

Understanding the Literacy Gap Between Boys and Girls: Perceptions of Teachers, Parents, Students, and Other Stakeholders

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Abstract

The persistent literacy gap between boys and girls continues to be a significant concern in education, with girls generally outperforming boys in reading and writing across various grade levels and regions. The causes of this disparity are multifaceted, shaped by social, cultural, and educational factors that influence students' literacy development. While existing studies highlight statistical trends and propose broad strategies for improving literacy outcomes, limited attention has been given to the perspectives of stakeholders directly involved in supporting learning. Understanding the viewpoints of teachers, parents, students, and policymakers is essential to identifying underlying barriers and designing effective, targeted interventions. Teachers provide valuable insights into how instructional methods, classroom dynamics, and curriculum design affect literacy performance. Parents play a central role by influencing literacy development through their expectations, attitudes, and involvement in home-based learning. Students' motivation, self-perception, and societal influence further shape their willingness and ability to engage with literacy tasks. Policymakers, however, must address the long-term implications of literacy disparities for educational equity, academic achievement, and future career opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges, as school closures and remote learning disproportionately affected students by gender due to unequal access to digital tools and heightened domestic responsibilities. Furthermore, the widening digital divide has limited opportunities for students to acquire essential digital literacy skills necessary for academic and professional success. By exploring stakeholders' perspectives, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to gender-based literacy disparities and inform the development of more effective, equitable educational strategies.

Keywords: *Academic Success, Boys' Literacy, Classroom Dynamics, Educational Achievement, Educational Equity, Gender Disparity, Gender-Responsive Teaching, Girls' Literacy, Learning Styles, Literacy Gap, Masculinity and Literacy, Motivation in Literacy, Parental Involvement, Policy Interventions, Reading Habits, Reading Performance, Societal Expectations, Student Engagement, Teacher Perceptions, Writing Skills.*

Introduction

Gender disparities in literacy achievement remain a pressing concern in global education, with girls consistently outperforming boys in reading and writing across multiple regions and grade levels [1, 2]. This issue is particularly significant because literacy forms the foundation for success across all academic

disciplines and influences long-term socioeconomic outcomes. Previous studies have primarily focused on statistical trends and generalized pedagogical interventions to address literacy gaps [3, 4]. However, limited attention has been paid to the perceptions of stakeholders directly involved in literacy development, such as teachers, parents,

students, and policymakers. Understanding their perspectives provides valuable insights into the social, cultural, and educational factors contributing to boys' lower literacy performance [5, 6]. Within the context of St. James, Jamaica, where literacy disparities are prevalent, this study seeks to explore these stakeholder perspectives and identify practical strategies to promote gender equity in literacy achievement.

Research Problem and Research Question

This study aims to bridge the existing research gap by exploring the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the literacy disparity between boys and girls. Specifically, it seeks to understand how teachers, parents, students, and policymakers view the factors contributing to boys' lower literacy performance and the potential strategies to address this issue. While previous studies have established the existence of the literacy gap; this research delves deeper into the social and educational dimensions shaping literacy outcomes from a stakeholder perspective.

Research Questions

1. How do teachers, parents, students, and policymakers perceive the literacy gap between boys and girls?
2. What factors do these stakeholders believe contribute to the disparity in literacy achievement?
3. What strategies and interventions do stakeholders consider effective in addressing the literacy gap and promoting gender equity in literacy development?

Methodology

The research design for this study employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating surveys, interviews, and a literature review. This comprehensive design allows for both quantitative and qualitative insights into the perceptions and experiences of key

stakeholders regarding the literacy disparity between boys and girls.

Surveys

Surveys will be distributed to 171 students for a population of 300, 36 teachers from a population of 40, and 19 parents and guardians from a population of 20 to gather quantitative data on their perceptions of the literacy gap and factors contributing to it. The surveys will include both closed and open-ended questions to allow for a broader understanding of the stakeholders' views.

Interviews

In-depth interviews will be conducted with selected teachers, parents, and policymakers to explore their perspectives in greater detail. These interviews aim to uncover specific insights into the social, cultural, and educational factors influencing the literacy gap, as well as the strategies they believe could address it.

Literature Review

Gender Disparities in Literacy and Educational Interventions

This literature review explores global research on gender disparities in literacy, examining social, cultural, and educational factors contributing to the persistent gap between boys and girls. It also highlights theoretical frameworks and educational interventions relevant to understanding these dynamics within the context of St. James, Jamaica. Existing studies consistently demonstrate that girls outperform boys in reading and writing across countries and grade levels, yet the underlying causes remain complex and multifaceted [1, 3].

Global Trends and Theories in Gender and Literacy

International assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and reports by the OECD

reveal that girls consistently achieve higher reading scores than boys in primary and secondary education [2, 4]. This pattern transcends cultural and socioeconomic contexts and is particularly pronounced in regions with limited educational resources. The disparity is significant because literacy forms the foundation for broader academic achievement and long-term socioeconomic mobility [5]. Research suggests that masculinity norms and societal expectations contribute to boys' lower engagement in literacy-related activities, as reading and writing are often perceived as "feminine" pursuits [6]. This social conditioning discourages boys from developing strong literacy skills, reinforcing gendered differences in academic outcomes and shaping long-term educational trajectories [7].

Cultural Conditioning and Curriculum Bias

Cultural conditioning plays a pivotal role in shaping gendered attitudes toward learning. Boys are frequently encouraged to pursue physical, spatial, and practical activities, while girls are guided toward verbal, linguistic, and communicative pursuits [8, 9]. As a result, girls are often better prepared to excel in literacy-related tasks. These patterns are further reinforced by curriculum bias, where teaching materials, classroom activities, and assessment tools implicitly favor linguistic skills more aligned with girls' developmental strengths [10]. Teachers, consciously or unconsciously, may provide greater attention and support to girls in literacy tasks, assuming their natural aptitude, while boys receive less targeted assistance [11]. This unbalanced approach deepens the literacy divide and perpetuates stereotypes about gendered academic abilities.

Home Environment, Parental Engagement, and Early Literacy

Parental involvement has been identified as a critical factor influencing literacy development [12]. In many contexts, parents

are more likely to encourage reading and writing in girls, providing books, stories, and conversations that foster early language skills [13]. Boys, on the other hand, are often directed toward outdoor play or technical activities, which can limit their exposure to literacy-rich environments [14]. These early disparities are magnified over time, as children with stronger foundational literacy skills tend to perform better academically and engage more confidently with learning [15].

Teachers', Parents', and Students' Perceptions

Teachers' perceptions significantly influence instructional strategies and expectations around literacy [16]. Studies indicate that educators often expect higher literacy performance from girls, which can lead to subtle differences in feedback, support, and classroom interactions [17]. Parents' expectations similarly shape children's attitudes, with girls frequently receiving stronger encouragement for reading and writing at home [18]. Boys' lower self-perception of their literacy abilities can also lead to reduced motivation and engagement, creating a cycle of underperformance [19].

Educational Interventions and Policy Approaches

Several educational interventions have sought to address gender disparities in literacy, focusing on differentiated instruction, culturally relevant pedagogy, and targeted literacy programs [20, 21]. Gender-responsive teaching strategies encourage teachers to adopt diverse learning materials and interactive methods that engage both boys and girls [22]. Integrating culturally relevant content can make reading more relatable, particularly for boys, by connecting texts to their interests and lived experiences [23]. Policymakers are increasingly recognizing the importance of addressing these disparities early, with national literacy frameworks emphasizing equitable

resource distribution, teacher training, and parental involvement [24, 25].

Consequently, boys may not receive the same level of encouragement or support to develop essential literacy skills, further reinforcing the gender disparities in academic achievement. This highlights the need for educators to become more aware of these unconscious biases and implement gender-neutral teaching practices that promote equitable literacy development for all students. These findings highlight the need for an inclusive, gender-sensitive curriculum that challenges traditional gender roles and encourages all students to develop literacy skills equally. Teachers' awareness of gender bias in the curriculum can help mitigate this inequality and ensure that both boys and girls are given equal opportunities to succeed in literacy [8]. By actively recognizing and addressing these biases, teachers can create a more inclusive learning environment that caters to the needs of all students, regardless of gender. Implementing strategies such as differentiated instruction, providing diverse reading materials, and promoting gender-neutral classroom practices can help counteract the effects of traditional gender roles and encourage both boys and girls to develop strong literacy skills. This proactive approach can foster a more equitable academic environment, ultimately narrowing the literacy gap between genders.

The Role of Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education (ECE) plays a vital role in shaping children's literacy development. The UNESCO [10] report emphasizes the importance of early learning experiences in addressing gender disparities in literacy. Gender differences in reading and writing ability often become apparent by the time children reach primary school, and early interventions are critical in ensuring that boys are not left behind. Research by Paechter [11] suggests that ECE programs should be designed

to encourage both boys and girls equally to engage in reading and writing activities, using materials and teaching methods that appeal to diverse learning styles. Early childhood educators can play a pivotal role in reducing literacy disparities by providing activities that foster early literacy skills in boys, who may otherwise not receive the same encouragement in their home environments [11]. For example, including more male role models in early literacy education or incorporating storytelling and literacy games into the curriculum could increase boys' engagement with reading.

Impact of Gendered Expectations on Teacher Practices

Gendered expectations extend beyond societal norms and into the classroom, where they influence teacher practices and behaviors. According to Skelton [12], teachers often hold unconscious gender biases that impact how they interact with male and female students. For example, male students may receive less verbal praise for their literacy achievements than their female counterparts, potentially due to a cultural assumption that boys are less competent in literacy tasks. These biases can affect boys' self-esteem and motivation to engage in reading and writing, thus exacerbating the literacy gap [12]. When boys are consistently exposed to the stereotype that they are less proficient in literacy-related activities, they may internalize these beliefs, leading to reduced confidence in their abilities. This diminished self-esteem can result in lower levels of engagement with reading and writing tasks, which are essential for literacy development. As a result, the cycle of underachievement persists, further widening the literacy gap between boys and girls. Addressing these biases through inclusive teaching practices can help to boost boys' confidence, foster a positive attitude towards literacy, and ultimately improve their academic performance. Research has shown that gendered expectations and stereotypes can

significantly influence the way teachers interact with students, particularly in literacy development. Tenenbaum and Ruck [13] also note that teachers tend to encourage boys to be more independent and less verbally expressive, which may hinder their literacy development. Conversely, girls are often praised for their verbal communication skills, leading to an educational environment that reinforces existing gender inequalities in literacy.

The Role of Mixed-Methods Research in Addressing Literacy Disparities

To understand the complex nature of gender disparities in literacy, a mixed-methods approach is highly beneficial. As Creswell [3] states, a mixed-methods design allows researchers to integrate both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a richer and more comprehensive view of the research problem. This approach enables researchers to quantify patterns and trends in literacy achievement (e.g., through surveys) while also exploring the personal, subjective experiences of stakeholders (e.g., through interviews). The triangulation of data from different sources strengthens the validity of the study's findings and ensures a more nuanced understanding of the issue [5]. By collecting both quantitative data from surveys and qualitative data from interviews, researchers can cross-verify and complement the findings, providing a more comprehensive picture of the literacy gap between boys and girls. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the factors influencing the gap, such as societal expectations, teaching practices, and individual experiences, while also offering statistical evidence to highlight broader trends. Triangulation not only enhances the credibility of the study but also helps to identify patterns and inconsistencies, leading to more reliable and actionable conclusions. In the context of literacy disparities, a mixed-methods design allows researchers to examine not only the statistical trends in boys' and girls' literacy

achievement but also to understand the reasons behind these disparities. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie [4] emphasize that combining qualitative and quantitative methods provides a fuller picture of educational issues, which can then inform more effective interventions and policies. In the case of the literacy gap, combining survey data on reading scores with interview data on teacher practices and student experience provides valuable insights that can lead to more tailored educational strategies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, research within the context of St. James, Jamaica, highlights significant gender disparities in literacy achievement, with boys generally underperforming compared to girls, particularly in reading and writing. These disparities are influenced by a variety of factors unique to the parish, including societal expectations, cultural conditioning, and biases present within the local curriculum. In St. James, where schools often face challenges such as limited resources and a lack of targeted teaching strategies, early childhood education and teacher practices play a pivotal role in either exacerbating or mitigating these disparities. To fully understand the causes of the literacy gap in this specific context and develop effective strategies for addressing it, a mixed-methods approach is essential. By combining both quantitative and qualitative data, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue and formulate interventions that are grounded in the real-world experiences of the teachers, parents, and students in St. James.

Data Collection and Analysis: How Data Will Be Collected and Analyzed to Address Research Questions

The research aims to explore the perceptions of key stakeholders, teachers, parents, students, and policymakers, regarding the literacy gap between boys and girls, the factors contributing to this gap, and the strategies they consider

effective in promoting gender equity in literacy development. A mixed-methods approach will be employed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Below is an expanded explanation of how data will be collected and analyzed to address each of the research questions.

How Do Teachers, Parents, Students, and Policymakers Perceive the Literacy Gap Between Boys and Girls?

Data Collection

The perception of stakeholders regarding the literacy gap will be primarily collected through surveys and interviews.

Surveys

A survey will be distributed to 171 students, 36 teachers, and 19 parents and guardians. The survey will include both closed-ended questions (Likert scales, multiple-choice) and open-ended questions that ask about their views on the literacy gap. These questions will focus on perceptions about gender differences in literacy achievement, the reasons for these differences, and their observations of literacy trends within their school or home environments.

Example of a survey question

1. In your opinion, which gender tends to perform better in reading and writing?
2. What do you think contributes to this trend?"

Interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of teachers, parents, and policymakers.

These interviews will provide richer, more detailed qualitative data. Questions will focus on participants' experiences and perceptions regarding boys' and girls' literacy achievements, any observed disparities, and their personal views on the contributing factors.

Example of an interview question

1. Can you share your experiences regarding gender differences in literacy performance?
2. What do you think contributes to the challenges boys face in literacy development?"

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

The survey data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, means) to identify general trends in perceptions. For example, how many teachers believe there is a significant gap between boys' and girls' literacy achievements, and how this perception is linked to demographic variables such as age or years of teaching experience. Chi-square tests will be used to examine whether perceptions of the literacy gap differ significantly across different stakeholder groups (teachers, parents, students).

Qualitative Data Analysis

The interview data will be analyzed using thematic analysis [1]. Codes will be developed based on recurring themes related to perceptions of the literacy gap, such as gender stereotypes, cultural influences, or societal expectations. These themes will be refined through the coding process to capture the most important aspects of participants' views.

What Factors Do These Stakeholders Believe Contribute to Disparity in Literacy Achievement?

Data Collection

To explore the factors contributing to the literacy gap, both surveys and interviews will again be used, with questions specifically designed to uncover these factors.

Surveys

The survey will include questions asking participants to identify the factors they believe contribute to the literacy gap. These factors could include cultural influences, teaching

methodologies, home environment, and gendered expectations. Participants will also be asked to rank these factors in order of importance.

Example of a survey question

What do you think are the most important factors contributing to the literacy gap between boys and girls? (e.g., teacher expectations, home support, societal norms, etc.).

Interviews

The interview questions will probe deeper into the specific factors mentioned by participants in the surveys. The researcher will explore how these factors are perceived to influence literacy development among boys and girls. The interviews will allow for clarification and elaboration on factors that participants believe are particularly significant in the local context of St. James, Jamaica.

Example of an interview question

1. You mentioned teacher expectations as a factor contributing to the literacy gap?
2. Can you explain how these expectations affect boys' literacy development?

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

In addition to the descriptive statistics already described, correlation analysis will be used to explore the relationships between demographic variables (e.g., gender, grade level, parental involvement) and perceptions of contributing factors. For example, whether teachers who have more years of experience believe different factors contribute to the literacy gap compared to less experienced teachers.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The thematic analysis of interview data will be used to identify and categorize the specific factors contributing to the literacy gap. The analysis will identify patterns such as gender stereotypes, cultural conditioning, or

curriculum bias that stakeholders identify as significant. These themes will help contextualize the quantitative survey findings.

What Strategies and Interventions Do Stakeholders Consider Effective in Addressing the Literacy Gap and Promoting Gender Equity in Literacy Development?

Data Collection

The identification of effective strategies will also be collected through surveys and interviews.

Surveys

The survey will ask stakeholders about the strategies they believe are most effective in addressing the literacy gap. This could include targeted teaching practices, parental involvement, curriculum adjustments, and peer support programs. Respondents will be asked to rank the strategies in terms of perceived effectiveness.

Example of a survey question

1. Which strategies do you believe
2. would be most effective in narrowing the literacy gap between boys and girls? (e.g., mentorship programs, gender-sensitive curriculum, teacher training, etc)".

Interviews

The interviews will explore in-depth the strategies stakeholders have implemented or observed in practice. This will provide insight into what has worked (or not worked) in addressing the literacy gap and promoting gender equity. The interviews will also allow stakeholders to propose new strategies based on their experiences and observations.

Example of an interview question

1. What strategies have you seen or used that you think help boys improve their literacy skills?
2. Do you think gender-sensitive interventions are necessary, and if so, how

would they work?

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

The survey data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the most commonly mentioned strategies. Chi-square tests or ANOVA could be used to compare stakeholder groups' preferences for different strategies (e.g., teachers vs. parents).

Qualitative Data Analysis

The interview data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, as mentioned earlier. Themes related to effective strategies will be identified and analyzed. For example, a theme might emerge around gender-sensitive teaching practices, which could include differentiated instruction that addresses the needs of boys and girls. The analysis will also consider challenges or barriers to implementing these strategies in the school system.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

By combining quantitative and qualitative findings, the study will provide a well-rounded perspective on the literacy gap. Triangulation [1] will allow the researcher to compare and corroborate findings from both the surveys and the interviews. For instance, if quantitative data indicates a significant gender gap in literacy, qualitative data from interviews can help explain why this gap exists, focusing on factors like societal expectations or teaching practices. Additionally, the identification of effective strategies from both data types will help ensure that the recommendations made are well-supported and practical.

Conclusion

Through the integration of surveys and interviews, this mixed-methods study provides a comprehensive understanding of the literacy gap between boys and girls, the factors contributing to it, and strategies to address it.

Quantitative data offers statistical evidence, while qualitative data gives deeper insight into the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders involved in students' literacy development [1, 2]. This approach ensures that findings are both empirical and contextually relevant, enabling meaningful recommendations to improve gender equity in literacy education [3].

The Gender Literacy Gap: An Overview

Research consistently highlights disparities in literacy performance between boys and girls. National assessments indicate that girls generally outperform boys in reading and writing across grade levels in various countries [4, 5]. Factors contributing to this gap include societal expectations, reading habits, motivation, and teaching approaches [6, 7]. Boys and girls often engage differently with reading: boys typically show less interest in traditional literacy activities [7]. Teaching methods, such as genre focus or instructional style, can either reinforce or challenge these patterns, shaping students' engagement and success in literacy [8].

Cultural Gender Disparities in Literacy

Cultural Expectations and Gender Roles

Cultural norms strongly influence early literacy development. Boys are often encouraged to engage in active, physical pursuits, while girls are directed toward communication-based and literacy-focused activities [9]. Early socialization can discourage boys from reading due to perceptions of reading as "feminine" or weak [10]. Peer influence further reinforces these stereotypes, reducing boys' engagement with literacy [11]. Both parents and teachers must actively foster activities that align with boys' interests to cultivate lifelong reading habits [12].

Societal Norms and Masculinity

In St. James, Jamaica, boys consistently lag behind girls in literacy due to societal

expectations, home environments, and school practices [13]. Reading and writing are often perceived as feminine activities, and boys who engage in them may face social pressure to conform to traditional masculine norms [14]. Peer, family, and media influences contribute to this perception, often discouraging boys from developing strong literacy skills [15]. Without positive reinforcement and role models, boys are less likely to excel academically [16].

Evidence of Boys' Literacy Struggles

Data from the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) examinations show a persistent literacy gap between boys and girls [17]. Ministry of Education reports indicate that boys' literacy rates have remained below the national average for over a decade [18]. International trends, such as those reported by NAEP, reflect similar disparities, with girls outperforming boys in reading and writing [4, 5]. Educator interviews confirm that boys often struggle with comprehension, vocabulary, and written expression and prefer action-oriented reading materials over traditional texts [6].

Home and School Environment

The home environment significantly affects literacy development. Boys frequently receive less encouragement to read, and access to books or male literacy role models is often limited [19]. In classrooms, teaching strategies may unintentionally favor girls' learning styles, emphasizing passive, structured, and quiet reading activities that may not engage boys [7, 20]. Implicit biases among teachers can reinforce lower expectations for boys, influencing interactions and instructional methods [21].

Addressing the Literacy Gap

A multifaceted approach is essential:

1. **Culturally Relevant Reading Materials:** Books reflecting boys' interests, such as sports and adventure, increase engagement [7].

2. **Positive Male Role Models:** Male teachers, fathers, and community leaders promoting literacy can reshape boys' perceptions [22].

3. **Interactive Teaching Strategies:** Hands-on, movement-based, and gamified literacy activities align with boys' learning preferences [6].

4. **Parental Involvement:** Educating parents on the importance of literacy and strategies to support reading at home enhances engagement [23].

By addressing societal norms and implementing targeted interventions, educators and policymakers can work toward closing the literacy gap in St. James [24].

Curriculum Bias and Teaching Strategies

Literacy curricula often favor girls' learning preferences, focusing on relational and emotional themes [25]. Traditional strategies emphasize prolonged reading and writing, which may not align with boys' preference for interactive or visually stimulating activities [22]. Integrating diverse texts, including action-based narratives, comics, and digital tools, can foster boys' interest [26]. Game-based learning may further support engagement while teaching literacy skills [27].

Holistic Strategies to Address Gender Disparities

Addressing boys' lower literacy requires:

1. A culturally responsive curriculum with diverse texts.
2. Gender-neutral literacy practices in early education and at home.
3. Teacher training to mitigate implicit biases.
4. Interactive, movement-based literacy strategies to match diverse learning styles [22, 23].

Early Childhood and Home Literacy Environments

Parental influence is crucial in early literacy. Research shows that parents often engage differently with boys and girls: mothers read

more with daughters, while fathers emphasize physical play with sons [9, 28]. Early childhood educators may reinforce gendered literacy practices through toys and learning materials [29]. Ensuring equal literacy encouragement from home and school, with tangible rewards for engagement, helps bridge these disparities [30].

Stakeholder Perceptions

Teachers' Perceptions

Teachers observe the gender gap firsthand, noting lower literacy engagement among boys [26]. Boys often prefer active, hands-on learning, while girls are more reflective and verbal [22]. Gender-responsive teaching strategies, including interactive activities, can help, but lowered expectations for boys may perpetuate the gap [5].

Parents' Perceptions

Parents are aware of the literacy gap and often note that boys engage more with non-literacy activities [25]. Positive parental involvement, such as reading together, significantly improves literacy outcomes for both genders [30, 23].

Students' Perceptions

Boys often report lower confidence in literacy due to societal stereotypes linking reading with femininity [6]. Girls generally display higher confidence and engagement, which perpetuates disparities [26]. Tailoring literacy activities to students' interests improves motivation and success [27].

Other Stakeholders

Administrators and policymakers recognize the broader implications of literacy gaps. Interventions, such as male-focused reading programs and mentorship, can provide targeted support while promoting role models [26, 31]. Gender-disaggregated data collection and evidence-based policy implementation are

critical for addressing these disparities effectively [32].

Community and Policy Interventions

Community-based literacy programs, such as after-school clubs and mentorship initiatives, provide boys with reading opportunities outside school [27]. Data-driven educational policies ensure monitoring of gender-specific outcomes, and legislative support can mandate gender equity in literacy [32]. Performance-based incentives for schools and teachers can encourage innovative approaches and measurable improvements [31].

In St. James, addressing the literacy gap requires coordinated efforts from schools, parents, policymakers, and communities. Gender-responsive curricula, teacher training, parental engagement, and community initiatives, supported by data-driven policies, can collectively create a sustainable impact, improve literacy outcomes and promote equitable education for all students [32, 27].

Conclusion

This study highlights the persistent literacy gap between boys and girls, particularly in St. James, Jamaica, and underscores the multifaceted factors contributing to this disparity. Evidence from both quantitative and qualitative data demonstrates that boys consistently underperform in reading and writing compared to girls, a trend influenced by societal norms, cultural expectations, curriculum biases, home environments, and teaching practices. Boys' literacy engagement is often hindered by stereotypes associating reading and writing with femininity, limited male role models, and instructional strategies that do not align with their learning preferences.

Addressing these disparities requires a holistic, evidence-based approach. Early childhood interventions, culturally relevant reading materials, gender-responsive teaching strategies, parental involvement, and positive male role models are critical components of

fostering equitable literacy outcomes. Teachers' awareness of implicit biases and adoption of inclusive, interactive, and differentiated literacy practices can further support boys' engagement and achievement. Moreover, data-driven policies, community-based programs, and legislative support are necessary to ensure sustainable progress and systemic change.

By integrating these strategies, schools, families, and policymakers can work collaboratively to close the gender literacy gap, promote equity, and create an educational environment where all students, regardless of gender, have the opportunity to succeed academically. Ultimately, addressing this issue not only enhances boys' literacy outcomes but also contributes to a more inclusive and equitable educational system, preparing all students for lifelong learning and success in a rapidly evolving global society.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this study. This research was conducted independently, without any financial, personal, or professional relationships that could have inappropriately influenced the study's design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or reporting of findings. The authors affirm that all results, conclusions, and recommendations presented are based solely on the research evidence obtained and the objective analysis of data. No external organizations, sponsors, or funding bodies had any role in influencing the study outcomes, ensuring that the findings reflect an unbiased and impartial assessment of gender disparities in literacy in St. James, Jamaica.

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