

# The Influence of Parental Background on Academic Performance in English Language Among Senior Secondary School Students in the West Coast Region, The Gambia, West Africa

Fatty, Fatou K<sup>1</sup>, Prof. Liu Changhai<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Education, Huazhong University of Science and Technology Wuhan Hubei Province P.R China (430074) , The University of Education The Gambia, West Africa.

<sup>2</sup>School of Education, Huazhong University of Science and Technology Wuhan Hubei Province P.R China (430074)

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.12110038>

Received: 18 November 2025; Accepted: 27 November 2025; Published: 04 December 2025

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the *'Influence of Parental Background and Socio-economic Status on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in English Language in the West Coast region of The Gambia, West Africa'*. Recognizing the critical role of English Language education in national development and individual career advancement, the research aims to understand how parental qualifications and economic conditions affect students' achievement in this subject. A quantitative survey methodology was adopted, involving 150 respondents from two selected secondary schools in the region. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed to determine the relationship between parental factors and student performance. The findings reveal a significant correlation between parents' educational attainment and socio-economic status and students' performance in English Language. Students whose parents had higher qualifications and better economic means tended to perform better, while those lacking such support faced academic challenges. The study concludes that parental involvement, both in terms of educational support and socio-economic provision, is crucial to improving students' outcomes in English Language. It recommends that parents be more actively engaged in their children's education by providing the necessary academic exposure, encouragement, and material support to foster better performance in the subject.

**Key Words:** Parental background, Academic Performance, children, English Language, Students, The Gambia

## INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the influence of parental background on the academic performance of secondary school students in English Language, with a particular focus on students' pedagogical content knowledge in the West Coast region of The Gambia. In recent years, concerns have grown among teachers, school administrators, and parents regarding the consistently low performance of students in English Language at the secondary school level in this region. Given that English serves as the official language of communication in The Gambia, students' mastery of the subject is critical not only for their academic success but also for their future career opportunities and national development.

The study adopts the theoretical lens of social constructivism to highlight the role of parental experiences and involvement in enhancing children's academic achievement. It posits that the social, economic, educational, and occupational background of parents significantly shapes the level of academic support and socialization their children receive at home. These factors, in turn, influence the students' ability to develop strong pedagogical content knowledge in English Language. Furthermore, the paper explores how the social facilitation effects of parental background vary depending on family structure, socio-economic status, individual differences among children, and peer interactions. Part Three of the paper discusses the link between pedagogical content knowledge and students' academic performance, while Part Four analyzes how parental background specifically affects performance in English Language. Part Five outlines the study's methodology, and Part Six presents the data collected from the field, along with its analysis and interpretation. Finally, Part Seven offers a conclusion

that summarizes the key findings and provides practical recommendations aimed at addressing the challenges identified in the study. By investigating these relationships, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on educational equity and performance, emphasizing the importance of parental support in shaping student outcomes in English Language education in The Gambia.

### **Theoretical Model and Assumptions**

Social constructivism, as a theory of teaching and learning, was initially introduced by Jerome Bruner in 1966. He posited that individuals construct knowledge about the world through direct experience and subsequent reflection (Takaya, 2008). Building upon this foundation, Vygotsky and Cole (1978) further developed social constructivism into a comprehensive theoretical framework. They argued that every function in a child's cultural development first emerges at the social level (inter-psychological) and is later internalized at the individual level (intra-psychological). This progression underscores the fundamental role of social interaction in the developmental process. Vygotsky emphasized that social engagement is essential not only for cognitive development but also for the formation of a lifelong personality, asserting that social learning significantly enhances intellectual growth (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). This helps learners to complete any task given to them in collaboration with colleagues and the teacher and build knowledge and comprehension by establishing a firm class (Khafaga1 et al., 2024). The argument of (Saleem et al., 2021) is that when people receive new knowledge, they reconcile it with the prior knowledge they have had or dismiss it as not important to them. They attempt to acquire knowledge by asking questions, investigating and evaluating issues and thereby develop knowledge as they attempt to gain knowledge from their experiences. The theory is related to the study in the sense that the parental background and occupation of the parents contribute immensely to the performance of a child from home. This gives students the preliminary experience and knowledge to utilize in school. This encourages learners to apply practical methods to gain knowledge, reflect and discuss the subject assignment in the classroom.

From the sociological point of view, social constructivism theory upholds the view that human development is socially situated and is constructed through interaction with others (McKinley, 2022). Underlying (McKinley, 2022) assumption is that individuals work together to construct artifacts hence the emphasis of social constructivism theory on cognition. The theory suggests that the natural world has a small or non-existent role to the play in the construction of scientific knowledge (Labinger & Collins, 2010). Despite it rejects the role of the superhuman of necessity in the invention or discovery of knowledge or its justification. Educational psychologists are concerned with the effects of social constructivism on teaching and learning. They examined the implication of teaching methods, students' motivation to learn and the overall teaching-learning processes, which in its theoretical standpoint is collaborative, interactive and transactional (knowledge exchange) ((Saleem et al., 2021).

The assumption of social constructivism theory is that knowledge is something that is actively constructed by learners based on their existing cognitive structures. It assumed that learning is relative to the stage of cognitive development of learners where they construct knowledge and build it through cognitive ground in which he/she grows up using teacher's pedagogical knowledge as cognitive framework. While the type of curriculum developed for learners plays a part in acquiring pedagogical content knowledge by students, parental influence and the methods of teaching plays supportive roles. In a learner centered curriculum where emphasis is placed on developing the pedagogical content knowledge of students, the aim of the teacher is to assist learners assimilate existing knowledge in school subjects. This in addition to the knowledge they acquire from their parents at home enables them to make the appropriate modifications or adjustment to classroom and school environment and correct common mistake with ease based on their existing intellectual framework and accommodate such information (Case, 1993). This according to Fleury and Garrison (2014) encourages students to apply practical methods to gain knowledge, reflect on it and discuss their work with their colleagues in the classroom. They argued that the social production of knowledge takes place in various circumstances and levels of sophistication. By interacting with others, the physical and immaterial environment, learners gain insight and experiences that help them at adulthood (Saleem et al., 2021). This concept of learning discourages learners from memorizing other people's ideas and encourages them to seek for and discover new knowledge. Indeed, people learn based on scientific observation, gain experience, reflect on them and use experiments to solve real-world problems.

According to social constructivism, learning is a collaborative process and as such pedagogical content knowledge developed from parents through the teacher to individual students' interactions with their culture and society (Carlson, 1999). Therefore, the relationship between parents' level of education and academic performance shows that there is significant positive relationship between parents' level of education and student's academic performance.

### **Conceptualizing Academic Performance of Students**

Scholars have used the term academic performance and academic achievement interchangeably in the discussion on the measurement of the learning abilities and outcome of students in schools. Academic achievement is considered to be equal to academic performance (Wang, 2021). Academic achievement is the direct manifestation of learning effectiveness which is a valid indicator that can be used to measure the effectiveness of teaching and learning at all levels of education (Zhu, 2016; Zhou & Siti, 2022). Pandey et al (1996) used the term academic to refer to academic work, school work, or the results achieved by students as a result of the accumulation of learning. While achievement refers to the completion and attainment of certain level of task that a student can achieve after a series of education or training, performance refers to the result of an examination in a subject or a whole course (Lamas, 2015). In a broad sense, academic achievement refers to the improvement of students' overall quality during the school years (Zhou & Siti, 2022). Austin (1984) argued that academic achievement has cognitive, non-cognitive, psychological and behavioural outcomes. It includes knowledge, values, attitude and skill or appropriate behavior (Bloom, 1956). The National Leadership Council on Liberal Education and America Promise assumed that academic achievement cannot be simply qualified in terms of admission rates and quality of degrees earned alone but how students acquire the knowledge and competences that are essential to their future life, work and civic activities (Zhou & Siti, 2022). It also includes all aspect of their knowledge, competences and literary development (Cai & Gao, 2019).

Similarly, academic performance measures a student's achievement in a particular subject and a combination of subject offered in schools. It is a reflection of the understanding and mastery of the course material given out to student to study in a term and academic session. This is usually assessed through examination and continuous assessment scores that are evaluated and graded to show how well a particular student has met their learning objectives in school. A teacher's pedagogical content knowledge is critical to designing the measuring instrument and effectively evaluating it.

The need to increase and improve the academic performance of students in schools (Romerhausen, 2013) remains a challenge to the global community. The academic performance which leads to the modification of the behavior of learners and plays significant role in the life of learners (Dutt, 2007; Mangal & Mangal, 2009) has been on the decline. Across the world, Africa and The Gambia in particular, parents care about the academic performance of their children because good academic performance provides more career opportunities and job security for their children (Bell, 2017). Studies have shown that students have different levels of academic performance due to differences in individual student's learning abilities, styles, skills, interest, strengths and weaknesses. This often results to variable learning outcome that is measured as academic performance (Timothy & Kammeryer-Mueller, 2007). The complexities that surround the academic performance of students and the disparities among them have been a source of concern to scholars and other significant stakeholders (Ikpi, Enya & Jothnny, 2014). This concern has been linked to the type of school, teaching methods, location of school, instructional materials, quality of teachers, teachers' experience as well as the parental background. Other concerns are linked to the non-application of the 5Es of social constructivism to teaching and learning where Piaget (1967) and Singh and Yaduvanshi (2015) laid emphasis on the need to engage, explore, explain, elaborate and evaluate on the topic taught in order to create a better understanding of scientific and technological knowledge of the subject taught for the improved performance of learners (Bybee, 2009; Singh & Yaduvanshi, 2015; Aljohani, 2017; Omotayo & Adeleke, 2019). These tools guide the teachers in the dissemination of subject specific information to learners and the evaluation of the performance in classroom test. Beside the teacher role is the responsibility of parents to facilitate learning of children for higher academic performance in English Language subject in secondary school.

---

## Parental Background and the Academic Performance of Students

The reports of many studies have shown the variable relationship between parental background and the academic performance of students in English Language subject in secondary schools in the West Coast region of The Gambia. Beside the pedagogical content knowledge of the teacher to understand and disseminate the knowledge about the English Language subject are the parental factors that impinge on the academic performance of school children. The major indices of the parental factors are discussed below.

Basically, the lack of active involvement of parents in the welfare of their children contributes to their poor academic performance in school (Ololube, 2023). Studies have shown that parents are in a position to provide the right guidance to children, mold their mindset and motivate towards effective learning and high academic performance, if complimented by the pedagogical content knowledge disseminated by teachers (Durand, at el, 2020). The socio-economic background of parents enhances the emotional stability of children and offer psychological boost to learning and higher academic performance. In support of this assertion, Ugwuja (2022) notes that psychological problems affect the potentialities of children to learn in schools. Denga (2020) in Eyake (2022) observed that praises, incentives, recommendations and other forms of reward system provided by parents motivates children to higher academic performance in schools. It has been noted that a child whose parents provide the necessary support has a great advantage over a child whose parents do not provide the type of incentives that supports higher performance hence the attitude of students to learning is shaped by the motivation provided by parents and the learning environment (Fan, at al, 2021). Indeed, individual members of the family serve as a role model to children as they navigate life experiences. Eyake (2022) quoted Adeyemi (2021) as saying that if parents fail to provide the child with the necessary equipments and guidance to fit properly into the society and future career, then the child educational career may be brought to ruin.

Furthermore, Orhungur (2022) asserts that the cultural background of parents determined to a large extent the academic performance of secondary school students. The socio-cultural settings of parents and its socializing influence mould the personality of the children especially in rural communities in The Gambia where culture dominant the way of life of rural dwellers. Parents speak their native languages with their children from birth to school age and adulthood. This factor constrained the ability of the children to learn English Language as he/she advances to the wider social space and in school and as Henderson and Mapp (2023) argued the educational upbringing of children.

Family structure also plays major role in the education of the child. Studies have shown that many of the children that dropped out of secondary school drop-outs are from broken homes and polygamous family (Walker, 2024). Parents with very large family size have higher responsibilities to educate their children. In many cases, such parents cannot afford school fees, uniform, textbooks and other basic instructional resources for their children leading to absenteeism, use of study time for manual labour to earn wage for school fee, missing of test and examination and eventual drop-out. The academic career and performance of most children have been affected by the separation of parents on grounds of different work station, divorce and natural death (Olmstead, 2023). The effect of single parenthood on children in school has debilitating effects on their academic performance especially in a very technical subject like English Language.

Another major factor is the economic status of parents. The monthly income earned by many parents is too low to support the substance needs of the family and the education of their children. Children from such family are often faced with malnutrition and other emotional and psychological problems associated with poverty. Orhungur (2022) argued that a low-income family with plenty of feeding problems may produce children that face physical and mental development challenges in the schools even when the pedagogical content knowledge of the teacher is high and the knowledge is effectively disseminated.

Similarly, Adewale (2023) argued that the socio-economic status of parents and household dynamics has an influence on students learning. Furthermore, Nwa-Chili (2020) argues that the socio-economic characteristics of parents have influence on the success or failure of the child in school. A child from high and middle socio-economic class is more likely to experience and acquire an elaborate language code whereas the child from the lower socio-economic class is faced with a restricted language code. A school isof course predominantly concerned with language elaborate code, therefore making it easy for a child from higher or middle class to

adjust. Children who spend their early age in economically privileged homes tend to perform more intelligently (Bradley & Corwyn, 2022; Larean, 2021) hence parental background can be used to explain most of the variance in students' academic performance than the schools itself (Lawson & Farah, 2022).

Furthermore, Sarigiani (2022) argued that the educational level of parent has profound influence on the academic performance of school children. The children of more educated parents tend to have higher aspirations and higher education plans and are exposed to after-school guidance, coaching and training at home and than their counterparts from illiterate parents (Sarigiani, 2022). Many parents want their children to maintain the status quo and as such they provide the necessary support that motivates their children to work towards getting good grades and qualify for admission into elite tertiary institution. As Mallan (2020) have claimed, this expectation motivates their children to do well at school hence the confidence parents reposed on their children help them to build self-confidence and goal-concept that is a catalyst to their educational achievement. However, Mallan (2022) warns that the high expectation placed by parents on children might impose stress that may be counter-productive and translate into poor educational performance.

Family social life also provides learning experiences that facilitates the performance of children in school. For example, if a child's parent is noted for reading books, attending educational classes, taking children to museums, libraries and education-oriented gatherings, the child is indirect engage learning experiences that facilitate high performance in school (Rana, 2022). However, the impact of social learning on children ability to learn and performance in school varies with the skills and learning abilities of children. Odoh and Ugwuanyi (2017) notes that the educational background of parents exerts enormous influences on the academic performance of children in school due to the career guide and counsel provided for the child at home. Supportively, Saila and Chamundeswari (2023) argued that a child from an educated parent is likely to follow the footsteps of his or her parent and work towards attaining the feet of their parent. However, most parents who had little or no formal education tends take more proactive steps towards ensuring that their children receive better education (Akujieze, 2003).

According to Evans (2021), lower income children have fewer stable families, greater exposure to environmental toxins and violence, and more limited extra-familial social support networks. Parents in such settings report lower educational expectations, less monitoring of children's schoolwork and less supervision of social activities compared to students from high socioeconomic and intact family. Evans further notes that low socioeconomic status children are less cognitively stimulated than high socioeconomic status children, as a result of reading less. Escarse (2003; 2013) pointed that due to residential stratification and segregation students from low-income backgrounds attend schools with lower funding and this reduces the achievement motivation of the students. However, Pedrosa et al (2023) pointed out that students whomostly come from deprived socioeconomic and education background performed relatively better than those from higher socioeconomic and educational background.

Parents are the primary persons in raising children in any society hence the family is regarded as the primary agent of socialization. It is through parents' efforts that children are socialized into productive citizenship (Adeyeye, 2023). Mudassir and Abubakar (2021) study in Malaysia reveals that students from parents with formal occupation perform better than their counterpart whose parents engages in informal occupation. However, they failed to account for the amount of time spent by parents on their occupation that affects students' academic performance. In his study, Graetz (2023) observed that parents that engage in inferior occupations earn lower incomes and often work longer hours to earn more income for their families. Such parents spent less time with their families and plays no role in careering guiding their children. A further study of the influence of parental background on the performance of school children carried out by Akujieze (2003) shows that the occupational status of parents determines the type of education parents give to their children. In a related manner, Ononuga (2005) states that the kind of occupation a parent engages in determine his income level and social status. These have implication on the type of school the children attend, their well-being in school, the quality of instructional materials provided by parents and mobility to and from school. However, this factor may not be the primary determinant of students' performance in all cases as most students from low-income families tend to do better in school than children from high income families.

Generally, the academic performance of students cannot be limited to factors tied to parental background alone. Other factors like teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, teacher-student relations, students' attitude to learning, commitment to the use of instructional resources, school administration, teacher's guidance, availability of laboratory for practical and food ration, especially, for boarding students (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2013) all combine to influence the performance of students in English Language subjects. Given that the knowledge gained by students in English language at the secondary school level provides the bedrock for higher knowledge and academic performance at the tertiary institution levels (Chindanya, 2012), the poor academic performance of students at the secondary school level is likely to limit the performance of students at the tertiary level where higher order communication in English Language is required.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative and descriptive research design to investigate, collect, and analyze data related to the influence of parental background on students' academic performance in English Language. According to Oriodho (2022), qualitative and descriptive approaches enable researchers to effectively gather, summarize, present, and interpret data in a manner that clearly communicates research outcomes. This framework guided the overall methodology of the study.

A total of 158 questionnaires were distributed to respondents in two purposively selected secondary schools in the West Coast Region of The Gambia, in line with the purposive sampling approach described by Hunt and Tyrell (2021) and Best and Khan (2023). Out of the total questionnaires distributed, 150 were successfully retrieved and used for data analysis.

To ensure the validity of the research instruments, expert reviews were conducted by faculty members from the Departments of English and Measurement & Evaluation. In addition, a pilot study was conducted in two private secondary schools to assess the reliability of the instruments. Based on the outcomes of the pilot test, necessary adjustments were made to improve clarity and effectiveness.

The final data were analyzed using simple percentages and the Chi-Square statistical test, which was applied to test the two hypotheses guiding the study.

### Research Hypothesis

The following propositions guide this study:

- Parental qualification has no significant relationship with the academic performance of English Language students' pedagogical content knowledge in West Coast Region Gambia.
- Socio-economic status of parents has no significant relationship with the academic performance of England Language students in West Coast Region, Gambia.

### Data Presentation and Interpretation

This section presents a detailed analysis of the empirical data gathered through fieldwork, focusing on two core dimensions influencing student academic performance: such as parental involvement, and the effect of parental income. Tables 5, 6, and 7 are critically analyzed and integrated with insights from existing literature. The data collected from the field through the use of questionnaires are presented below, with the results analyzed to highlight the key findings of the study.

**Table 1: Demographic distribution of Respondents**

Sex	No	CF
Boys	87 (58%)	58

Girls	63 (42%)	100
Total	150 (100%)	

Source: Field Work, April 2025.

The data from the above shows that boys are 87 (58%) and girls' respondents were 63 (42%) of the student respondent's population. The result shows the predominance of boy respondents over girl respondents, which reflects the demographic dynamics of students' enrolment in the case study secondary schools in the West Coast region of The Gambia. A recent study carried out by UNESCO (2023) note that socio-cultural norms and economic pressure still disproportionately affect access of girls to education, particularly in rural areas. For instance, Adebayo et al. (2023) found that child marriage and domestic responsibilities contribute to early school dropouts among girls. By implication, gender-inclusive interventions are still critical. Ensuring parity in enrolment and retention, especially at the primary and lower secondary levels, remains a priority under the education Sector Plan.

**Table 2: Showing years spent in School by Respondents**

Years	Frequency	CF
Grade 1-2	42 (28%)	28
Grade 3-4	45 (30%)	58
Grade 5-6	58 (39%)	96
Grade 6 repeated	5 (3%)	100
Total	150 (100%)	

Source: Field Work, April 2025.

It is evident from data on table 2 that the numbers of students that questionnaire were administered in Grade 1-2 are 42 (28%), those in grade 3-4 are 45 (30%) and those in grade 5-6 are 58 (39%). Only 5 students that were repeating grade 6 (3%) were identified and given questionnaire to fill. The distribution of questionnaire to students across the grade levels in the secondary is to equitable representation of the view of respondents on the influence of parental background on the pedagogical content knowledge of English Language students in secondary schools in the West Coast region of The Gambia. This aligns with Uwaifo and James (2022), who observed that dropouts and grade repetition increase from upper primary due to poor foundational literacy and household income instability. Repetition in Grade 6 (3%) may also signal transition pressures to junior secondary school, where dropout rates spike (World Bank, 2023). This suggests that strengthening early grade literacy, school feeding programs, and parental engagement are vital to improving progression and completion rates.

**Table 3: Educational Background of Parents**

Qualification	Frequency	CF
Degree	27 (18%)	18
Diploma	36 (24%)	42
Professional Certificate	23 (15%)	57
WAEC	27 (18%)	75

Primary	15 (10%)	85
No formal education	22 (15%)	100
Total	150 (100%)	

Source: Field Work, April 2025.

The results from table 3 shows that parents of 27 (18%) students are degree holders, 36 (24%) have diploma certificate, 23 (15%) holds professional certificate, 27 (18%) holds the West African Examination Council certificate, 15 (10%) holds primary certificate and 22 (15) had no formal education. This result shows that majority of the students are from parents with low educational background which has implications on the type of school they attend (public school), access to instructional materials, timely payment of school fee, assistance with home work and career guidance. The findings from the research carried out by Olamide and Usman (2024) show that children of more educated parents tend to perform better academically due to more supportive home environments and emphasis on education. Similarly, Ojomo (2023) correlates parental education with school attendance, punctuality, and academic motivation. Therefore, policy initiatives such as parental education workshops and home-learning support programs are important for reducing intergenerational education disadvantage.

**Table 4: Socio-economic Background of Parents**

Occupation	Frequency	CF
Civil servants	33(22%)	22
Business man	31(21%)	42
Farmer	29(19%)	61
Craftman	26(17%)	78
Unemployed	31(21%)	100
Total	150(100%)	

The resulted from the questionnaire on the occupational background of the parents of student respondents shows that the parents of 33 (22%) students are civil servants, 31(21%) are businessmen, 29 (19%) are farmers, 26 (17%) are craftsmen and 31 (21%) are unemployed. This shows that majority of the students in the case study secondary schools in the Gambia are from an average income family, reflecting the socio-economic status of their parents. This aligns with Makanziza and Singirankabo (2024), who noted that children from low socio-economic backgrounds are at higher risk of poor school performance and dropout, especially where household income is irregular or below poverty thresholds. The 21% unemployment rate among parents is particularly worrying and may contribute to child labour or absenteeism. Reports from the National Bureau of Statistics (2023) indicate a direct link between parental unemployment and school non-completion, especially in rural areas. Therefore, strengthening conditional cash transfers (CCTs) and school incentive schemes (e.g., school meals, supplies) could mitigate the effect of economic disadvantage on learners.

The data on tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 collectively reflect persistent gender imbalance in schooling; and modest levels of parental education, which can impact student learning outcomes. Furthermore, it reflects majority of families from lower socio-economic classes, affecting affordability and commitment to education; and vulnerability to dropout risks, especially beyond primary school due to economic and educational background.

In view of this, one may suggest as follow:

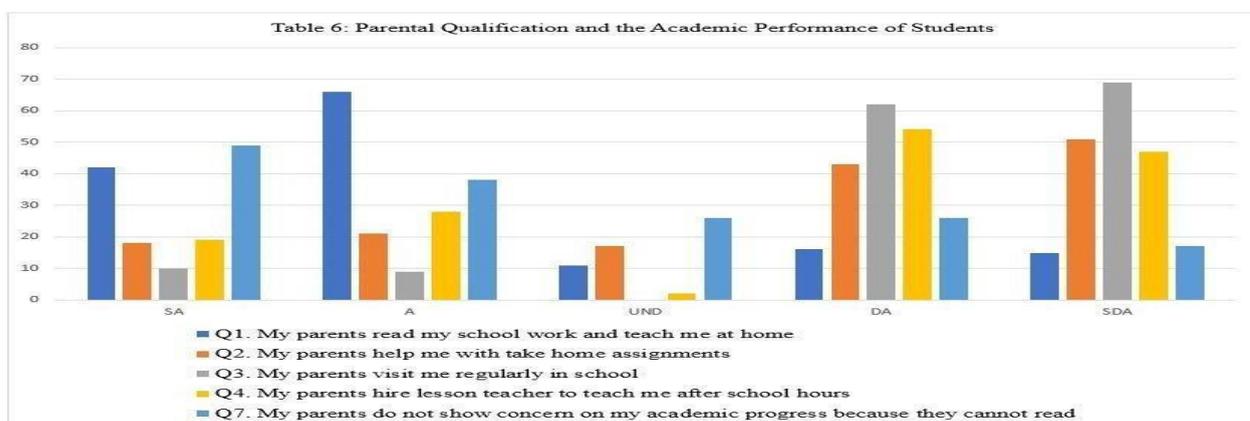
- i. Targeted Girl-Child Education Initiatives: Expand safe schools and community sensitization programs. This is in line with Nigeria’s National Gender Policy on Education (2022).
- ii. Community Learning Centers- provide adult literacy programs for parents to reinforce the importance of education at home.
- iii. Expand School-Based Support Systems- enhance school feeding, after-school programs, and psychosocial services especially for children from unemployed homes.
- iv. Strengthen Data-Driven Planning- leverage disaggregated data like these tables to inform district-level interventions (e.g., via the EMIS dashboard).

**Table 5: Parental Qualification and the Academic Performance of Students**

Questions 1-8	SA	A	UND	DA	SDA
Q1. My parents read my school work and teach me at home	42 (28%)	66 (44%)	11 (7%)	16 (11%)	15 (10%)
Q2. My parents help me with take home assignments	18 (12%)	21 (14%)	17 (11%)	43 (29%)	51 (34%)
Q3. My parents visit me regularly in school	10 (7%)	09 (6%)	00 (0%)	62 (41%)	69 (46%)
Q4. My parents hire lesson teacher to teach me after school hours	19 (13%)	28 (19%)	2 (1%)	54 (36%)	47 (31%)
Q7. My parents do not show concern on my academic progress because they cannot read	49 (33%)	38 (25%)	26 (17%)	26 (17%)	17 (11%)

Source: Field Work, 2025.

**Figure 1: Parental Qualification and the Academic Performance of Students**



The opinion of the respondents varies with the questions presented to them. On the question of the amount of time parents reach the school work of their children at home, 42(28%) agree, 66 (44%) strongly agree, 11 (7%) were undecided, 16 (11%) disagree and 15 (10%) respondents strongly disagree. In relation to question on parental assistance with take home assignment, 18 (12%) strongly agree, 21 (14%) agree, 17 (11) were undecided, 43 (29%) disagree and 51 (34%) strongly disagree. The responses of respondents to the parental visit to children in school, 10 (7%) strongly agree, 9 (6%) agree, 62 (41%) disagree and 69 (49%) strongly disagree. Where the students were asked to respond to, if their parents hire lesson teacher to teach them at home, 19 (13%) strongly agree, 28 (19%) agree, 2 (1%) were undecided, 54 (36%) disagree and 47 (31%) strongly disagree. The questions on the literacy level of parents and their concern for the academic progress of their children attracts varied responses from 49 (33%) that strongly agreed, 38 (25%) agree, 26 (17%) were undecided, 26 (17%) disagree and 17 (11%) strongly disagree.

From the empirical point of view, table 6 evaluates the extent of parental involvement in students’ education. Q1: 72% (SA + A) say parents spend time with them at home, suggesting emotional and moral support. Q2: Only 26% receive homework help, with 63% (DA + SDA) indicating a lack of support, possibly due to parents’ educational limitations or busy schedules. Q3: An overwhelming 87% report that parents rarely visit schools, indicating poor school engagement. Q4: 32% of parents hire lesson teachers, while 67% do not, likely due to financial or educational limitations. Q7: A significant number (58%) agree or strongly agree that parental illiteracy affects academic concern. These findings mirror the observations of Ogunniyi (2024), who contended that low levels of parental literacy and busy occupational schedules limit meaningful involvement in children’s education. Eze and Nwosu (2022) also highlight the negative implications of such disengagement on academic performance, especially in low-income or rural households.

**Table 6: Effects of socio-economic Status of Parental on Academic Performance of Students**

Questions	SA	A	UND	DA	SDA
Q1. My parents pay my school fees promptly every term	48 (32%)	53 (35%)	12 (8%)	18 (12%)	19 (11%)
Q2. My parents buy me uniform and the books I need in school	52 (35%)	64 (43%)	9 (6%)	13 (7%)	12 (8%)
Q3. My house is conducive for me to study at home	47 (31%)	61 (41%)	13 (7%)	17 (11%)	12 (8%)
Q4. My parents give me pocket money to buy my needs in school	44 (29%)	51 (34%)	11 (7%)	23 (15%)	21 (14%)

Source: Field Work, 2025.

good academic record are able to extend knowledge to their children through mentoring students in home work, paying visitations at school and contributing to school decisions and their academic performance in schools.

### Concluding Remarks

After the reconnaissance survey and the analysis of data, the convergence of findings from Tables 5, 6, and 7 highlights a multidimensional framework influencing student academic performance in the West Coast Region of The Gambia. Firstly, teacher competence emerges as a critical factor in facilitating student comprehension and overall academic achievement (Table 5). Secondly, while parental involvement—particularly in terms of educational and moral support—is recognized as important, it is often constrained by parental literacy levels and

time availability (Table 6). Thirdly, household income significantly affects students' access to educational resources and the quality of their learning environment (Table 7).

These findings support the integrated perspective advanced by Ebele and Ogochukwu (2024), which posits that effective educational outcomes are contingent upon the combined influence of teacher effectiveness, parental support, and economic capacity. Accordingly, improving student performance necessitates a holistic approach that includes enhanced teacher training, parent education initiatives, and broader economic empowerment programs.

The study also establishes a statistically significant relationship between parental background and student performance in the English Language, emphasizing the importance of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge. It was found that children's educational attainment is shaped not only by the school environment but also by the learning conditions within their homes. The occupational and economic status of parents, along with their income levels, directly influence the degree of support they are able to provide to their children, thereby affecting academic outcomes.

In light of these findings, the study recommends that stakeholders strengthen social support mechanisms aimed at enhancing students' academic performance in English Language across secondary schools in the West Coast Region. Specifically, it advocates for targeted interventions such as scholarships, the provision of free textbooks and essential learning materials for students from low-income households, and improved access to educational facilities. Furthermore, school administrators and policymakers should engage parents in supporting their children's academic efforts by assisting with homework, encouraging regular revision, and minimizing school absenteeism. Collectively, these measures have the potential to substantially improve student outcomes and contribute to the broader goals of national educational development.

## REFERENCES

1. Adegboye, R. and Musa, A. A. (2021). "Socioeconomic Factors and Educational Access in Nigeria: A Household Survey Analysis." *International Journal of Social and Educational Research*, 9(2), 25–41.
2. Adeshina, E. B. (2011). *Fostering the relationship between home and school: A case study of a senior secondary school in The Gambia*. Master Thesis, Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Jyväskylä: 1-93
3. Adeyeye, G. M. (2023). The influence of family structure on children's academic achievement: evidence from some selected secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria, *Eureka: Social and Humanities*, 2: DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21303/2504-5571.2023.002778>
4. Adewale, A. M. (2012). The effects of parental socio-economic status on academic performance of students in selected schools in Edu LGA of Kwara State Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 2 (7), 23- 25
5. Afolabi, M. O. (2022). *Pedagogical Content Knowledge and Effective Teaching in Nigerian Secondary Schools*. Lagos: Scholarly Press.
6. Ajayi, K. O. et al. (2021). Parents' Education, occupation and Real Mother's Age as predictors of Students' Achievement in Mathematics in Some Selected Secondary Schools in Ogun state, Nigeria.
7. Akujieze, N. (2003). Impact of parents' socioeconomic background on students' achievement in agricultural science at the secondary school level in Ogbomoso, Oyo state, Nigeria.
8. Aljohani, M. (2017). Principles of "constructivism" in foreign language teaching. *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*, 7(1), 97-107.2.
9. Ashton, P. T. (1990). Theme: Pedagogical Content Knowledge, *Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(3), 63-65
10. Austin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education, *journal of College Students Personnel*, 25 (4), 297-308
11. Bybee, R. (2009). A commissioned paper prepared for a workshop on exploring the intersection of science education and the development of 21st century skills. The BSCS 5E instructional model and 21st century skills. (RW Bybee, Ed.) USA: National Science Teachers Association. Pozyskane [http://itsisu.concord.org/share/Bybee\\_21st\\_Century\\_Paper.dostęp:14.12.2015](http://itsisu.concord.org/share/Bybee_21st_Century_Paper.dostęp:14.12.2015)].
12. Cao, Y., Goa, J., Lian, D., Rong, Z., Shi, J., Wang, Q. and Zhou, Y. (2018). Orderliness predicts academic

- performance: Behavioral analysis on campus lifestyle. *Journal of the Royal Society Interface*, 15, 146
13. Carlsen, W. S. (2023). Why do you ask? The effects of science teacher subject-matter Knowledge on teacher questioning and classroom discourse. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document. Reproduction Service NO. ED 293 181).
  14. Chen, A. and Ennis, C. D. (1995). Content knowledge transformation: an examination of the relationship between content knowledge and curricula, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 2(4): 389-401. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0742-051x\(94\)00041-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0742-051x(94)00041-4)
  15. Chindanya, A. (2012) Effects of Parental Involvement in the Education of Children. Unpublished D. Ed. Thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria.
  16. Chinyere, A. & Ibezim, O. K. (2023). "Teachers' Instructional Skills and Student Academic Achievement in English Language." *Nigerian Journal of Educational Research*, 31(2), 112–127. <https://doi.org/10.4314/njer.v31i2.6>
  17. Clinton, J., and Hattie, J. (2020) New Zealand students' perceptions of parental involvement in Learning and schooling. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 33 (3), 324-337.
  18. Cochran, K. F., DeRuiter, J. A., & King, R. A. (1993). Pedagogical content knowing: An integrative model for teacher preparation. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 44, 263-272
  19. Collins, H. M. (1981). "Stages in the Empirical Program of Relativism - Introduction". *Social Studies of Science*. 11 (1): 3. doi:10.1177/030631278101100101. S2CID 145123888.
  20. Durand, T. M., & Perez, N. A. (2021). Continuity and variability in the parental involvement and advocacy beliefs of Latino families of young children: Finding the potential for a collective voice. *School Community Journal*, 23 (1), 49-79.
  21. Ebele, G. N. and Ogochukwu, E. J. (2024). Rethinking Educational Success in Nigeria: Integrating Pedagogy, Parenting, and Poverty Alleviation. Abuja: Academic Lens Publishers.
  22. Escarce, J. J. (2003). Socioeconomic Status and the Fates of Adolescents, *Health Services Research*, 38(5):1229-33. DOI: 10.1111/1475-6773.00173
  23. Scarce, J. J. (2013). Socio-economic status and the fate of adolescents, *Education Research Journal*, 2(2) 106-113
  24. Evans, G. (2020). The environment of childhood poverty. *American Psychologist*, 59,77-98. *Family process*, 51(4), 483-497.
  25. Eze, M. U. and Nwosu, B. I. (2022). "Literacy Levels and Parental Engagement in Child Education in Enugu State." *African Review of Educational Development*, 27(3), 63–79.
  26. Fleury, S., and Garrison, J. (2014). Toward a new philosophical anthropology of education: Fuller considerations of social constructivism. *Interchange*, 45(1-2), 19-41. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358439655\\_Social\\_Constructivism\\_A\\_New\\_Paradigm\\_in\\_Teaching\\_and\\_Learning\\_Environment](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358439655_Social_Constructivism_A_New_Paradigm_in_Teaching_and_Learning_Environment) [accessed May 30 2025].
  27. Grossman, P. L., Wilson, S. M., and Shulman, L. (2022). Teachers of substance: Subject Matter knowledge for teaching. In M. C. Reynolds (Ed.). *Knowledge base for the beginning teacher* (pp. 23-36). Oxford: Pergamon Press.
  28. Graetz, B. (2023). Perspectives on socioeconomic status and school education: Australian Government Publishing service.
  29. Henderson and Mapp, M. (2020). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13, 1–22.
  30. Kanno, T. N. (2018). Guided discovery teaching method. In T. N. Kanno & U. M. Nzewi (Eds.). *Issues in Curriculum Development and Implementation in Nigeria*. Lagos: Foremost Educational Services Ltd. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358439655\\_Social\\_Constructivism\\_A\\_New\\_Paradigm\\_in\\_Teaching\\_and\\_Learning\\_Environment](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358439655_Social_Constructivism_A_New_Paradigm_in_Teaching_and_Learning_Environment) Accessed May 27 2025.
  31. Kennedy, M. (1990). Trends and Issues in: Teachers' Subject Matter Knowledge. Trends and Issues Paper No. 1. ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, Washington, DC. (ED#322 100)
  32. Kussmaul, C. and Pirmann, T. (2021). Guided Inquiry Learning with Technology: Investigations to Support Social Constructivism. *InCSEDU* (1): 483-490).
  33. Lamas, H. (2015). School performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology; Propositos y representacios*, 3 (1), 351-385
  34. Lawson, M. and Farah, J. (2022). A meta-analysis of the relationship between socioeconomic status and executive function performance among children. *Developmental Science*, 21(2).

35. Mallan, D. (2020). Relationship between Socioeconomic performance and students' academic performance of senior secondary school in Kebbi. Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, Usman Danfodiyo University Sokoto
36. Marks, R. (2023). Pedagogical content knowledge: From a mathematical case to a Modified conception. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 4(3) 41-42.
37. McKinley, J. (2015). "Critical Argument and Writer Identity: Social Constructivism as a Theoretical Framework for EFL Academic Writing" (PDF). *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*. 12 (3): 184–207. doi:10.1080/15427587.2015.1060558. S2CID 53541628. Retrieved 3 June 2025.
38. Mudassir, A., & Abubakar, N. (2021). The impact of parents' occupation on Academic performance in secondary school students. *Multimiginal Academic Journal of social sciences*, .3(1): 65-68
39. Mukanziza, J. and Singirankabo, E. (2024). Link between Socio-Economic Status and Students' Performance in Nine- and Twelve-Years Basic Education in Rwanda: Groupe Scholaire Saint Leon Nyarusange and Groupe Scholaire Nsinda. *Open Access Library*, 11 (7): 1-13
40. Odoh, L. C and Uhwaunayi, U. B. (2017). Influence of parental occupation and level of education on academic performance of accounting students in Nigeria, *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 7 (10): 21-27
41. Ogunniyi, T. A. (2024). "The Role of Home Background in Educational Outcomes: A Study of Low-Income Households." *West African Journal of Education and Society*, 8(1), 88–102.
42. Ogunshola, F., Adewale, A.M. (2012). The effects of parental socio-economic status on academic performance of students in selected schools in Edu Lga of Kwara State Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Research. Business Soc. Sci.*, 2(7): 230-239
43. Okebukola, P. A. (2020). *Breaking Barriers to Learning: The Culturo-Techno-Contextual Approach (CTCA)*. Sterling Publisher, Slough, UK., New Delhi
44. Olatunde, T. S. (2024). "Financial Constraints and Academic Performance in Nigerian Public Schools." *Educational Policy and Planning Review*, 11(4): 101–117.
45. Ololube, N. P., Onyekwere, L. A., and Agbor, C. N. (2015). Social stratification and mobility: how socio-economic status of family affects children's educational development and management. *Education*, 5(4), 111-122. DOI: 10.5923/j.edu.20150504.03
46. Omotayo, S. A., and Adeleke, J. O. (2017). The 5E Instructional Model: A Constructivist Approach for Enhancing Students' Learning Outcomes in Mathematics. *Journal of the International Society for Teacher Education*, 21(2), 15-26.23.
47. Omotoyinbo, D. W. (2020). Effectiveness of instructional materials in teaching English language in secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria, *International Journal of Research in Education Humanities and Commerce*, 1 (3): 72-83
48. Ononuga, F. (2005). Relationship between Socio-Economic Status and Academic Achievement in Economics. Unpublished B. Ed Project, University of Ibadan.
49. Oyeleye, B. O. and Ayodele, B. (2022). Availability of educational resources and principals' managerial effectiveness in secondary schools for educational sustainable development in southwest, Nigeria. *Journal of Economic, Social and Educational Issues*, 2(2), 125-133.
50. Pedrosa, L. et al. (2023). Educational and Social Economic background of graduates and academic performance: Consequences for affirmative action programs at a Brazilian Research University.
51. Piaget, J. (1967). *Development and Learning*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
52. Rana, M. (2022). The influence of parents' educational level on their children's academic performance. *Journal of Education practice*. Indus International Institute D.G. Khan
53. Rothstein, R. 2004. Class and schools using social economic and educational reforms to close the white and black achievement gap. Economic Policy Institute, U.S.A (PDF) Influence of Parental Occupation and Level of Education on Academic Performance of Accounting Students in Nigeria. Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344748096\\_Influence\\_of\\_Parental\\_Occupation\\_and\\_Level\\_of\\_Education\\_on\\_Academic\\_Performance\\_of\\_Accounting\\_Students\\_in\\_Nigeria#fullTextFileContent](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344748096_Influence_of_Parental_Occupation_and_Level_of_Education_on_Academic_Performance_of_Accounting_Students_in_Nigeria#fullTextFileContent)
54. Romerhausen, N. J. (2013). Strategies to enhance student success: A discourse analysis of academic advice in international student handbooks. *Journal of International Students*, 3(2), 129–139.
55. Saila, T. and Chamundeswari, S. (2021). Influence of parental occupation and level of education on academic performance of accounting students in Nigeria

56. Saleem, A. A, Huma Kausa, H. D. and Deebea, F. (2021) Social Constructivism: A New Paradigm in Teaching and Learning Environment. Available from:
57. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358439655\\_Social\\_Constructivism\\_A\\_New\\_Paradigm\\_in\\_Teaching\\_and\\_Learning\\_Environment](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358439655_Social_Constructivism_A_New_Paradigm_in_Teaching_and_Learning_Environment) Perennial Journal of History (PJH) 2(2): 403-421
58. Shah, S. O. and Hussain, M. (2021). Parental occupation and its effect on the academic performance of children, *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR)*, 8(8): 576-583. [www.jetir.org](http://www.jetir.org)
59. Sapungan, G. M. and Saungan, R. M. (2014). Parental Involvement in Child's Education: Importance, Barriers and Benefits. *Asian Journal of Management Sciences and Education*, 3(2): 42-48
60. Sarigiani, P. (2020). Self image and educational plans of adolescents from two contrasting communities. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, San Francisco
61. Singh, S. and Yaduvanshi, S. (2015). Constructivism in science classroom: Why and how. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 5(3), 1-5.
62. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358439655\\_Social\\_Constructivism\\_A\\_New\\_Paradigm\\_in\\_Teaching\\_and\\_Learning\\_Environment](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358439655_Social_Constructivism_A_New_Paradigm_in_Teaching_and_Learning_Environment) Accessed May 30 2025
63. Shulman, L. S. (1986). Pedagogical content knowledge: teachers' integration of subject matter, pedagogy, students, and learning environments: Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15: 4-14.
64. Shulman, L. S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57, 1-22.
65. Ugwuja, G. O. (2010). Influence of Family Background on the Academic Achievement of Senior Secondary School Students in Nsukka Educational Zone of Enugu State. Unpublished Master's
66. Degree in Sociology of Education, University of Nigeria UNESCO (2011). Family background and literacy performance <https://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/69/05591>. Retrieved March 7, 2020
67. UNESCO (2023). Education and Socioeconomic Status in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Regional Report. Paris: UNESCO Publishing. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000389097>
68. Vygotsky, S. (2021). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
69. Wang, Y. (2019). The development history and guiding significance of China's view of higher vocational education in the 40 years of reforms and opening up, *journal of Sichuan Vocational and Technical College*, 15: 119-123
70. Zhou, Z. and Siti, M. M. (2022). A literature review on the academic achievement of college students. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 20 (1) 11-18
71. Zhu, S. (2016). A review of college students academic achievement research, teaching and education. *higher Education Forum*, 271: 36-38
72. Xu, J., Guo, S., Feng, Y., Ma, Y., Zhang, Y., Nunez, J. C., and Fan, H. (2023). Parental Homework Involvement and Students' Achievement: A Three-level analysis, *Psicothema*, 36 (1): 1-14
73. Note: use the copy you forwarded to me and trace and delete all citation on pedagogical content knowledge in the reference section.
74. Carlson, H. L. (1999). From practice to theory: A social constructivist approach to teacher education. *Teachers and teaching*, 5(2), 203-218.
75. Case, R. (1993). Theories of learning and theories of development. *Educational psychologist*, 28(3), 219-233.
76. Chen, A., & Ennis, C. D. (1995). Content knowledge transformation: An examination of the relationship between content knowledge and curricula. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 11(4), 389-401.
77. Cochran, K. F., DeRuiter, J. A., & King, R. A. (1993). Pedagogical content knowing: An integrative model for teacher preparation. *Journal of teacher education*, 44(4), 263-272.
78. Gudmundsdottir, S., & Shulman, L. (1987). Pedagogical content knowledge in social studies. *Scandinavian Journal of Educationl Research*, 31(2), 59-70.
79. Hartmuth, D., Amin, R. M., Schlichting, D., Schött, S., Haudenschild, J., Küchenhoff, H., & Neuhaus, B. J. (2025). Developing science teachers' enacted pedagogical content knowledge through integration of student feedback into the Refined Consensus Model of pedagogical content knowledge. *Cogent Education*, 12(1), 2470563.

80. John-Steiner, V., & Mahn, H. (1996). Sociocultural approaches to learning and development: A Vygotskian framework. *Educational psychologist*, 31(3-4), 191-206.
81. Khafaga1, 2, A., & Al-Johani, H. M. (2024). The Impact of Virtual Learning on Students' Engagement in the Saudi EFL Context: A Connectivism-Theoretic Perspective. *World*, 14(3).
82. Labinger, J. A., & Collins, H. (2010). *The one culture?: a conversation about science*. University of Chicago Press.
83. McKinley, B. (2022). *Organizational Branding and Social Responsibility Strategies in Community Colleges: A Qualitative Inquiry* [Capella University].
84. Nilsson, P., & Vikström, A. (2015). Making PCK explicit—Capturing science teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in the science classroom. *International Journal of Science Education*, 37(17), 2836-2857.
85. Salamat, L., Saleem, M. A., & Akhter, N. (2024). Exploring the Need for Inclusive Teaching and Challenges of Students with Different Abilities to Receive Higher Education in the Public Sector Universities. *Journal of Social Horizons*, 1(2).
86. Saleem, A., Kausar, H., & Deebe, F. (2021). Social constructivism: A new paradigm in teaching and learning environment. *Perennial journal of history*, 2(2), 403-421.
87. Shulman, L. S. (2013). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Journal of Education*, 193(3), 1-11.
88. Shulman, L. S., & Shulman, J. H. (2004). How and what teachers learn: A shifting perspective. *Journal of curriculum studies*, 36(2), 257-271.
89. Takaya, K. (2008). Jerome Bruner's theory of education: From early Bruner to later Bruner. *Interchange*, 39, 1-19.
90. Vygotsky, L. S., & Cole, M. (1978). *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard university press.
91. Ward, P., & Ayvazo, S. (2016). Pedagogical content knowledge: Conceptions and findings in physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 35(3), 194-207.