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Gender Differences in Prize-Winning and Academic Performance among Students of Osun State University, Nigeria, 2018-2026

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Abstract

This study examined gender differences in prize-winning and academic performance among students at Osun State University, Nigeria, from the 2018/2019 to 2025/2026 academic sessions. Specifically, the study determined the gender distribution of prize winners at convocation ceremonies, compared the academic performance of male and female students at the Ifetedo Campus, and examined the perceptions of teaching methods and academic support in relation to academic performance at Ifetedo Campus. The study adopted an ex-post facto descriptive survey research design. Sixty (60) students were selected through stratified sampling from the Ifetedo Campus. Data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation, paired-samples t-test and independent-samples t-test at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that female students accounted for 67 (68.4%) of the 98 prize awards, compared to 31 (31.6%) for male students, and the difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Female students led in 6 of the 7 sessions reviewed. Furthermore, female students at Ifetedo Campus had a higher mean CGPA ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.58$) than male students ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.52$), and the difference was statistically significant ($t(58) = 2.89$, $p = .005$). Teaching methods ($M = 3.45$) and academic support ($M = 3.37$) were perceived by respondents as relating to academic performance, both above the criterion mean of 2.50. The study concluded that female students recorded a larger share of the Overall Best Student awards in 6 of the 7 sessions reviewed, and female students in the surveyed sample at Ifetedo Campus recorded a higher mean CGPA than male students. The total number of graduands per session was available, but the breakdown of graduands by gender was not provided; therefore, a prize-winning rate by gender could not be calculated. It was recommended that Ifetedo Campus introduce targeted tutorial groups and peer mentoring for male students with CGPA below 3.21, and that the University publish the number of graduands by gender in future convocation brochures so that prize-winning rates by gender can be calculated.

Keywords: Gender Differences, Academic Performance, Prize-Winning, Academic Achievement, CGPA, Social Cognitive Theory, Social Role Theory

Introduction

The issue of gender differences in academic achievement has become relevant in tertiary institutions. Studies in different contexts have shown that female students frequently outperform their male counterparts across various disciplines. For instance, Naylor and Smith (2001) reported a significant gender gap in favour of women at a British university. Brown (2010) attributes the superior performance of female students, in part, to their greater academic focus, whereas male students devote more time to social media and other non-academic activities. In the contemporary knowledge-driven, corporate-oriented world, tertiary education credentials have become increasingly valuable in shaping employment opportunities and socioeconomic success (Nab et al., 2025). Thus, students' academic performance remains a major concern for educators, researchers, policymakers, and educational institutions because it is an important indicator of the effectiveness of the educational system and of students' academic performance (Tadese et al., 2022). Academic performance refers to the extent to which students achieve educational goals and acquire the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to address real-life challenges (Matalka & Dwakat, 2022). Studies have identified gender differences in academic achievement, with females increasingly outperforming males at several levels of education. Reports by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (2012) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019) indicate consistent advances in female academic achievement. Studies have documented superior academic performance among female students in various educational settings (Fergusson, 1997; Delaney & Devereux, 2020).

However, this global pattern must be read against the Nigerian context, where female participation in tertiary education is lower than that of males. Oludayo et al. (2019) found that admissions to all tertiary institutions showed that male admissions were higher than female admissions between 2010 and 2015. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024), in the Statistical Report on Women and Men in Nigeria in 2022, reported that female enrolment in Nigerian universities was 43.46% in the 2019/2020 academic session and 44.49% in

the 2020/2021 academic session. The implication is that in Nigeria, female academic superiority, where it occurs, is achieved from a smaller enrolment base. This growing gender gap has attracted academic and policy attention due to its potential implications for workforce composition, productivity, and sustainable development. While earlier educational patterns often favoured male students, recent trends show increasing female dominance in tertiary education enrolment, completion rates, and academic excellence. In countries in Europe and North America, women record higher grades, earn more academic credits, and graduate at higher rates than men (Vettoretto & Triventi, 2026; Antoni et al., 2026).

Several factors have been identified as contributors to gender differences in academic performance. Cultural norms and traditional gender roles have historically influenced educational opportunities and expectations. In many African societies, girls were traditionally socialised toward domestic responsibilities, while boys were encouraged to engage in activities that fostered scientific and practical skills (du Plessis, 2025; Yusuf & Agbonifo, 2025; Yusuf, 2026). However, changing social realities, increased advocacy for female education, and evolving perceptions of gender roles have altered this pattern, leading to improved educational outcomes among females. Research suggests that home environment, parental support, social expectations, and motivation significantly shape students' academic achievements and educational aspirations (Liem et al., 2025; Yadav & Yadav, 2025). In addition to sociocultural influences, individual and institutional factors affect students' academic performance (Wang & Chen, 2025). These include academic self-perception, attitude toward school, teacher support, future orientation, motivation, family involvement, and socioeconomic conditions.

Although some studies have reported male academic performance in specific disciplines and educational levels, evidence points to female students' dominance in academic performance and achievements in higher education. In Nigeria, a body of work has examined the relationship between gender and academic performance, using CGPA and degree class as outcomes. Oguguo et al. (2020) reported higher mean scores for female students in accounting, while other Nigerian studies have reported mixed results by discipline and level, with female high performance more pronounced in Arts, Social Sciences and Education than in some Science and Engineering programmes. What these studies lack is a systematic examination of the highest level of academic excellence, namely convocation prize-winning. Prize-winning is distinct from CGPA or degree class because it identifies the very top performers recognised publicly by the university. This is the focus of this study.

At Osun State University, female students' dominance in prize-winning is evident. During the 16th Convocation in September 2026, for instance, only 2 out of the 13 First-Class graduates in the Accounting Department were male, while 11 were female. The study examines the factors driving this trend at the Ifetedo Campus of the Osun State University by investigating the gender distribution of convocation prize winners between the 2018/2019 and 2025/2026 academic sessions.

Objectives of the Study

The study examined the gender distribution of prize winners at the Ifetedo Campus of Osun State University (UNIOSUN) in Osogbo during convocation ceremonies from 2018/2019 to 2025/2026. It compared the academic performance of female and male students and examined students' perceptions of teaching methods and academic support in relation to academic performance at the Ifetedo Campus of UNIOSUN.

Research Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant difference in the number of male and female prize winners from 2018/2019 to 2025/2026 at Osun State University, Ifetedo Campus.

H02: There is no significant difference in students' academic performance based on gender at Osun State University, Ifetedo Campus.

Gender and Academic Achievement in Higher Education

Education is widely recognised as a catalyst for national development, economic growth, and social transformation. Through education, individuals acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for personal advancement and societal progress. According to Battle and Lewis (2002), education plays a crucial role in human capital development and significantly influences individuals' life opportunities and overall well-being. Consequently, academic performance has become an important indicator of the effectiveness of educational systems and the extent to which students achieve educational goals. Furthermore, academic performance serves as a measure of students' mastery of learning outcomes, problem-solving abilities, and overall academic competence. It provides educational institutions, parents, and policymakers with a basis for assessing educational quality and identifying areas that require intervention. Academic success also creates opportunities for scholarships, awards, recognition, and career advancement, thereby motivating students to excel (ProctorEdu, 2024). Similarly, Saxton (2000) argues that achievement and productivity contribute to economic development by generating opportunities for growth and prosperity.

Within this context, gender has emerged as a significant factor in discussions of educational achievement. Earlier studies conducted by Braddock (1981) and Simelane (1996) established that gender influences educational outcomes. However, scholarly concerns regarding gender and education have evolved. While research in the 1970s focused primarily on girls' educational disadvantages, attention shifted in the 1990s toward boys' underachievement relative to girls (Frosh et al., 2002). Contemporary studies investigate the factors behind the rising academic performance of female students. Evidence from different regions demonstrates that female students often outperform their male counterparts academically, although the pattern is not uniform across contexts. In Africa, several university-based studies have reported better performance by females. In Nigeria, Okewole et al. (2020) found that female undergraduates in the sciences at Redeemer's University, Ede, outperformed their male counterparts across several programmes over five years. Similarly, Abioye et al. (2019) reported that a higher percentage of female engineering students graduated with First Class degrees at Covenant University, Ota, between 2006 and 2017, while the proportion of female students who graduated with Third Class degrees fell to almost zero over the same period. Alatise et al. (2024) also found female students leading in academic performance at Fountain University, Osogbo, based on final results of graduating students over four years, while Adelakun (2017) reported that a larger percentage of female students (48.1%) than male students were in Second Class Upper Division in the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Ibadan, with a significant difference in overall academic performance in favour of females ($t = 6.049$, $p = 0.015$).

In Pakistan, Hassan and Hassan (2016) also reported higher achievement among female students. By contrast, evidence from Ethiopia shows the reverse pattern in some institutions. Eshetu et al. (2024) found that male students attained significantly higher CGPAs and national exit examination scores than female students at Wollo University, with female students underrepresented among top-achieving groups. Similarly, Kimball (1989) and Wilberg and Lynn (1999) reported that female students generally excel in language-related competencies such as reading, writing, and verbal communication. These findings have stimulated scholarly interest in understanding the factors responsible for gender differences in academic achievement and the increasing academic success of female students in higher education.

Psychological Determinants of Gender Differences in Academic Achievement

A substantial body of literature attributes gender differences in academic achievement to psychological factors that influence students' engagement with learning (Demalata et al., 2024). Among the most frequently examined factors are academic self-concept, academic self-efficacy, future orientation, motivation, and self-regulation. Academic self-concept refers to individuals' perceptions and beliefs about their abilities and competencies. Julien (2025) defines self-concept as the sum of beliefs individuals hold about themselves, including their abilities, characteristics, and relationships. It refers to the collection of knowledge and attitudes individuals hold about their personal attributes (Aboalrob et al., 2025). Closely related to this concept is academic self-efficacy, defined as an individual's confidence in their ability to perform academic tasks successfully (Guo et al., 2025). Academic self-perception refers to students' subjective evaluations of their

academic abilities (Alshowkan et al., 2026). Such perceptions influence students' academic choices, persistence, and engagement with learning activities.

Empirical studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between self-perception and academic achievement. Rubab et al. (2025) and Yangyang et al. (2025) found that students with stronger academic self-concepts tend to perform better academically because they are more confident and engaged in learning activities. However, findings regarding gender differences remain inconclusive. Kaedabi-Donkor et al. (2025) reported no significant relationship between self-concept and academic performance among male and female college students, concluding that gender did not significantly influence this relationship. Future orientation and goal valuation have also been identified as important predictors of academic achievement. According to La Rosa et al. (2026), students may pursue either mastery goals, which focus on learning and personal improvement, or performance goals, which emphasise demonstrating competence relative to others. Wahid and Khasanah (2026) aver that mastery-oriented students define success in terms of self-development, whereas performance-oriented students evaluate success in terms of competitive achievement. Closely linked to these concepts is future orientation, which concerns students' perceptions of and aspirations for their future educational and occupational outcomes. Abbas et al. (2025) found that students with strong future aspirations tend to exhibit higher levels of academic motivation and achievement because they perceive education as a pathway to future success.

Motivation and self-regulation have also received considerable attention within educational research (Jaya et al., 2025). To them, motivation refers to the direction and intensity of effort toward achieving desired goals. Highly motivated students are more likely to remain committed to academic tasks and demonstrate persistence in the face of challenges. Kamberi (2025) found a significant positive relationship between motivation and academic performance among Saudi Arabian dental students. Motivation is a crucial determinant of educational success. Self-regulation refers to learners' ability to monitor, control, and evaluate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours in pursuit of academic goals (Jaya et al., 2025). Self-regulation is an active and constructive process through which learners take responsibility for managing their own learning. Consistent with this perspective. Motivated students tend to exhibit stronger self-regulatory behaviours, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning processes. Nevertheless, studies examining gender differences in motivation have produced mixed findings. According to Avcı et al. (2025), female students demonstrate higher levels of intrinsic motivation than male students. However, Al Shuaili (2025) found lower levels of extrinsic motivation among female students. Despite these differences, available evidence suggests that motivation, self-regulation, goal orientation, and self-perception remain important mechanisms through which gender differences in academic achievement may emerge.

Institutional and School-Related Determinants of Gender Differences in Academic Achievement

Beyond psychological factors, institutional and school-related experiences play a significant role in shaping students' academic outcomes. Among the most frequently examined institutional determinants are students' attitudes towards school and teachers' influence. Attitude towards school refers to students' beliefs, feelings, and behavioural tendencies toward their learning environment. Collins et al. (2026) define attitude as a relatively enduring combination of beliefs, emotions, and behavioural tendencies directed toward situations or objects. It is the feelings, behaviours, and interactions students have with their educational environment. Positive attitudes towards school are generally associated with increased engagement and improved academic outcomes. Empirical studies support this relationship. Positive attitudes towards school significantly contribute to academic achievement (Akomodi, 2025), while students with lower academic achievement often exhibit negative attitudes toward school and learning (Erdogdu & Erdogdu, 2025). Studies have shown that girls generally have more positive attitudes towards school than boys, as they tend to be more motivated and engaged in educational activities (Stenberg et al., 2025). In contrast, male students often demonstrate lower levels of commitment to school-related tasks. Such differences may partly explain the growing academic advantage observed among female students.

Teachers' attitudes and support constitute another important institutional factor affecting academic performance. Teachers play a central role in shaping students' learning experiences, motivation, self-

confidence, and academic behaviour. According to Patil (2025), positive teacher-student relationships foster supportive learning environments that encourage student success. Through encouragement, constructive feedback, appreciation, and active listening, teachers can promote greater student engagement and academic achievement. The significance of teacher support has been documented in several studies. In Nigeria, Adam and Nuhu (2025) found a strong positive relationship between teachers' attitudes and students' academic performance. These findings reinforce the view that supportive educational environments are essential for fostering academic success among students.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that a single factor cannot explain gender differences in academic achievement. Rather, they result from the interaction between psychological factors such as self-perception, goal orientation, motivation, and self-regulation and institutional factors, including school attitudes and teacher support. While existing studies have established gender differences in educational outcomes, limited research has examined how these factors influence academic excellence and prize-winning within Nigerian universities. Consequently, there remains a need for institution-specific studies such as the present investigation of academic performance among male and female students at Osun State University.

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory

The SCT was developed by Bandura (1986). The theory posits that human behaviour results from reciprocal interactions among personal factors, behavioural patterns, and environmental influences. According to Bandura (1966), individuals actively shape and are shaped by their social environments through cognitive, self-regulatory, and motivational processes. Central to the theory is the concept of self-efficacy. Individuals with stronger self-efficacy are more likely to persist in challenging situations, use effective learning strategies, and attain higher levels of achievement. Self-efficacy influences students' academic motivation, goal setting, and persistence in learning activities. Students who believe in their academic capabilities are more likely to invest effort and overcome obstacles during the learning process. Zimmerman (2000) extends SCT, emphasising self-regulated learning, explaining that successful students actively monitor, evaluate, and adjust their learning strategies to achieve academic goals. Self-regulation is a critical mechanism by which motivation translates into academic success. The theory is particularly relevant to this study because it provides a framework for understanding how academic self-perception, goal orientation, motivation, future aspirations, and self-regulation influence academic success. Since these variables have been identified in the literature as important determinants of academic achievement, SCT helps explain how psychological factors contribute to gender differences in academic performance at Osun State University.

Social Role Theory

SRT was developed by Eagly (1987; 2013) to explain gender differences in behaviour, attitudes, and social expectations. The theory posits that the differences between men and women are largely the result of socially constructed roles rather than biological characteristics. Eagly (1987; 2013) and Yusuf (2026) acknowledge that societies assign different responsibilities, expectations, and opportunities to men and women, and these roles influence their behaviours, aspirations, values, and achievements. Eagly and Wood (1999) contend that gender differences emerge because men and women occupy different social positions that require distinct behaviours and competencies. Consequently, individuals internalise societal expectations and often behave in ways consistent with prescribed gender roles. Within educational settings, these expectations may influence students' academic interests, goal aspirations, study habits, and perceptions of achievement. Similarly, Wood and Eagly (2012) argue that gender roles shape educational and occupational choices by influencing beliefs about what is considered appropriate behaviour for males and females. These expectations can affect students' motivation, commitment to education, and future aspirations. In the same vein, Eagly and Wood (2016) maintain that changes in social structures and increased educational opportunities for women have contributed significantly to the narrowing and, in some cases, reversal of historical gender gaps in education.

The application of SRT to this study is particularly relevant, as it helps explain the growing academic advantage of female students in higher education. The theory suggests that changing societal expectations regarding women's education, careers, and leadership roles may encourage greater commitment to academic achievement among female students. Conversely, traditional constructions of masculinity may discourage some male students from fully engaging with academic activities. Thus, SRT provides a useful framework for understanding how gender norms and social expectations contribute to differences in academic performance between male and female students. While SCT explains how individual-level factors such as self-efficacy, motivation, self-regulation, and future aspirations influence academic achievement, SRT provides insight into how socially constructed gender expectations shape educational attitudes, behaviours, and outcomes. Together, the two theories offer a comprehensive framework for explaining the observed differences in academic performance and academic excellence among male and female students at Osun State University

Methodology

This study employed an ex-post facto descriptive survey research design, examining existing convocation records and brochures to determine the gender distribution of prize winners. The survey component collected primary data from selected students on academic performance and factors contributing to gender differences in academic achievement and prize-winning. The design was considered appropriate because the variables under investigation had already occurred and could not be manipulated by the researcher. The population of the study comprised all prize winners documented in the convocation brochures of Osun State University between the 2018/2019 and 2025/2026 academic sessions, as well as undergraduate students at Osun State University, Ifetedo Campus. For the documentary component of the study, total enumeration was employed to include all identified prize winners within the period under review.

The prize is awarded by Osun State University at convocation to the graduating student with the highest Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) in each Faculty, as printed under each name in the brochure. A total of 98 prize awards, comprising 31and 67 received by male and female graduands, respectively, were included in the analysis. One Faculty normally produces one winner per session, except when two students tie on the same CGPA, in which case both are listed as winners for that Faculty. Gender was coded from the Convocation Brochures using the recipient's photograph and first name. The photographs published in the brochures served as a check on gender coding, which is important because many Yoruba names are unisex. Where a name was ambiguous, the photograph was used to confirm gender. Seven sessions, except 2020/2021 (COVID-19), were analysed. A sample of 60 students, comprising 30 males and 30 females, was selected through stratified sampling from the Ifetedo Campus of the University for the survey component. The Ifetedo Campus was purposively selected because it is situated in a predominantly rural environment. The campus presents a distinct socio-economic and educational context that may influence students' academic experiences and outcomes. It is characterised by relatively limited access to some educational and social facilities commonly associated with urban settings. The campus provided a suitable context for examining gender differences in academic performance.

Two instruments were used for data collection. The first was a documentary checklist developed by the researcher to extract information on the number of male and female prize winners from the University's convocation brochures. The second was a structured questionnaire titled Questionnaire on Gender Differences and Academic Performance. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A collected respondents' demographic information; Section B collected information on students' academic performance, as measured by their current Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA); and Section C examined factors contributing to gender differences in prize-winning and academic performance. Items in Section C were measured using a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA = 4), Agree (A = 3), Disagree (D = 2), and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1). A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted as the benchmark for acceptance. The questionnaire underwent face and content validity assessments by three experts in the Faculty of Education at Osun State University. Their comments, observations, and recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the instrument to ensure clarity, relevance, and adequacy of the items. The instrument's reliability was established through a pilot study involving 20 students not included in the

main study. Data obtained from the pilot study were subjected to Cronbach's alpha reliability test, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.82, indicating that the instrument was reliable and suitable for the study. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Secondary data were obtained from official convocation brochures of Osun State University covering the period under review. In contrast, primary data were collected through the direct administration of questionnaires to selected respondents at the Ifetedo Campus. The questionnaires were administered and collected by the researcher.

The data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0. Frequency counts and percentages were used to determine the gender distribution of prize winners. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to analyse factors contributing to gender differences in prize-winning and academic performance, using a criterion mean of 2.50 for decision-making. A paired-samples t-test was employed to assess significant differences in the numbers of male and female prize winners across the academic sessions studied. In contrast, an independent-samples t-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in academic performance by gender. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The exact total population of Ifetedo Campus by gender and the response rate were not documented during data collection, which is noted as a limitation. The total number of graduands per session was available in the brochures, but the breakdown of graduands by gender was not provided; therefore, a prize-winning rate by gender could not be calculated.

Presentation of Results and Discussion

Research Question One: What is the gender distribution of prize winners at convocation ceremonies from 2018/2019 to 2025/2026 at Osun State University?

Table 1: Gender distribution of prize winners at convocation ceremonies from 2018/2019 to 2025/2026 at Osun State University.

Academic Session	Male (F)	Male (%)	Female (F)	Female (%)	Total (F)	Total (%)
2018/2019	6	37.5	10	62.5	16	100
2019/2020	1	8.3	11	91.7	12	100
2020/2021	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2021/2022	2	16.7	10	83.3	12	100
2022/2023	7	53.8	6	46.2	13	100
2023/2024	5	35.7	9	64.3	14	100
2024/2025	4	28.6	10	71.4	14	100
2025/2026	6	35.3	11	64.7	17	100
Overall	**31**	**31.6**	**67**	**68.4**	**98**	**100**

Source: UNIOSUN Convocation Brochure, 2018/2019–2025/2026)

Interpretation

Table 1 presents the gender distribution of prize winners at convocation ceremonies from the 2018/2019 to 2025/2026 academic sessions of Osun State University. The analysis was based on data extracted from official convocation brochures covering the period under review. The findings revealed that out of the 98 prize winners, 67 (68.4%) were female students and 31 (31.6%) were male students. Across most of the academic sessions reviewed, female students consistently recorded a higher proportion of prize winners than their male counterparts. The highest female representation was recorded during the 2019/2020 academic session, when females accounted for 91.7% of all prize winners, while male students had their highest representation in the 2022/2023 academic session, at 53.8%. Overall, the findings indicate that female students received a considerably larger share of academic prizes and awards than male students during the period under review. This suggests that female students demonstrated higher levels of academic excellence at the University. This finding is in line with Naylor and Smith (2001), who reported that female students

generally perform better academically in higher education institutions, and supports previous studies highlighting the growing academic advantage of female students in tertiary education.

Research Question One: What is the gender distribution of prize winners at convocation ceremonies from 2018/2019 to 2025/2026 at Osun State University?

H01: *There is no significant difference in the number of male and female prize winners from 2018/2019 to 2025/2026 at Osun State University.*

Table 2: Paired Samples T-test Showing Difference in the Number of Male and Female Prize Winners from 2018/2019 to 2025/2026 at Osun State University

Gender	N	Mean	SD	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male	7	4.43	2.23	3.91	6	.008	H01 Rejected
Female	7	9.57	1.72				

Significant at $p < 0.05$.

Source: UNIOSUN Convocation Brochures (2018/2019–2025/2026)

Interpretation

Table 2 presents the results of the paired-samples t-test showing the difference in the numbers of male and female prize winners at Osun State University, Osogbo, between the 2018/2019 and 2025/2026 academic sessions. The result revealed that female prize winners (M = 9.57, SD = 1.72) recorded a higher mean score than male prize winners (M = 4.43, SD = 2.23). The result further showed that the difference was statistically significant, t(6) = 3.91, p = .008. Since the p-value of .008 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis (H01) was rejected. This implies a significant difference in the number of male and female prize winners at Osun State University, Osogbo, with female students receiving significantly more academic prizes than their male counterparts. This finding is consistent with the studies by Wilberg and Lynn (1999) and Naylor and Smith (2001), which reported that female students generally perform better academically than male students in higher education institutions. The finding further supports the view that female students tend to exhibit stronger academic commitment, diligence, self-regulation, and study habits, which contribute to superior academic performance and increased academic recognition. Consequently, these attributes may partly explain the higher number of prizes won by female students during the period under review.

Research Question Two: What is the difference in academic performance of male and female students at Osun State University, Ifetedo Campus?

H02: *There is no significant difference in students' academic performance based on gender at Osun State University, Ifetedo Campus.*

Table 3: Independent Samples t-Test Showing Difference in Students' Academic Performance Based on Gender at Osun State University, Ifetedo Campus

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male	30	3.21	0.52	2.89	58	.005	H02 Rejected
Female	30	3.62	0.58				

Significant at $p < 0.05$

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Interpretation

Table 3 presents the results of the independent-samples t-test for students' academic performance by gender at Ifetedo Campus of Osun State University. The results revealed that female students (M = 3.62, SD = 0.58) recorded a higher mean CGPA than male students (M = 3.21, SD = 0.52). The difference was statistically significant, t(58) = 2.89, p = .005. Since the p-value (.005) is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in students' academic performance based on gender at Ifetedo Campus, with female students performing significantly better than their male counterparts. This finding corroborates the results in Tables 1 and 2, which show that female students constituted 68.4% of prize winners across the University and received significantly more academic prizes than male students. The finding also aligns with Naylor and Smith (2001), Candeias et al. (2010a), who reported that female students generally demonstrate stronger academic commitment, positive attitudes toward learning, and higher levels of academic motivation than male students. This may explain their superior academic performance and higher representation among prize winners, even within the rural context of Ifetedo Campus.

Research Question Three: What are the perceptions of students at Ifetedo Campus on teaching methods and academic support in relation to academic performance? at Osun State University, Ifetedo Campus?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing Students' Perceptions of Teaching Methods and Academic Support in Relation to Academic Performance at Ifetedo Campus (N=60)

S/N	Variable (Section C)	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Teaching Methods	60	3.45	0.21	Accepted
2	Academic Support	60	3.37	0.23	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Scale: 4-point Likert Scale: SA = 4, A = 3, D = 2, SD = 1.
Criterion Mean = 2.50. Mean ≥ 2.50 = Accepted; Mean < 2.50 = Rejected.

Interpretation

Table 4 presents students' perceptions of teaching methods and academic support in relation to academic performance at Ifetedo Campus (N=60). Teaching Methods recorded a mean of 3.45 (SD = 0.21) and Academic Support recorded a mean of 3.37 (SD = 0.23). Both means were above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that respondents generally agreed that teaching methods and academic support are related to academic performance. The low standard deviations also indicate that respondents largely agreed with their responses. Overall, the findings suggest that students perceive teaching methods and academic support as important to their academic performance. The study focused on these perceptions as reported by the students and did not further examine how these perceptions relate to CGPA or prize-winning by gender. This is in line with Ulug et al. (2011), who noted that teacher-related factors are perceived to relate to academic performance.

Discussions of Findings

The first objective of the study was to determine the gender distribution of prize winners at convocation ceremonies from the 2018/2019 to 2025/2026 academic sessions at Osun State University. The findings showed that female students accounted for 67 (68.4%) of the 98 prize winners, while male students accounted for 31 (31.6%). Furthermore, the paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in the numbers of male and female prize winners, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This finding shows that, in the recorded prize lists, female students received a larger share of prizes than male students during the period under review, in 6 of the 7 sessions, with the exception of 2022/2023. This is in line with

Naylor and Smith (2001), Wilberg and Lynn (1999), and Hassan and Hassan (2016), who reported that female students generally perform better academically than male students. The study was guided by Social Role Theory proposed by Eagly (1987), which argues that societal expectations and changing gender roles influence behaviour and achievement. However, role expectations were not directly measured in this study; therefore, the findings are not presented as a test of the theory.

The second objective of the study was to compare the academic performance of male and female students at Osun State University, Ifetedo Campus. The findings showed that female students obtained a higher mean CGPA (M = 3.62, SD = 0.58) than male students (M = 3.21, SD = 0.52). The Independent Samples t-test showed that the difference was statistically significant, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates that female students in the sample performed better academically than male students at Ifetedo Campus. This is in line with previous studies by Candeias et al. (2010a), and Verešová and Malá (2016), which reported that female students generally exhibit more positive attitudes toward learning, stronger academic engagement, and higher motivation than male students. Similarly, Frosh et al. (2002) observed that educational debates in recent decades have increasingly shifted from girls' underachievement to concerns regarding boys' underachievement. The study was guided by Social Cognitive Theory, developed by Bandura (1986), which emphasises the role of self-efficacy, motivation, self-regulation, and goal orientation in academic success. However, self-efficacy, self-regulation and motivation were not directly measured in this study; therefore, the findings are not presented as a test of the theory.

The third objective of the study was to examine students' perceptions of teaching methods and academic support in relation to academic performance at Ifetedo Campus. The findings showed that respondents generally agreed that teaching methods (M = 3.45) and academic support (M = 3.37) relate to academic performance, as both means were above the criterion mean of 2.50. This implies that students perceive their academic outcomes as being related not only to their personal abilities but also to institutional and environmental factors in the learning process. This is in line with the views of Ulug et al. (2011), Gundogdu and Silman (2007), and Madukwe et al. (2019), who noted that teacher-related factors are perceived to relate to students' motivation, confidence, engagement, and academic performance. Overall, the findings from the prize data and the Ifetedo Campus sample show that female students receive a larger share of prizes and have a higher mean CGPA than male students in this study.

Limitations of the Study

This study had the following limitations. The documentary component relied solely on information published in the official Convocation Brochures. The brochures do not explicitly state gender, so it was inferred from the recipient's photograph and first name. Although the photographs served as a check, possible misclassification of a small number of cases cannot be completely ruled out. The survey component was limited to 60 students, comprising 30 males and 30 females, from Ifetedo Campus only. The findings from the survey, therefore, cannot be generalised to all undergraduate students at Osun State University or to other campuses of the University. The exact total population of Ifetedo Campus by gender and the response rate were not documented during data collection, limiting the precision of the sampling description. The study was limited to the Overall Best Student in Each Faculty as the measure of prize-winning. Other departmental or non-academic awards were not included.

Conclusion

This study examined gender differences in prize-winning and academic performance among students at Osun State University, covering the period from the 2018/2019 to 2025/2026 academic sessions, with a specific focus on academic performance at the Ifetedo Campus. Specifically, the study investigated the gender distribution of prize winners, compared the academic performance of male and female students, and identified factors contributing to the observed differences. The findings revealed a significant gender disparity in academic prize-winning at the University. Female students accounted for 67 (68.4%) of the 98 prize winners during the period under review, while male students accounted for 31 (31.6%). The study also

revealed a significant gender difference in academic performance at Ifetedo Campus, with female students having a higher mean CGPA (M = 3.62) than male students (M = 3.21). Furthermore, respondents perceived teaching methods and academic support as related to academic performance at the Ifetedo Campus. The study was guided by Social Cognitive Theory and Social Role Theory, which emphasise the role of self-regulation, motivation, environmental support, and social influences in shaping academic outcomes. However, self-regulation, motivation, self-efficacy and role expectations were not directly measured in this study; therefore, the findings are not presented as a test of these theories. The study therefore concludes that, in 6 of the 7 sessions reviewed, female students recorded a larger share of the Overall Best Student awards across the Faculties of the University, and female students in the surveyed sample at Ifetedo Campus recorded a higher mean CGPA than male students. The total number of graduands per session was available, but the breakdown of graduands by gender was not provided; therefore, a prize-winning rate by gender could not be calculated. The study contributes to knowledge by providing empirical evidence on gender differences in both academic performance and academic prize-winning within a Nigerian university context. Unlike many previous studies that focused solely on students' academic performance, this study combined CGPA data from the Ifetedo Campus with the University's convocation prize-winning records to describe how gender differences are reflected in institutional recognition.

Recommendations

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

1. The University should sustain the Faculty-level Overall Best Student award as a visible record and publish in each convocation brochure the total number of graduands by gender for each Faculty. At present, only the total number of graduands is available, so a prize-winning rate by gender cannot be calculated. Publishing the breakdown will allow the University to know whether the 68.4% female share of the 98 awards reflects a higher prize-winning rate or simply a higher number of female graduands.

2. The University's Quality Assurance Unit should review what differed in the 2022/2023 session, when male students recorded their highest share of 53.8%, and in the 2019/2020 session, when female students recorded 91.7%. Since female students led in 6 of the 7 sessions, a session-by-session review of Faculty prize lists will help the University identify whether the change was Faculty-specific or University-wide, rather than assuming a uniform trend.

3. Ifetedo Campus should introduce targeted academic support for male students, who recorded a lower mean CGPA of 3.21 compared to 3.62 for female students in the sample of 60 students. This should take the form of Faculty-based tutorial groups and peer mentoring for male students with a CGPA below 3.21, using the study patterns identified in the survey to guide the mentoring content.

4. Since respondents at Ifetedo Campus agreed that teaching methods (M = 3.45) and academic support (M = 3.37) relate to academic performance, both above the criterion mean of 2.50, lecturers at Ifetedo Campus should retain and document the specific student-centred methods currently in use, such as active participation and tutorial support, so that the methods can be reviewed against CGPA in the next session, rather than introducing new methods without evidence.

5. The Counselling and Student Affairs Units at Ifetedo Campus should keep a simple record of students who attend study-skills workshops and mentoring, with their CGPA before and after attendance. This will allow the Campus to test whether the perceived relationship between academic support and performance reported in this study holds when tracked over time.

6. Parents and guardians should become more actively involved in the academic lives of their children, especially male children. While considerable attention has been devoted to promoting girls' education, similar efforts should be made to monitor, guide, encourage, and support boys' academic progress. This call is not to diminish the gains made in girls' education, but to correct a growing pattern of neglect of the male child. Yusuf and Fagbadebo (2026) have shown that this neglect is not limited to the classroom. In their assessment of domestic violence against men in Ondo and Osun States, they found that men, like women, experience

various forms of domestic violence, yet their experiences are often trivialised, unreported and unsupported because of societal expectations that men should endure hardship in silence. The same culture of silence follows the boy-child: his academic struggles are dismissed as stubbornness or laziness, his need for guidance is mistaken for strength, and his poor performance is left unmonitored until it becomes failure. Parents should therefore cultivate positive study habits, academic discipline, and educational aspirations among their sons, just as they do for their daughters, to improve their academic engagement and performance and to break the cycle of male neglect that begins at home and continues into adulthood.

7. Future studies should cover a longer period and more campuses of Osun State University, and should directly measure motivation, self-regulation, self-efficacy and role expectations, which were not measured in this study but were discussed through Social Cognitive Theory and Social Role Theory. This is necessary because the 2020/2021 session had no convocation due to COVID-19, and only 7 sessions were analysed in this study.

Ethical Considerations

This paper is part of a larger study on Gender-Based Violence and the Security of Women in Nigeria, approved by the Institutional Research and Ethics Committee (IREC) of the Durban University of Technology, South Africa, via Ethical Clearance number IN-IREC 047/25. The study adhered to all ethical protocols. Participants voluntarily consented to participate, and their identities are kept anonymous. Grammarly software installed on the laptop was used for refinements and proofreading.

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