

Student Achievement in the Social Studies: A Demographic Analysis

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ABSTRACT The importance of learning outcomes has been captivating the attention of responsible stakeholders in academics. It is widely viewed as being a crucial factor in determining students' future accomplishments. It is deemed that students' learning outcomes may differ because of several related factors. In this context, the present study examined differences in secondary students' social studies achievement based on their sex, locality, and type of school management. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, wherein a self-developed achievement test was administered to collect data from three hundred school students in the Malda district of West Bengal. Descriptive and inferential statistics (t-test) were executed for data analysis. Findings revealed that students' achievement in social studies was high ($M=23.01$, $SD=6.65$). Also, a significant difference was recorded in students' scores based on their demography and school type ($p<.05$). Male students ($M=25.83$, $SD=4.69$) had a higher level of achievement compared to female students ($M=19.55$, $SD=6.87$). Students from urban schools ($M=24.27$, $SD=6.07$) and privately managed schools ($M=28.01$, $SD=1.98$) had higher achievement in social studies compared to rural school students ($M=20.90$, $SD=6.87$) and those from public schools ($M=17.77$, $SD=5.56$), respectively. Further, while finding the causes of these differences, household chores, sibling caring, disproportionate availability of modern infrastructure, and management emerged as potential factors, and accordingly, educational implications and suggestions were hypothesized for further student achievement research in India.

INTRODUCTION

The academic outcome has been intriguing the engagement of responsible stakeholders in education. It is a significant determinant of students' future specifically, and the future of a nation in general. It is also widely viewed as vital in determining students' career-seeking behavior (Sarif and Vandana 2022). Earlier studies showed that the academic achievement has a positive influence on students' self-efficacy beliefs, self-esteem, motivation, engagement, academic career, and subjective well-being (Linderman 2010; Köseoglu 2015; Preoteasa et al. 2016; Doodman et al. 2017; Lakhani et al. 2017; Noronha et al. 2018). And henceforth, educational institutions also strive to ensure the attainment of the academic caliber of students. According to Adeyemo (2001), "schools may have

other peripheral objectives, but the emphasis is always placed on the achievement of sound scholarship".

School education is very critical for individuals' personality development as emphasized in the Kothari Commission, 1964. It helps them with knowledge and skills, while exclusively purporting to the all-round development including physical, cognitive, social, cultural, and emotional domains. The state of West Bengal was the study area, where the present research was carried out. Like other states of India, ten years of general education is also being availed for all students in the state. The constituents of the instructional curriculums of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education syllabus (WBBSE) have enclosed both sciences and social studies subjects. Like science subjects, social studies play an equally important role in students' all-round development. Through social studies, students become familiar with languages, cultures, history, geography, and political aspects of human society. Besides inculcating basic human, social, and cultural values, it also nurtures a sense of appreciation and credence to diversity among

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students and enables them to adapt to changes that happen in the society.

Social studies, though there are diverse ranges of disciplines, primarily include subjects like history, geography, economics, civics, and sociology at school levels. According to Dubey and Prokupek (1980), social studies is a “process of education, which utilizes the study of human life for the purpose of giving children the opportunity of solving problems of crucial importance both for the individual and for the society” (As cited in Awopetu 2001). Education, no doubt is a great source of inspiration for social changes, henceforth several initiatives are being taken by public and private bodies for spreading quality and affordable education. However, there are several challenges for the sustained out-flow of quality education across the pan-India. Also, education availed through public and private institutions resulted in disparities due to riffs in provided facilities, infrastructures, teaching-learning process, teacher-student ratio, and interaction and institutional climate, and family-related factors (Irfan and Shabana 2012; Adika and Adika 2013; Adeyemi 2014; Kumar and Lal 2014; Giraldo-Garcia 2014; Okon and Archibong 2015; Anandharaja et al. 2016; Filgona and Sababa 2017; Aransi 2018). Besides, the locality also affects students’ learning outcomes. Students in rural areas experience a lack of quality education; good exposure, a good learning environment, and governance, on the flip side, students in urban schools have the opportunity to access necessary exposure; educational facilities, support, and learning environments (Adebayo and Dorcas 2015; Young 1998; Igbo et al. 2015; Nnenna and Adukwu 2015; Onoyase 2015; Saikia 2017). Further, a problem like gender stereotypes and prevailing undue socio-emotional support for girls’ education are still a burning issue among academics (Diaz 2003; Nuthana and Yenagi 2009; Adika and Adika 2013; Parveen et al. 2013; Anandharaja et al. 2016; Kumar and Bansal 2017; Mwangi and Ileri 2017; Sarif 2019).

Objectives of the Study

The literature surveyed highlights the assumption that the variables like sex, locality, and school management may cause a riff in students’ learning outcomes, and thereby the current study aimed at studying secondary school students’

social studies achievement, and examined differences if any in the level of their achievement base on sex, rural-urban locality, and school management, which were categorically presented as follows:

- 1) To study secondary school students’ academic achievement in social studies.
- 2) To find out the significant mean difference between male and female students’ academic achievement in social studies.
- 3) To find out the significant mean difference between rural and urban school students’ academic achievement in social studies.
- 4) To find out the significant mean difference between public and private school students’ academic achievement in social studies.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated as per the stated objectives of the present study:

- H₁. Secondary school students’ academic achievement in social studies is high.
- H₀₁. There is no statistically significant mean difference between male and female students’ academic achievement in social studies.
- H₀₂. There is no statistically significant mean difference between rural and urban school students’ academic achievement in social studies.
- H₀₃. There is no statistically significant mean difference between public and private school students’ academic achievement in social studies.

METHODOLOGY

Method

A descriptive survey research design was adopted to determine the present status of students’ achievement in social studies. Authors employed a comparative research method to find out significant differences in students’ achievement in social studies based on their sex, locality, and school type. The study was conducted in Malda district covering all secondary school students From class ninth grade. The first author has

collected the data From target student population in physical mode.

Participants

In this study, authors adopted a stratified random sampling strategy. The Malda district of West Bengal was the study area which has a total of 17 blocks and out of which, five blocks were randomly selected based on rural-urban characteristics. Then, two schools were chosen From each of the five selected blocks, based on their co-education setup. Finally, a total of 300 ninth-grade students were selected From each of those selected schools. The sample was dichotomized based on gender, locality, and management type, which included 158 male and 142 female students, 172 rural and 128 urban school students, and 150 students From both government and private schools.

Variables

In the present study, authors opted for two different types of variables, such as dependent and independent variables. In the study, student achievement in social studies was studied as a dependent variable, while sex, locality, and management type were studied as independent variables.

Instrument

To assess students' achievement in social studies, authors used a self-prepared achievement test. The test has MCQ-type question items with four alternative options. The test had a total of 30 items, representing 10 items for each of the selected three school subjects, namely geography, history, and political science. The question items were formulated in light of the Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives at knowledge, understanding, and application levels (Bloom 1956). The achievement test was developed based on social studies curriculums/contents. This was a common test for ninth-grade students, where each question had one mark for the right answer, while there was no negative marking for the wrong response. The range score lies between 0 and 30 marks. The composite score of the test was considered as student achievement in the social studies.

Reliability and Validity of the Instrument

The first author conducted a pilot study on 30 students to check the lucidity and comprehensible clarity of the developed question items. Then, necessary corrections and modifications were done based on students' responses and feedback. The test questionnaire was given to seven experts for establishing the content and face validity of the constructed items. The reliability of the test was confirmed using test-retest method of reliability which revealed test-retest value of .792 ($> .70$) denoted the higher level of dependability and consistency of the test.

Procedure

The data collection was done by the first author from the target population. Before administering the academic achievement test to students, the authors obtained consent from the authority heads of all selected schools. Each participant was informed of the purpose of the data collection. Also, they were informed that their responses and personal information, like name, age, and exam scores would be maintained in complete confidence. The participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were given the option to decline if they so preferred. The test was administered during school hours, and it took approximately 20-25 minutes to complete. No incentives were given to respondents for taking part in the survey.

Data Analysis

Both descriptive and differential statistics were employed for data analysis. Authors had used frequency, percentile, and mean as descriptive statistics for understanding students' achievement in social studies, and an independent sample t-test was performed as differential statistics to examine the significant mean difference in their academic scores based on their sex, locality, and school type.

RESULTS

Status Quo of Students' Academic Achievement in Social Studies

To assess students' academic achievement in social studies, frequency and percentage were

computed. Table 1 revealed that 48 percent of the total students scored between 26 and 30 marks on academic achievement in social studies and about 33 percent of students whose score was less than 70 percent, out of which, 15.4 percent of students scored between 16 and 20 marks, 12.9 percent students scored between 11 and 15 marks, 3.6 percent students scored between 6 and 10 marks, and only 1 percent students scored between 1 and 5 marks. Besides, a discrepancy was recorded in students' social studies achievement as a significant proportion of students scored less than 50 percent marks.

Table 1: Students' scoring pattern in Social Studies

Achievement scores	No. of students	%
26-30	144	48.0
21-25	57	19.1
16-20	46	15.4
11-15	39	12.9
6- 10	11	3.6
1-5	3	1.0
Total	300	100

Levels of Students' Academic Achievement in Social Studies

Percentile statistics had been computed to understand the levels of students' scores in social studies. It showed that fifty percent of students scored less than the weighted average value of 25 on social studies achievement. Further, to test the formulated research hypothesis, a mid-point was computed to determine the level of students' achievement in social studies (Table 2). The analysis showed that students' mean score was 23.01, with SD of 6.65. It was found that the mean of students' achievement in social studies was higher than the mid-value ($23.01 > 15$). Henceforth, the constructed research hypothesis, " H_1 : secondary school students' academic achievement in social studies is high" was accepted, indicating that students' level of scores in social studies was high.

Table 3: Male versus Female students' scores in Social Studies

Sex	N	Mean	S.D.	SE_M	t-value	df	Sig. level
Male	158	25.83	4.69	.373	9.311	297	0.00
Female	142	19.55	6.87	.579			

Table 2: Mean, S.D., and mid-value analysis

N	Mean	S.D.	Mid-value
300	23.01	6.65	15

Source: Author's calculation

Differences in Male and Female Students' Academic Achievement in Social Studies

Table 3 showed the results of 158 male and 142 female students' scores of achievement in social studies, out of the total number of 300 participants. The analysis revealed a mean score of 25.83, with SD of 4.69 for male students and 19.55, with SD of 6.87 for female students. It was found that male students outperformed their counterpart female school students ($M=25.83 > M=19.55$). Further, to test the constructed null hypothesis, an independent sample t-test was performed. The calculated t-value of 9.31 was found to be statistically significant at a sig value of 0.00 (two-tailed, $p < .05$). The computed Cohen's d was 1.08 ($t \times 2 / df$), indicating that the difference in academic achievement between male and female students had a substantial effect size. Thus, the null hypothesis, " H_{01} : there is no statistically significant mean difference between male and female students' academic achievement in social studies" was rejected and accepted as an alternative hypothesis, indicating there was a significant mean difference in students' academic achievement between male and female school students, where male students outperformed their counterpart, female students.

Differences in Rural and Urban School Students' Academic Achievement in Social Studies

Table 4 showed the results of 123 rural and 177 urban school students' scores of academic achievement in social studies. The analysis revealed a mean score of 20.90, with SD 6.87 for

Table 4: Rural versus Urban school students' scores in Social Studies

<i>Locale</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>SE_M</i>	<i>t- value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. level</i>
Rural	172	20.90	6.87	.619	4.471	298	0.033
Urban	128	24.27	6.07	.456			

rural school students, and a mean score of 24.27, with SD 6.07 for urban school students. It was found that students of urban schools outperformed their counterparts students of rural schools ($M=24.27 > M=20.90$). Further, in order to test the stated null hypothesis, an independent sample t-test was executed. The calculated t-value of 4.47 was found to be statistically significant at a sig value of 0.033 (two-tailed, $p < .05$). The computed Cohen's d was 0.52 ($t \times 2 / df$), indicating that the difference in academic achievement between the groups had a substantial effect size. So, the constructed null hypothesis, " H_{02} : there is no statistically significant mean difference between rural and urban school students' academic achievement in social studies" was rejected and accepted as an alternative hypothesis, indicating that there was a significant difference in students' academic achievement in social studies based on school location, where students of urban schools outperformed their counterpart students of rural schools.

Differences in Public and Private School Students' Academic Achievement in Social Studies

Table 5 showed the results of 150 public and 150 private school students' scores of academic achievement in social studies. The analysis revealed a mean score of 17.77, with SD 5.56 for public school students, and a mean score of 28.01, with SD 1.98 for private school students. It was found that students of private schools had outperformed their counterparts students of public schools ($M=28.01 > M=17.77$). Further, to test the stated null hypothesis, an independent sample t-test was performed. The calculated t-value of 21.25 was found to be statistically significant at a sig

value of 0.01 (two-tailed, $p < .05$). The computed Cohen's d was 2.46 ($t \times 2 / df$), indicating that the difference in academic achievement between the groups had a substantial effect size. So, the stated null hypothesis, " H_{03} : there is no statistically significant mean difference between public and private school students' academic achievement in social studies" was rejected and accepted as an alternative hypothesis, indicating that there was a significant difference in students' academic achievement based on school type, where students of private schools outperformed their counterpart students of public schools.

DISCUSSION

The present study found that school students had a higher level of academic achievement in social studies, nevertheless, a discrepancy was recorded in the scoring pattern, where a significant proportion of the students had less than fifty percent score in the test. Henceforth, the study suggests teachers bestow equal importance on all students and take necessary interventions to improve the academic achievements of those who were 'slow learners'. Further, the study identified significant differences in students' academic achievement in social studies based on their sex, locale, and school type, wherein male students and students of urban schools and those from private schools had a higher level of achievement compared to their counterparts female students, rural school students, and the students of government schools, respectively. The findings of the present study were supported by a few earlier studies which evidenced high levels of students' academic achievement in social studies (Alokan and Arijesuyo 2013; Parveen et al. 2013;

Table 5: Public versus Private school students' scores in Social Studies

<i>School type</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>SE_M</i>	<i>t- value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. level</i>
Public	150	17.77	5.56	.454	21.25	298	0.01
Private	150	28.01	1.98	.162			

Dania 2014; Nwafor 2015; Nnamani and Oyibe 2016; Attah, and Ita 2017; Aransi 2018).

Further, the current study revealed sex as an independent factor caused a difference in students' achievement in social studies. This finding of the present study was also supported by earlier studies, confirmed a higher achievement of male students compared to female students in the social studies (Adika and Adika 2013; Parveen et al. 2013; Igbo et al. 2015; Nwafor 2015; Anandharaja et al. 2016; Nnenna and Adukwu 2018). This discrepancy in terms of the gender gap can be claimed that traditional society places less value on girls' education, causing them to get involved in household chores and caring for siblings at home, as evidenced from field observation. In this regard, Rahaman and Rahaman (2018) reported a similar finding from a study conducted in the same district, Malda, indicating that girls' performance is harmed by household pressure and uncertain future. So, responsible stakeholders need to reorient the traditional society that places less importance on girls' education, and provides deficit socio-emotional support for girls' education. In this context, parents and teachers must play a critical role in dispelling the traditional mindset, and should provide moral support to young girl students, both at home and school.

Also, the current study evidenced that the locale of school as an important factor significantly affected students' academic achievement in social studies. This finding of the present study was also found to be identical to the findings of earlier studies which indicated higher scores of urban school students in academic achievement compared to rural school students (Young 1998; Onoyase 2015; Igbo et al. 2015; Nnenna and Adukwu 2018). This difference may be attributed to the disproportionate availability of modern exposure and educational facilities in rural and urban schools. This finding From the field observation was also supported by Nnenna and Adukwu (2015) and Onoyase (2015) who revealed that the underdeveloped socio-economic conditions in rural areas were the causes of the rural-urban discrepancy in learning outcomes. In this case, school authorities should facilitate parent guidance programs, as well as take steps to ensure the required modern equipment in rural schools.

The present study evidenced school type as an important factor, which affected students' ac-

ademic achievement in social studies. This finding of the present study was also supported by the findings of existing studies which showed students of private schools performed better compared to their counterpart students of public schools (Nwafor 2015; Okon and Archibong 2015; Anandharaja et al. 2016; Ahmed et al. 2017; Aransi 2018). Further, the current study identified From the field observation, that the disparity in achievement outcomes between public and private school students might have been caused by a lack of required staff, infrastructures, pupil-teacher ratio, exposures, and management efficiency, and these findings were consistent with earlier studies (Adika and Adika 2013; Adegemi 2014). Henceforth, it was suggested to take diligent endeavors to equip schools with required teaching-learning facilities and provide the necessary support to create an enabling school environment in public schools.

DELIMITATIONS

The present study was delimited to the secondary school students of Malda district of West Bengal. It was also delimited to understand students' achievement in social studies including only geography, history, and political science. Hence, researchers may take up a study on students' achievement in social studies considering other school subjects, such as environmental studies, science, and language subjects. Also, it can be conducted in other district of the state or other parts of India, with greater sample size to revalidate the findings of the present study. The present study evidenced sex, locality, and school type as significant factors affecting students' academic achievement in social studies. So, a study may be conducted to explore other factors affecting students' learning outcomes in public and private schools or rural and urban settings. Besides, an in-depth study can also be undertaken to unmask the factors causing differences in social studies achievement between male versus female students, public versus private school students, and rural versus urban school students.

CONCLUSION

The current study provided evidence of students' academic achievement and their learning

gaps in social studies in relation to demography and school types. It was found that students secured a high level of academic achievement in social studies. However, a significant proportion of students performed poorly in social studies. So, teachers must bestow equal importance on all students and take necessary interventions to improve the learning outcomes of those 'slow learners'. The study revealed that female students performed less on social studies achievement than male students. So, parents and teachers must play a critical role in providing moral support to girl students, both at home and school. Further, the present study found that rural school students scored lesser in academic achievement than urban school students. In this case, school authorities should facilitate parent guidance programs, as well as take steps to ensure the required modern equipment in the schools. Also, students from public schools performed less on the social studies achievement compared to private school students. So, responsible stakeholders must take necessary interventions to equip these schools with necessary teaching-learning infrastructure. Overall, educational stakeholders; teachers, school managing committees, parents, and the community together have to play a pivotal role in bettering students' learning outcomes and bringing down their learning gaps in social studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of the present study brought out findings using a self-prepared tool, which may help responsible stakeholders to understand the current status quo of secondary students' achievement in social studies. From this point forward, a study could be carried out utilizing a standardized instrument to comprehend students' achievement in social studies to validate the findings of the present study. It is also necessary to revalidate the findings of the differences in students' social studies achievement with respect to their sex, locality, and management type. It is recommended to teachers to treat every student equally going forward and to make the necessary steps to boost the academic performance of those who were 'slow learners'. Both parents and teachers must play a crucial role in defying the conventional mindset about gender, and should offer moral support to young girl students at home

and school. In this scenario, educational executives should support parent with guidance initiatives and take action to guarantee that schools in rural areas also have sufficient instrumental supports to reduce the learning gap between rural and urban school students. Besides, government school administrators as well as teachers should also pay close attention to those identified problems, which caused lower level of the students' performance in social studies, and take the necessary steps to help them achieve greater level of achievement in social studies.

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