigeria

Akporhwarho Stella Ochuko

Ogheneakoke E. Clifford

Osakwe Emmanuel

*Social Science Education Department, Delta State University Abraka.*

*Corresponding Author: stellamajority@gmail.com.*

### ABSTRACT

The study investigated social identity groups and the academic performance of social studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State. Three null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study. This research is a correlational study design. The population comprised all the Social Studies students in the two Colleges of Education in Delta State. The researchers adopted the purposive sampling technique using eighty (80) year three (3) Social Studies students as the sample. A self-developed questionnaire titled Social Identity Groups and Academic Performance Test (SIGAPT) was used for data collection. The instrument was based on the four-point scale of measurement weighed as Strongly Agreed (SA) (4 points), Agree (A) (3 points), Disagree (D) (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (SD) (1 point). The correlation coefficient of determination and linear and multiple regression were used to analyse data using the SPSS software. The findings revealed that social identity can influence students' academic performance, while age, gender, and socioeconomic status showed no significant relationship. It is concluded that there is a positive relationship between social identity groups, as an individual's self-concept of belonging to a social group, with emotional and valuation significance and students' academic performance. Consequently, proper sensitization of social identity group behaviour to control or curb students' engagement in social identity group activities is preferred.

**Keywords:** Social identity group, academic performance, age, gender and socioeconomic status.

### INTRODUCTION

The indispensability of communication for educational development and for the general identity among Nigerians is incontestable, considering the ethno-linguistic

nature of our society. Education is acquiring relevant and worthwhile skills, attitudes, values, and competencies to make one useful to oneself, family, community, and the nation at large. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN 2014), education is an excellent instrument for national development and social change. Using education as an excellent instrument for the desired national development, the government intends to make Nigeria a “free, democratic, just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant, a great and dynamic economy and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens” (FRN, 2014).

However, these advantages of education may be eroded if students have poor social identity groups they belong. Social identity is an individual's knowledge of belonging to a social group, with some emotional and valuation significance (Watson 2021). An individual's social identity indicates who they are in terms of the groups to which they belong. Social identity is the portion of an individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership in a relevant social group (Edem, 2005). The concept of social agents influencing self-identity is not new and is commonly known as social identity.

Hoy (2021) highlights social identities (age, ability, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and religion), which influence students' academic performance. William (2021), Edem and Ekpenyong (2021) explain that self-concept is what a person knows about social relationships. In education, whether at the primary or secondary level, the relationships between and within age, peers, ethnicity, religion, race, and gender are considered social relationships (Mogan, 2020). A positive social identity enables an individual to improve in every activity within and outside the school environment. A positive social identity group may affect the academic performance of a student positively. Therefore, individuals should be guided to choose the right social identity group. A positive social identity may enable an individual to improve academically (Menevse and Seker, 2020).

Age as a social identity is a social identity that changes the life of an individual. At each stage of the life, everyone passes through prejudices and privileges based on age. Young people often face stereotypes that they are naïve and incompetent, which may influence their academic outcomes.

Gender is another social identity of an identification as a male or a female. Gender attributes (masculine and feminine) are socially constructed and often ascribed to people based on their sex at birth. There is a behavioural difference between male and female students in social identity, which may influence their academic performance. Sexual orientation as a social identity refers to the physical and romantic attraction of people. Common sexual orientations include opposite-sex attraction, same-sex attraction, and bisexuality (attracted to both sexes), but there are many more.

Similarly, Edem (2017) argues that socioeconomic status as social identity primarily relates to wealth and a range of other social and cultural markers associated with people of different social classes (such as job type, food preferences, and values). There are three socioeconomic groups: working class, middle class, and upper class. Ovie (2020) notes that age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and location influence academic performance.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the importance of academic performance in students' future success, many students from diverse social identity groups (age, gender, and socioeconomic status) continue to experience significant disparities in educational achievement. This persistent achievement gap raises concerns about the role of social identity groups in shaping academic motivation, beliefs, and outcomes. Many students struggle to cope with their studies; they seem to be concerned about their future wellbeing and attempt to measure the living standards of their peer groups or mates. They lack courage about future employment opportunities which causes them to develop negative behaviour towards academic work such as going to clubs and hanging out with social identity groups. They try to abandon academic work because they want to be identified as members of social identity groups and enjoy the benefits of such groups at the expense of their academic work, which affects their academic performance. When students face social identity group problems, their physical, cognitive, and academic performance in Social Studies at the Colleges of Education may be affected. Personal experience has also shown that socioeconomic status, age of students, and gender, should be studied in this study. Hence, can social identity groups influence the academic performance of Social Studies students?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- i. There is no significant relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education about the age of the students.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education concerning gender.
- iii. There is no significant relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education concerning socioeconomic status.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The study hinges on the Social Learning Theory as propounded by Bandura (1977) and the Social Identity Theory propounded by Tajfel and Turner (1979). Tajfel and Turner identify the social identity group as a collection of people who categorized themselves as belonging to the social categories and internalized as social identity, defining attributes to define and evaluate themselves when talking about the group members. Tajfel (1974) and Turner (1986) view individuals and students based on their self-concepts formed based on membership in a social identity group (gender, age, or other groups). By so doing, the members of the in-group tend to protect the interests of the group and their interests. The attributes that capture and evaluate intergroup similarities and intergroup differences seem to drive or push some of the students crazy and tend to overlook or even abandon their academic work, which can lead to low academic performance on the part of the students involved with the social identity group activities (Tajfel and Turner 1979).

Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory assumes that human behaviour is a function of the person and the environment, a position presented in the formula  $B = f(P + E)$ . By the term person here, Bandura essentially means cognitive factors. By the term environment, he means the social models and the contingencies pressing upon the individual. According to Bandura, the three elements (the person, the behaviour and the environmental situations) are highly interrelated, and each can influence the other.

## **Social Identity Group**

Becker and Tausch (2014) ascertain that social identity is concerned with measures of social identification that enable individuals to identify themselves as members of a social group with the readiness to abide by the social in-group rules and regulations, the group's interests and characteristics. Ikegami (2010), Becker and Tausch (2014) observe a relationship between low levels of social identification and students' well-being, mobility and beliefs. They have not clearly said whether social identification and incompatibility have any significant relationship with academic performance. Menevse and Seker (2020) observe that social identity is positively related to some components of success (academic or verbal performance). According to them, a positive social identity group influences better scores. They concluded that there is interaction between social identity and academic performance. As the student gets involved with a better and positive social identity group, he may want to maintain a positive self-image. A student tends to transfer a positive self-image into challenging issues or tasks; hence, the desire to succeed is higher and the willingness to confront

issues is transferred into problem-solving and reading, thereby leading to a higher academic performance.

### **Age as a Social Identity Group**

Age is an independent variable that affects the academic performance of undergraduates. Cognitive development and maturity (associated with age) are necessary for the worthwhile performance of students. As the age of an individual increases, it affects the developmental changes. It also affects every area of human performance (Wehlburg, 2011).

Olalekan (2016) observes that the age of the peer group has a lot of influence on students. Evidence abounds that students feel comfortable and relaxed among fellow students (peer group). A brilliant student surrounded by dull friends would lose interest in learning. Similarly, students of the same age range feel better and more comfortable mingling. They are attracted to one another as a way of social identification, which in turn influence their academic performance. On the other hand, a peer group for study would stimulate interest in learning. Olalekan (2016) states that the nature of the age group determines its impact on the motivation and achievements of its members. He further suggests that one group may hurt its members while another may have positive effect on its members.

The question at this point is: how many young people know to choose a group that impacts them positively? However, the attractive nature, morals and achievement motivate its members. If the group atmosphere is warm, understanding, and supportive, the group influences task performance and achievement positively. A hostile group frustrates the members' growth and academic achievement. Auberry (2018) also notes that imitation of behaviours in a group occurs when a person acts in a way that is likely to be followed by the rest of the group.

### **Gender as a Social Identity Group**

Gender is the range of physical, biological, mental, and behavioural characteristics differentiating between the feminine and masculine (female and male) populations. The importance of examining achievement concerning gender is based primarily on the socio-cultural differences between girls and boys. Some vocations and professions have been regarded as men's (engineering, arts and crafts, agriculture, among others.), while others are regarded as women's (catering, typing and nursing). The typical African society has shown that invincible rules provide what is feminine and what is masculine (Kendra, 2021).

Hence, science-oriented subjects in most cultures are defined as masculine. The historical background of education in Nigeria serves to give a picture of how tradition and culture have placed women and girls at a disadvantage and restricted them to a narrow range of occupations and careers. Parents assign tasks like car washing, grass cutting, bulb fixing, and climbing ladders to the boys. House chores like dishwashing, cooking and cleaning are assigned to the girls. In a nutshell, what are regarded as complex and difficult tasks are allocated to boys, whereas girls are expected to handle the relatively easy and less demanding tasks. As a result of this, the larger African society tends to see girls as weaker than boys. Consequently, an average girl, especially in Northern Nigeria, goes to school with these fixed stereotypes (Vuletich *et al.*, 2019).

Gender has captured the interest of educators in Nigeria, especially gender equity. The International Labour Organization (2000) defines gender as the socially constructed differences and relations between males and females. According to the document, "gender" is not interchangeable with "sex", which refers exclusively to the biological differences between male and female. How male students see the tertiary institution differs from how female students see and join groups in the school setting.

Siblings and peer groups influence the academic performance of a student. According to Tabit (2016), female students are easily influenced by their peers, whom they sometimes trust more than their parents or teachers. Well-motivated siblings and peers have healthy academic competition in their home environment; they visit each other, study at home, and exchange ideas. While most children pick up positive skills through everyday interactions with adults and peers, educators and parents must reinforce this casual learning with direct and indirect instruction (Edem, 2020). We must also recognise when and where children pick up behaviours that may harm their development and safety (Taylor, 2016).

### **Socioeconomic Status as a Social Identity Group**

Socioeconomic status may be described as the blend of economic and sociological measures of an individual's work experience, and the economic and social position of an individual or family with others on the premise of income, educational level, and occupational status. For the investigation of a family's socioeconomic status, the household income, education of the earner, and occupation may be checked, and in addition, the consolidated wage is contrasted with that of the person, when their attributes are assessed. Socioeconomic status is partitioned into three categories (high socioeconomic status, middle socioeconomic status, and low socioeconomic status) a family or an individual may fall into. When putting a family or an individual into one of these classifications, any or the majority of the three variables, which include

income, education, and occupation, can be investigated and evaluated. The economic status of the parents can contribute significantly to determining the academic performance of their offspring. Mushtag *et al.* (2016) highlight the impact of socioeconomic factors such as family background, father education, mother education, number of children interested in education, facilities provided by the government for children's education, and decisions about a child's future.

A recent wave of literature has established an important link between the socioeconomic status of a family and the learning environment available to students (Veldman, *et al.* (2019). It is alleged that the parents' socioeconomic status contributes significantly to students' success in education. Families from low socioeconomic status groups are less likely to have the economic resources or time available to provide adequate academic support to their children. Existing literature in this field suggests that children's initial reading capability is largely associated with their home literacy surroundings, the number of books owned, and parent suffering (Mushtag *et al.*, 2016). However, parents from low socioeconomic status groups may be powerless to meet the expense of resources such as books, computers, or tutors to produce this helpful literacy environment (Stewart, 2019).

The economic status, education level and reading habit of parents are linked to one another. Moreover, parental education and reading habits influence their kids' learning (Williams *et al.*, 2020). However, sometimes the educational performance of these students is more questionable and controversial because the children do not follow their parents' training and do not get a good career. In addition, children with high socioeconomic status are more at risk of depletion, grades, and math problems than children from low-status families (Ross, 2013).

## **Research Procedure**

This study adopted a correlational research design which examined the relationship between social identity groups (age, gender, socioeconomic status) and academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State. The population comprised all Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State. There are 253 Social Studies students in the two (2) public Colleges of Education in Delta State - College of Education, Warri and College of Education, Mosogar. The researchers adopted the purposive sampling technique. Eighty (80) students from the two (2) public Colleges of Education in Delta State were used as the sample,

The instrument for data collection was a researchers' developed questionnaire titled "Social Identity Groups and Academic Performance Test (SIGAPT). The questionnaire contained two sections, A and B respectively. Section A required

demographic information from correspondents, school, gender, age, gender and socioeconomic status of students. The instrument was based on the four-point scale of measurement weighed as Strongly Agreed (SA) (4 points), Agree (A) (3 points), Disagree (D) (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (SD) (1 point). The questionnaire and the Social Studies achievement test question papers were administered to the Social Studies students in the College of Education, Warri and College of Education, Mosogar during the academic session. The correlation, coefficient of determination, linear and multiple regression were used in testing all hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance using the SPSS software for data analysis.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1:** Coefficient of Determination of the relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students Delta State Colleges of Education about age

Variable	N	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> %	Decision
Age, and Academic Performance	80	.407	.166	16.6	Positive

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

Table 1 shows that the correlation coefficient (R-value) of .407 indicates a positive relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State about age. The analysis also shows the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.407 was .166. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) and the contribution indicate that 16.6% of social identity groups and age accounted for Social Studies students' academic performance in Delta State. This is an indication that 83.4% of the variation in Social Studies students' academic performance in Delta State is attributed to other factors other than social identity groups and the age.

**Table 2:** Coefficient of Determination of the relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students Delta State Colleges of Education about the gender

Variable	N	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> %	Decision
Gender, and Academic Performance	80	.223	.050	.5	Positive

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

Table 2 showed correlation coefficient (R-value) of .223 indicating positive relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State about gender. The analysis



also showed that the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.223 was .050. This coefficient of determination and the percentage amount of contribution indicate that 0.5% of social identity groups and the gender accounted for Social Studies students' academic performance in Delta State. It is an indication that 99.5% of the variation in Social Studies students' academic performance in Delta State is attributed to other factors other than social identity groups and the gender.

**Table 3:** Coefficient of Determination of the relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education concerning socioeconomic status.

Variable	N	R	$R^2$	$R^2\%$	Decision
Socioeconomic status and Academic Performance	80	.256	.065	6.5	Positive

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

Table 3 showed correlation coefficient (R-value) of .256 indicating positive relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State about socioeconomic status. The analysis also showed that the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.256 was .065. This coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of .065 and the percentage amount of contribution indicate that 6.5% of social identity groups and the socioeconomic status accounted for Social Studies students' academic performance in Delta State. This is an indication that 93.5% of the variation in Social Studies students' academic performance in Delta State is attributed to other factors other than social identity groups and the socioeconomic status.

**Table 4:** Regression Analysis of Social Identity Groups and the Academic Performance of Social Studies Students in Delta State Colleges of Education about the age of the students

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
1 Regression	378.232	2	189.116			
Residual	1905.756	77	24.750	7.641	.001 <sup>b</sup>	Positive
Total	2283.988	79				

Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

Table 4 shows that an F-ratio of 7.641, with an associated exact probability value of 0.00 was obtained. This probability value of 0.00 was compared with 0.05 set for testing the hypothesis. It was found significant because 0.00 is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges

of Education in Delta State as concerns the age of the students was rejected. It, therefore, concludes that there is a significant relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State concerning the age of the students

**Table 5:** Regression Analysis of Social Identity Groups and Academic Performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education concerning gender

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
1	Regression	550.433	2	56.670			
	Residual	1733.555	77	28.190	2.010	.141 <sup>b</sup>	Negative
	Total	2283.988	79				

Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

Table 5 shows that an F-ratio of 2.010 with an associated probability value of 0.14 was obtained. This probability value of 0.41 was compared with 0.05 set as the level of significance for testing the hypothesis and it was found not significant because 0.14 is greater than to 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between social identity group and academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education about gender was accepted. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State concerning gender

**Table 6:** Regression Analysis of social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education about socioeconomic status

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
1	Regression	149.144	2	74.572			
	Residual	2134.843	77	27.725	2.690	.074 <sup>b</sup>	Negative
	Total	2283.988	79				

Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

Table 6 shows that an F-ratio of 2.690 with an associated probability value of 0.07 was obtained. This probability value of 0.07 was compared with 0.05 set as the level of significance for testing the hypothesis and it was found significant because 0.07 is greater than to 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between social identity group and academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State Colleges of Education about socioeconomic status was accepted. The researchers, therefore, conclude that there is no significant relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State about the socioeconomic status of the students.

The findings reported a significant relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State about the age of the students. This means that cognitive development and maturity (associated with age) are necessary for the worthwhile performance of students. As the age of an individual increases it affects the developmental changes. Hence, the that there is a significant relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State about the age of students. Manski (2013), Olalekan (2016), Bankole and Ogunsakin (2016) report similar results, which showed that age has a strong relationship that can influence the academic performance of students.

The findings also revealed no significant relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State about gender. Males and females are responsive to social identity groups as the feeling is mutual. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance concerning the gender of students. The findings are in contrast with Tabit (2016) and Taylor (2016), Vuletich *et al.* (2019), Morgan (2020) and Kendra (2021).

The finding also showed that there is no significant relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State about the socioeconomic status of the students' parents. This means that the socioeconomic status of the parents may not play any significant role in determining the academic performance of students in Colleges of Education. However, the finding indicates that there is no significant relationship between social identity groups and the academic performance of Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in Delta State about the socioeconomic status of the students' parents. On the contrary, Mushtag *et al.* (2016), Stewart (2019), Williams *et al.* (2020) report that socioeconomic status of the parents can play a significant role in determining the academic performance of their offspring.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study concluded that there is a positive relationship between social identity group behaviour, as individual's self-concept of belonging to a social group, with some emotional and valuation significance; social identity may have effect on the students' academic performance. However, the study proved that age, gender and socioeconomic status may moderate social identity and influence the students' academic performance significantly.

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Proper sensitization on the negative effects of social identity group behaviour to control or curb students' engagement in social identity group activities.
- ii. Good orientation by the school authority and other educational stakeholders to educate students on the negative effect of social identity groups activities.

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