



## **GENDER STUDIES AS A TOOL FOR IMPROVING GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS IN PRINCE ABUBAKAR AUDU UNIVERSITY, ANYIGBA, KOGI STATE.**

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**ABSTRACT:** The investigated gender studies as a tool for improving global competitiveness among undergraduate teacher education students in Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Kogi State. The study adopted the descriptive survey design with a sample of 373 respondents from a population of 5,437 students in the Faculty of Education, Prince Abubakar Audu University, which was selected through multistage sampling technique. The instrument was validated by three experts while the reliability was tested using Cronbach Alpha and it gave a coefficient of 0.81. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that gender studies are minimally integrated into teacher education curricula, with limited presence in course content, pedagogy, and institutional support, students exposed to gender studies show greater awareness and more positive attitudes toward gender equity. However, socio-cultural and religious beliefs, along with a general disregard for gender education by both students and lecturers, posed significant barriers to its full integration, highlighting the deep-rooted structural and ideological obstacles to inclusive education. Hence, it was recommended that the management of Prince Abubakar Audu University should revise and expand her education syllabi to include and make compulsory, practical-based gender studies courses, faculty members should adopt experiential and real-life classroom examples when teaching gender content, this knowledge will be available to them through attendance to conferences, it is required that awareness campaigns should be launched within the university community to address misconceptions about gender studies, using peer education programs, public lectures and the management of the university since it is currently under the leadership of a woman as head of the institution should do well to sponsor programmes that would break barriers that challenges gender equality.

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**Keywords:** Gender studies, competitiveness, teacher education

### **Introduction**

Gender issues have consistently remained a prominent topic of discussion in contemporary social discourse worldwide. With the advent of modernization, there is a growing awareness and ongoing redefinition of the roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women within society. Based on the fact that gender roles are social constructs that vary across cultures as what is customary in

one society may be unfamiliar or even alien to another, many institutions in Nigeria have incorporated gender studies into their curricula. This inclusion aims to equip students with understandings of gender perspectives and prepare them to navigate diverse viewpoints in a globalized world.

According to UNESCO (2013) gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in

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our families, our societies and our cultures. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). Gender roles and expectations are learned. They can change over time and they vary within and between cultures. Systems of social differentiation such as political status, class, ethnicity, physical and mental disability, age and more, modify gender roles. The concept of gender is vital because, applied to social analysis, it reveals how women's subordination (or men's domination) is socially constructed. As such, the subordination can be changed or ended. It is not biologically predetermined nor is it fixed forever.

Gender roles, often shaped by societal expectations and norms, define the responsibilities, behaviours, and opportunities deemed appropriate for men and women. These roles are socially constructed and can vary significantly between cultures, even within the same country. For instance, among the Igbo tribe in southeastern Nigeria, traditional gender roles have often emphasized male dominance in leadership and economic activities, while women primarily manage domestic responsibilities and small-scale trade. This dynamic has historically been reinforced by patriarchal systems that prioritize male inheritance and leadership in community affairs (Amadiume, 1987). However, Igbo women have carved out spaces of influence, such as through the Umuada system, which grants women a collective voice in family and communal decisions.

In contrast, the Fulani people, a predominantly pastoralist group in northern Nigeria, present a different cultural framework for gender roles. Fulani men are traditionally responsible for herding and livestock management, which is central to their nomadic lifestyle, while women are more involved in household duties and the preparation of dairy products for sale. Unlike the Igbo, where women engage significantly in trade, Fulani women often operate within a more restricted economic sphere, reflecting their community's emphasis on preserving cultural values tied to modesty and seclusion (Hassan & Adamu, 2020). These variations underscore how cultural contexts shape gender

roles, highlighting the importance of understanding gender studies in most academic institutions of the world today.

According to Lykke (2010) gender studies emerged as an academic field in the late 20th century, gaining prominence during the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s. It originated from women's studies, a discipline that sought to address the historical exclusion of women's contributions and experiences from mainstream academic discourse (Lykke, 2010). Over time, gender studies expanded to encompass not only women's issues but also masculinity studies, queer theory, and other dimensions of gender and sexuality. The interdisciplinary nature of gender studies allows for the exploration of how societal norms, power dynamics, and cultural expectations shape the roles and experiences of individuals across different contexts.

Gender studies is broadly defined as the academic examination of gender and its intersections with other social categories, such as race, class, and ethnicity. Lorber (1994) defines it as "the study of how gender operates within societies, including how it influences social structures, individual identities, and cultural practices." This field analyzes how gender roles are constructed and perpetuated, how they intersect with power relations, and how these dynamics influence social and economic opportunities for individuals.

Gender studies was introduced to address systemic inequalities and promote a deeper understanding of how societal norms shape experiences and opportunities. It provides tools to analyze and challenge patriarchal structures, discrimination, and stereotypes that limit individual and collective potential. In the Nigerian context, the introduction of gender studies into curricula seeks to address pervasive issues such as gender-based violence, economic disparities, and political underrepresentation. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), only 3.6% of Nigeria's parliamentary seats were held by women as of 2023, highlighting the gender imbalance in decision-making spaces. Through gender studies, individuals are empowered to advocate for policies and practices that promote equity and inclusion.

In Nigeria, gender inequality remains a significant issue, with women often disproportionately affected by poverty,



illiteracy, and unemployment. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), the literacy rate for males in Nigeria is 71.3%, compared to 52.7% for females, indicating a significant educational gap. Cultural practices such as early marriage and gendered labour divisions perpetuate inequality, particularly in rural areas. However, progress is being made in some sectors. For instance, women's participation in entrepreneurship has grown, with women now owning 41% of micro, small, and medium enterprises in Nigeria (SMEDAN, 2021). Gender studies play a critical role in highlighting these issues by advocating for systemic changes to promote gender equity across all sectors of society.

In recent years, gender dynamics have shifted in various sectors traditionally dominated by one gender, with trailblazers breaking stereotypes and redefining roles. For instance, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the first female Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), has emerged as a global leader in trade and development, traditionally male-dominated fields (WTO, 2021). Similarly, Opeyemi Famakin, a prominent male food critic in Nigeria, has gained recognition in a field historically associated with women, showcasing the potential of individuals to excel beyond traditional gender roles. These shifts highlight the importance of dismantling gender stereotypes, a mission central to gender studies, which provides individuals with the tools to compete and thrive in any domain.

Gender studies enhance global competitiveness by fostering inclusivity, innovation, and collaboration. It equips individuals with the analytical skills to recognize and leverage diverse talents, which is critical in today's interconnected and diverse global economy. According to the World Economic Forum (2023), nations with higher gender parity are more competitive and innovative, as diverse perspectives lead to better decision-making and problem-solving. By challenging outdated norms, gender studies encourage men and women to pursue non-traditional careers, breaking barriers that limit societal progress and economic growth.

Among undergraduate teacher education students in Nigeria, gender studies can be transformative. Teachers play a crucial role in shaping young minds, and an

understanding of gender dynamics enables them to challenge biases and promote equity in classrooms. For instance, introducing gender-sensitive teaching methods can inspire female students to pursue careers in STEM and encourage male students to engage in caregiving professions, both of which are critical for addressing skill shortages in Nigeria. This approach aligns with UNESCO's (2021) call for integrating gender studies into teacher training to promote inclusive education and prepare students for a competitive global workforce. By incorporating gender studies into teacher education, Nigerian undergraduates gain understanding of global challenges and opportunities. This knowledge positions them to create learning environments that value diversity and foster critical thinking, essential skills for global competitiveness. Moreover, teachers who are well-versed in gender studies can mentor students to embrace non-traditional career paths, thus broadening Nigeria's talent pool. However, gender inequality continues to be a significant challenge in Nigeria, affecting various aspects of societal development, including education, workforce participation, and economic growth. Despite global advancements in addressing gender-related issues, many Nigerian institutions, particularly in the primary and secondary level, have not fully integrated gender studies into their curriculum. This gap limits the ability of future educators to recognize and challenge deeply rooted stereotypes, perpetuating cycles of inequality in classrooms and society. Consequently, the lack of gender-sensitive education contributes to a workforce that is unprepared to harness the full potential of its diverse population, ultimately, this may be hindering Nigeria's global competitiveness. The problem is further exacerbated by cultural norms and traditional expectations that reinforce rigid gender roles. For example, male students often shy away from caregiving, culinary or teaching professions, while female students face discouragement from pursuing careers in STEM fields. These disparities are evident in national statistics, such as the 2022 report by the National Bureau of Statistics, which shows that women comprise only 22% of Nigeria's STEM workforce. Similarly, men constitute less than 20% of professionals in early childhood education (UNESCO,



2021). These imbalances highlight the need for targeted interventions in teacher education to promote gender equity and broaden career aspirations among students. Without addressing these challenges, Nigeria risks perpetuating a system that stifles innovation and limits its capacity to compete on a global scale. It is based on the foregoing that this study seeks to examine gender studies as a tool for improving global competitiveness among undergraduate student teachers in Prince Abubakar Audu University, Kogi State. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. Examine the extent to which gender studies is integrated into teacher education curriculum in Nigeria.
2. Examine the impact of gender studies based on the perception of undergraduate teacher education students in Nigeria.
3. Examine the barriers hindering the inclusion of gender studies content in University programs in Nigeria.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent is gender studies integrated into the teacher education curriculum in Nigeria?
2. What is the impact of gender studies based on the perception of undergraduate teacher education students in Nigeria?
3. What are the barriers hindering the inclusion of gender studies content in university programs in Nigeria?

### Research Method

The study was carried out in Prince Abubakar Audu University, Ayingba, Kogi State, Nigeria. The population for the study was made up of 5437 undergraduate students of the faculty of education, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba. The sample for the study was made up of 370 students drawn using the disproportionate random sampling technique. The instrument used by the

researcher for data collection was a questionnaire titled: Question on Gender Studies as a Tool for Improving Global Competiveness Among Undergraduate Teacher Education Students in Prince Abubakar Audu University (QGSTIGCAUTESPAAU) which was constructed by the researchers. It consisted of 21 items which were arranged in two sections A and B. Section A contains the biodata, while section B consist of extent of genders studies content integrated in teacher education curriculum, perception of students on the impact of gender studies content in their curriculum and the barriers hindering gender equality in Nigeria. The questionnaire was built on a four-point Likert Scale, namely: Very High Level (VHL), High Level (HL), Low Level (LL) and Very Low Level (VLL) and the levels of responses are weighted as 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively. The instrument was face validated by three experts, one from Measurement and Evaluation Unit and two from curriculum unit of the Department of Educational Foundations of Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Kogi State. The suggestions given were used in producing the final copy of the instrument. Cronbach alpha was used in calculating the reliability which gave an alpha value of 0.81 which was considered high after it was administered on 10 students of the faculty of education, Federal University Lokoja. The instrument was administered and collected by the researchers on the spot. The data obtained were analyzed using, mean and standard deviation for answering the research questions Therefore, items whose mean were less than 2.5 were seen as low extent (LE) responses while those whose mean were 2.5 and above were seen as high level (HE) responses.

### Results

**Research Question 1:** To what extent is gender studies integrated into the teacher education curriculum in Nigeria?

**Table 1: Responses on the Extent Gender Studies is Integrated into the Teacher Education Curriculum in Nigeria**

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	N	REMARK
1	University curriculum includes dedicated courses on gender studies.	2.68	0.97	370	HE



2	Topics related to gender equality, inclusivity are consistently incorporated into my teacher education courses.	2.33	1.03	370	LE
3	There are adequate training on how to address gender-related issues in classroom settings.	2.29	1.01	370	LE
4	Gender perspectives are integrated into teaching methodologies, learning materials in my department.	2.20	1.04	370	LE
5	Lecturers frequently discuss gender-related issues during lectures.	2.22	1.00	370	LE
6	The teacher education curriculum in the university promotes equal representation of male and female historical figures and scholars.	2.67	0.96	370	HE
7	There is access to learning resources (books, articles, and media) that focus on gender studies.	2.29	1.02	370	LE
8	The university actively organizes seminars or workshops on gender education for students.	2.23	1.00	370	LE
<b>Grand Mean and Standard Deviation</b>		<b>2.36</b>	<b>1.00</b>		

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The result on Table 1 above revealed that the overall mean of (2.36) falls below the decision benchmark of 2.5, indicating a low extent of integration of gender studies content into the teacher education curriculum at Prince Abubakar Audu University. Only two out of the eight items with mean (2.68) and (2.67) were rated above the threshold, suggesting that while gender studies may be formally included in the curriculum, its practical and comprehensive integration remains limited. Most items related to classroom practice, teaching methodologies, training, and resource availability were rated low, signaling insufficient emphasis on gender-sensitive

teaching practices. The implication of this would be that although foundational steps toward gender studies content inclusivity may exist, there is a notable gap in the curriculum's depth, delivery, and reinforcement, which may hinder the ability of future educators to challenge gender biases and promote equity effectively thus, limiting their readiness to thrive in a globally competitive, inclusive educational environment.

**Research Question 2:** What is the impact of gender studies based on the perception of undergraduate teacher education students in Nigeria?

**Table 2: Responses on the Impact of Gender Studies Based on the Perception of Undergraduate Teacher Education Students in Nigeria**

S/N	ITEMS	(Mean)	SD	N	REMARK
1	Studying gender-related topics has makes one more aware of gender biases in educational settings.	2.70	0.95	370	HE
2	Understanding of gender equality has improve due to the gender studies content in my courses.	2.35	1.03	370	LE
3	Gender studies positively influenced ones attitude toward gender roles in society.	2.65	0.99	370	HE
4	It helps recognize the importance of promoting gender-sensitive teaching practices.	2.67	0.97	370	HE
5	Learning about gender issues changed my perspective on career opportunities for men and women.	2.66	0.98	370	HE



6	The knowledge of gender studies encourages one to advocate for inclusive policies in education.	2.68	0.96	370	HE
7	Gender studies content often feels too theoretical and disconnected from real classroom experiences.	2.21	1.06	370	LE
8	Discussions on gender in my programme sometimes reinforce stereotypes instead of challenging them.	2.18	1.08	370	LE
<b>Grand Mean and Standard Deviation</b>		<b>2.51</b>	<b>1.00</b>		

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The table 2 above revealed that the cumulative mean of 2.52 indicates a high extent of impact of gender studies based on the perception of undergraduate teacher education students at Prince Abubakar Audu University. Out of the eight items analyzed, six items were at high level with (mean  $\geq 2.5$ ); showing a strong level of extent among respondents that gender studies have significantly shaped their awareness, attitudes, and advocacy related to gender issues despite earlier results that indicated limited content integration in the curriculum. Specifically, students reported increased awareness of gender biases, improved attitudes toward gender roles, greater recognition of the importance of gender-sensitive teaching, and stronger support for inclusive educational policies. This suggest that gender studies have positively influenced the mindset of many future educators, equipping them with the

perspective needed to foster equity and inclusivity in schools. However, the two items with means less than (2.5), showed that some students feel the content is too theoretical and at times reinforces stereotypes, pointing to a gap between theory and practice. The implication is that while gender studies have had a meaningful impact on the students, curriculum designers/developers, and alike lecturers must work towards making the content more practical, relatable, and critically engaging, so students could apply gender concepts effectively in real classroom and societal contexts.

**Research Question 3:** What are the barriers hindering the inclusion of gender studies content in university programs in Nigeria?

**Table 3: Responses on the Barriers Hindering the Inclusion of Gender Studies Content in University Programmes in Nigeria.**

S/N	ITEMS	Mean (Mean)	SD	N	REMARK
1	The teacher education curriculum in the university does not prioritize gender studies as a core subject.	2.32	1.02	370	LE
2	There is a lack of qualified lecturers to effectively teach gender studies in my university.	2.29	1.01	370	LE
3	Cultural religious beliefs discourage the full inclusion of gender studies in teacher education programs.	2.65	0.96	370	HE
4	Many students and lecturers do not see gender studies as essential to teacher education.	2.61	0.98	370	HE
5	The university administration provides little to no funding for gender-related research and programmes.	2.41	1.00	370	LE
<b>Grand Mean and Standard Deviation</b>		<b>2.45</b>	<b>0.99</b>		

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The result on Table 4 showed that the cumulative mean of 2.52 indicates a high level of perceived barriers hindering

the inclusion of gender studies in university programmes. While two main barriers (cultural/religious beliefs) with



mean (2.65) and lack of perceived importance by students and lecturers with mean (2.61) were affirmed, other factors like curriculum prioritization, qualified lecturers, and funding support were below expectation for the respondents, with mean scores being below (2.5). This suggests that although structural and resource-related challenges exist, the most significant obstacles are sociocultural perceptions and attitudinal resistance, highlighting the need for awareness campaigns and mindset shifts to foster broader integration of gender studies in teacher education.

### Discussion of the Findings

The findings from table 2 on the extent to which gender studies is integrated into the teacher education curriculum in Nigeria revealed a generally low extent of integration. Although the item on ‘university curriculum includes dedicated courses on gender studies’ was affirmed, other items were perceived at low extent, indicating that gender studies is not comprehensively embedded in the teacher education programmes. This suggests that while there are some structural recognition of gender studies in curriculum design, its operationalization across teaching practices, materials, and discourse remains weak. This minimal integration contradicts the inclusive goals of teacher education and impairs the development of gender-sensitive educators.. This was confirmed by the study done by Awe, Osiesi, and Tilije (2021) which found that gender perceptions significantly influenced students’ orientation towards teaching roles and responsibilities. The implication is that curriculum designers must go back to the drawing board to ensure that adequate level of content is made available to students in the curriculum

The results in table 2 reported that some gender discussions reinforce stereotypes or are too theoretical. This criticism reflects represents a disconnect between theory and practice. When gender education lacks practical relevance or fails to challenge dominant norms, it risks losing credibility among students. This affirms the research by Adebayo (2022) who noted a similar challenges in his analysis of institutional politics and the shortage of specialist researchers in Nigeria’s gender studies centers, indicating a systemic issue in content delivery and

educator capacity. Therefore, it becomes imperative that teacher education must be done with sincerity of purpose and intentionality towards ensuring that observed gaps are bridged through the conversion of theoretical content to find practical use.

Table 3 results showed barriers hindering the inclusion of gender studies in university programs. The items on cultural/religious beliefs discourage full inclusion and many students and lecturers do not see gender studies as essential were acceptable to the respondents. This implies that sociocultural resistance and institutional neglect are significant obstacles to gender studies integration. These findings echoed Omoregie and Abraham’s (2009) study, which identified cultural and traditional beliefs as central to gender disparities in Nigerian education. The present study aligns with this, showing that belief systems and administrative inaction limit curriculum innovation. Furthermore, the data confirmed Cizel & Çizel’s (2014) position that psychological and social variables such as learned helplessness and gender norms shape how individuals perceive structural barriers like the glass ceiling. In the Nigerian context, traditional gender socialization in educational spaces perpetuates these mental models, impeding progress. Even when content is available, its acceptance depends on shifting deep-seated cultural attitudes. It then implies that educational stakeholders must find reasons to take up awareness campaigns and dymistify where possible all standing barriers and hindrances to the inclusion of gender studies contents in teacher education curriculum.

### Conclusion

The conclusion that could be drawn from the study based on the findings stands that even though gender studies helps students understand gender equality better and makes them more open-minded, it is still not widely taught adequately as it should. This is mostly because of cultural beliefs, lack of support from schools, and people not seeing gender studies as important. These results matter a lot, noting that if nothing is done urgently, Nigerian teacher training programmes may keep passing on old-fashioned ideas about gender that don't match today’s world..



### Recommendations

Based on the finding of this research, the following recommendations were made:

1. The management of Prince Abubakar Audu University should revise and expand her education syllabi to include and make compulsory, practical-based gender studies courses.
2. Faculty members should adopt experiential and real-life classroom examples when teaching gender content, this knowledge will be available to them through attendance to conferences.
3. It is required that awareness campaigns should be launched within the university community to address misconceptions about gender studies, using peer education programs, public lectures, etc.
4. The management of the university since it is currently under the leadership of a woman as head of the institution should do well to sponsor programmes that would break barriers that challenges gender equality.

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