

Gendered Cultural Capital Shaping Academic Success among Students at Higher Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how gendered cultural capital shapes academic success among students in universities and educational institutions. Drawing on Bourdieu's framework of cultural capital and intersectionality theory, the research explores how gendered socialization, curriculum design, pedagogical practices, mentorship networks, and institutional structures influence students' acquisition, deployment, and recognition of cultural resources. Eight major themes were analyzed: 1) gendered socialization and early formation of cultural capital, 2) gendered access to educational resources, 3) curriculum and epistemic bias, 4) classroom dynamics and pedagogical practices, (5) mentorship, networking, and professional opportunities, 6) intersectionality and compounded inequalities, 7) student agency and resistance, and 8) institutional policies promoting equity. Findings indicate that male and female students experience differential opportunities and constraints in accumulating and utilizing cultural capital, with intersectional identities further amplifying disparities. The study highlights the importance of inclusive curricula, equitable access to resources, supportive mentorship, and institutional interventions that recognize diverse forms of cultural capital. By foregrounding the gendered dimensions of cultural capital, the research offers insights for policymakers, educators, and institutions seeking to foster equitable pathways to academic achievement and professional development.

Keywords: Gendered Cultural Capital, Academic Success, Higher Education, Intersectionality, Pedagogical Practices, Mentorship, Institutional Equity

Introduction

The concept of cultural capital, as articulated by Bourdieu (1986), emphasizes the ways in which non-economic resources such as knowledge, skills, educational credentials, and social dispositions shape individuals' access to opportunities and social mobility. Inside educational contexts, cultural capital is not distributed evenly (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Reay et al., 2009); it is often mediated by gender norms and expectations that influence students' academic trajectories, aspirations, and experiences (Crenshaw, 1989; Lareau, 2011). Gendered cultural capital refers to the differential accumulation, valuation, and deployment of these resources along gender lines, shaping how male and female students navigate institutional structures, participate in classroom activities, and access academic recognition (Arnot & Reay, 2007; Eagan et al., 2014). These dynamics underscore the importance of examining not only what forms of cultural knowledge are rewarded in higher education but also how gendered socialization shapes students' capacity to acquire and utilize these resources effectively (Francis & Skelton, 2001).

Universities and educational institutions serve as critical sites where cultural capital is both transmitted and contested, yet the gendered dimensions of this transmission remain underexplored (Shoaib, Shamraiz, Baneen, & Abdullah, 2026c; Shoaib & Ullah, 2026). From curricular content and classroom interactions to mentoring opportunities and peer networks, the ways in which cultural capital is acquired and recognized reinforce existing gender hierarchies (Shoaib, Shamraiz, Baneen, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026d). For instance, students socialized into behaviors traditionally associated with masculinity has been more likely to assert authority (Shoaib, Shahzadi, Shamraiz, & Abdullah, 2026a; Shoaib, Shamraiz, Abdullah, & Shahzadi, 2026a), negotiate leadership roles, and gain recognition for academic excellence, whereas female students experience constraints in the same spaces due to socialized norms of comportment and participation (Shoaib, Shamraiz, Abdullah, & Shahzadi, 2026b; Shoaib, Shamraiz, Baneen, & Abdullah, 2026b). Understanding how gendered cultural capital shapes academic success thus requires a nuanced analysis of both structural and interpersonal factors within educational institutions, offering insight into persistent inequalities and potential avenues for fostering equitable academic environments.

Study Context

The relationship between cultural capital and educational outcomes has been widely examined in sociology and educational research (Shoaib, Shahzadi, Shamraiz, & Abdullah, 2026b, 2026c), with Bourdieu's framework providing a foundational lens to understand how social resources translate into academic advantage (Shoaib, Shahzadi, & Abdullah, 2026; Shoaib, Shahzadi, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026). Cultural capital encompasses not only formal qualifications but also dispositions, language skills, knowledge of cultural codes, and behaviors that align with institutional expectations (Shoaib, Iqbal, Baneen, & Abdullah, 2026b, 2026c). However, existing research increasingly highlights that access to and recognition of cultural capital is not gender-neutral (Shoaib, Iqbal, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026a; Shoaib, Iqbal, Baneen, & Abdullah, 2026a). Socialization processes, familial expectations, and societal norms influence how male and female students acquire, embody, and deploy cultural capital,

affecting their engagement, performance, and progression within educational institutions (Shoaib, Ahmed, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026b; Shoaib, Iqbal, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026b).

In the context of universities and higher education, gendered differences in cultural capital manifest in multiple ways (Shoaib, Ahmed, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026a, 2026c): choice of academic disciplines, participation in classroom discussions, leadership in academic projects, access to mentorship networks, and even self-perception of competence (Shoaib, Abdullah, & Baneen, 2026a, 2026b). However, male students benefit from social norms that encourage assertiveness and public recognition (Shamraiz, Shoaib, Baneen, & Shahzadi, 2026a; Shoaib, Abdullah, & Baneen, 2026c), female students often navigate subtle constraints shaped by gendered expectations, potentially limiting the effective utilization of their cultural and social resources (Shahzadi, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026; Shamraiz, Shoaib, Baneen, & Shahzadi, 2026b). Understanding these dynamics is crucial, as it sheds light on persistent disparities in academic success (Shahzadi, Shoaib, & Abdullah, 2026; Shahzadi, Shoaib, Baneen, & Abdullah, 2026), informs policy interventions aimed at equitable educational practices (Ali, Abdullah, & Shoaib, 2026; Larijani, Shoaib, & Abedi, 2026), and highlights the need for institutions to create inclusive environments where all students fully leverage their cultural capital (Ahmed, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026b; Ali, Abdullah, & Shoaib, 2026).

The Data and Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design to examine how gendered cultural capital shapes academic success among students in universities and educational institutions. Drawing on Bourdieu's framework of cultural capital and intersectionality theory, the research aimed to explore the nuanced ways in which gendered socialization, curriculum design, pedagogical practices, mentorship networks, and institutional structures influence students' acquisition, deployment, and recognition of cultural resources.

Data were collected through purposive sampling of published research documents, including peer-reviewed journal articles, ethnographies, policy analyses, and theoretical studies relevant to gendered cultural capital in higher education. The selected sources were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved iterative coding, identification of recurring patterns, and refinement to derive eight major analytical themes: 1) gendered socialization and early formation of cultural capital, 2) gendered access to educational resources, 3) curriculum and epistemic bias, 4) classroom dynamics and pedagogical practices, 5) mentorship, networking, and professional opportunities, 6) intersectionality and compounded inequalities, 7) student agency and resistance, and 8) institutional policies promoting equity.

The qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the complex interactions between gender, cultural capital, and academic outcomes, emphasizing the subjective experiences, institutional contexts, and structural constraints that shape educational trajectories. By synthesizing insights across multiple studies, the research identifies patterns of advantage and disadvantage in the accumulation and recognition of cultural capital, highlighting actionable implications for policy, pedagogy, and institutional reform aimed at fostering equitable academic success.

Results and Discussion

Theme 1: Gendered Socialization and Early Formation of Cultural Capital

Gendered socialization plays a foundational role in shaping the types of cultural capital students acquire before entering higher education (Ahmed, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026; Ahmed, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2026a). From early childhood, societal norms and familial expectations influence the skills, knowledge, and behaviors considered appropriate for boys and girls (Waris, Shoaib, Sharif, & Abdullah, 2025a, 2025b). For example, boys have been encouraged to engage in analytical problem-solving, assertive communication, or competitive activities, fostering confidence and public recognition of their abilities (Waris, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025; Waris, Shoaib, Sharif, & Abdullah, 2025c). In contrast, girls are often socialized toward cooperation, emotional intelligence, and domestic-oriented skills have not been institutionally rewarded in academic settings dominated by traditional measures of achievement (Shoaib & Zaman, 2025; Shoaib, Zaman, & Abdullah, 2025). These early experiences create differential exposure to knowledge, dispositions, and behaviors that form the basis of gendered cultural capital, shaping students' comfort, participation, and perceived legitimacy within educational institutions (Shoaib, Waris, Zaman, & Abdullah, 2025a, 2025b).

The early formation of gendered cultural capital has long-term implications for academic trajectories in universities (Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025c; Shoaib, Waris, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025). Students enter higher education with pre-formed dispositions, confidence levels, and ways of navigating institutional expectations that align with or challenge prevailing gender norms (Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025b; Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025b). Male students often find themselves better positioned to assert authority, negotiate leadership roles (Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025a; Shoaib, Waris, & Iqbal, 2025a), and gain visibility in academic spaces, whereas female students require additional effort to translate their skills into recognized academic capital (Shoaib, Tariq, & Iqbal, 2025b; Shoaib, Tariq, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2025). Recognizing this dynamic highlights the importance of addressing structural and cultural biases in both pre-university and university settings (Shoaib, Shamsher, & Iqbal, 2025; Shoaib, Tariq, & Iqbal, 2025a). By understanding how gendered socialization shapes early cultural capital, educators and policymakers design interventions that support equitable preparation and access to academic success for all students (Shoaib, Rasool, Zaman, & Ahmed, 2025; Shoaib, Shamsher, & Iqbal, 2025).

Theme 2: Gendered Access to Educational Resources

Access to educational resources is a critical determinant of students' ability to acquire and deploy cultural capital, yet this access is often shaped by gendered expectations and structural inequalities (Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025c; Shoaib, Rasool, Zaman, & Abdullah, 2025). In many educational contexts, male and female students experience differential availability of learning materials, technological tools, and extracurricular opportunities that directly influence their academic preparation (Shoaib, Rasool, & Zaman, 2025a, 2025b). For instance, male students have greater encouragement or familial support to pursue STEM-related resources (Shoaib, Rasool, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025b; Shoaib, Rasool, Kalsoom, & Ali, 2025), workshops, or competitions, whereas female students face subtle discouragements or

societal expectations that prioritize domestic responsibilities over academic engagement (Shoaib, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2025b; Shoaib, Rasool, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025a). These disparities not only affect knowledge acquisition but also shape students' confidence and perceived legitimacy in academic spaces, reinforcing pre-existing gendered advantages and constraints in cultural capital accumulation (Shoaib, Rasool, & Iqbal, 2025a, 2025c).

Gendered access to resources also manifests in institutional practices and policies within universities and educational institutions (Shoaib & Kausar, 2025; Shoaib, Kausar, Ali, & Abdullah, 2025). Library facilities, laboratory usage, mentorship programs, and research opportunities have been unevenly accessed due to scheduling (Shoaib, Iqbal, & Iftikhar, 2025; Shoaib, Iqbal, Rasool, & Abdullah, 2025), social networks, or implicit biases favoring male participation (Shoaib & Bashir, 2025; Shoaib, Batool, Kausar, & Abdullah, 2025). Additionally, students from marginalized socio-economic backgrounds often experience compounded challenges (Shoaib, Ali, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025b; Shoaib, Ali, & Kausar, 2025), with female students disproportionately affected by financial constraints or cultural norms limiting their mobility and resource utilization (Shoaib, Ali, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025c). Understanding these dynamics underscores the importance of institutional interventions aimed at equitable resource distribution (Shoaib, Ali, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025c; Shoaib, Ali, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025a), mentorship, and supportive learning environments, enabling all students to maximize their cultural capital and succeed academically regardless of gender (Shoaib, Ali, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025b).

Theme 3: Curriculum and Epistemic Bias

Curriculum design and content play a pivotal role in shaping the forms of cultural capital that are recognized and valued within educational institutions (Shoaib, Ali, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025a), often reflecting epistemic biases that intersect with gender (Shoaib, Ahmed, Zaman, & Abdullah, 2025). Many curricula are historically rooted in male-dominated perspectives, prioritizing knowledge, theories, and examples that align with masculine experiences and interests (Shoaib, Ahmed, & Usmani, 2025b). This privileging marginalizes the experiences and contributions of women, leading female students to encounter academic content that is less relatable or less rewarding in terms of institutional recognition (Shoaib, Ahmed, & Usmani, 2025a). Such epistemic bias not only affects engagement and motivation but also influences how students develop and deploy cultural capital, as success is often tied to mastery of knowledge forms that reflect dominant gendered norms (Shoaib & Abdullah, 2025; Shoaib, Ahmed, & Iqbal, 2025).

The gendered nature of curricular biases has tangible implications for academic achievement and career trajectories (Shoaib, 2025a, 2025b). Male students find themselves aligned with disciplinary norms that valorize assertiveness, technical reasoning, or leadership-oriented skills, enhancing their academic visibility and opportunities for advancement (Ali, Shoaib, & Kausar, 2025; Iqbal, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025). In contrast, female students need to exert additional effort to translate their knowledge and competencies into forms that are institutionally acknowledged (Ali, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025a, 2025b). Moreover, curricular biases interact with other structural factors including as classroom dynamics and

assessment practices to perpetuate gendered disparities in educational outcomes (Ali, Shoaib, Iqbal, & Abdullah, 2025a, 2025b). Recognizing and addressing epistemic biases through inclusive curriculum design, diversified content (Ali, Shoaib, & Ali, 2025), and critical pedagogy is therefore essential to enable all students to effectively leverage their cultural capital for academic success (Ahmed, Shoaib, & Zaman, 2025).

Theme 4: Classroom Dynamics and Pedagogical Practices

Classroom dynamics and pedagogical practices are central to the ways in which gendered cultural capital is recognized, reinforced, or constrained within educational institutions (Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2024b; Shoaib, Zaman, & Abbas, 2024). Teachers' expectations, interaction styles, and evaluation methods often reflect implicit gender norms, influencing students' participation, engagement, and academic confidence (Shoaib, Ali, & Abbas, 2024; Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2024a). For instance, male students have been encouraged to speak up, challenge ideas, or take leadership roles in group activities, which aligns with institutional measures of academic visibility and authority (Shoaib, 2024e; Shoaib, Abdullah, Naqvi, & Ditta, 2024). Female students, on the other hand, have been subtly socialized to adopt passive (Shoaib, 2024c), compliant, or supportive roles, which limit opportunities for recognition and the accumulation of culturally valued academic capital (Shoaib, 2024b, 2024d). These dynamics underscore the role of the classroom as a site where gendered power relations intersect with institutional definitions of knowledge and competence (Ali, Zaman, & Shoaib, 2024; Shoaib, 2024a).

Pedagogical strategies further shape the deployment and effectiveness of students' cultural capital (Shoaib, Shehzadi, & Abbas, 2023; Shoaib, Usmani, & Abdullah, 2023). Active learning approaches, group-based assessments, and discussion-oriented classes favor students who are already socialized to assert themselves, whereas students navigating gendered expectations hesitate to fully participate or voice their perspectives (Shoaib, Naseer, & Naseer, 2023; Shoaib, Rasool, Anwar, & Ali, 2023). The differential experiences of male and female students in these settings compound over time, affecting academic performance, self-efficacy, and access to mentorship or research opportunities (Shoaib, 2023c; Shoaib, Mustafa, & Hussain, 2023). Addressing these inequities requires intentional pedagogical interventions, such as inclusive teaching practices, awareness of gender biases (Shoaib, 2023b), and strategies that encourage equitable participation, ensuring that all students leverage their cultural capital to achieve academic success (Shoaib, 2023a).

Theme 5: Mentorship, Networking, and Professional Opportunities

Mentorship and professional networks play a crucial role in shaping students' ability to translate cultural capital into tangible academic and career success, yet access to these resources is often gendered (Shoaib, Usmani, & Ali, 2022; Ullah, Shoaib, Ali, & Ullah, 2022). Male students frequently benefit from established networks and mentorship opportunities that align with dominant institutional cultures, providing guidance, sponsorship, and visibility in academic and professional arenas (Shoaib, Mustafa, & Hussain, 2022; Shoaib, Tariq, Shahzadi, & Ali, 2022). Female students, in contrast, face challenges in accessing mentors, particularly in male-dominated disciplines, and encounter subtle biases that limit inclusion in influential networks

(Shoaib, Anwar, & Rasool, 2022; Shoaib, Mehmood, & Butt, 2022). These disparities affect the acquisition of symbolic and social capital, influencing career trajectories, research opportunities, and professional recognition within and beyond universities (Shoaib, Ali, Anwar, & Abdullah, 2022; Shoaib, Anwar, & Mustafa, 2022).

The impact of gendered access to mentorship and networking extends to the development of competencies and confidence necessary for academic success (Ali, Shoaib, & Abdullah, 2022; Ullah & Shoaib, 2021). Students with robust support networks gain insider knowledge about navigating institutional norms, securing research positions, and leveraging professional connections, reinforcing their cultural capital (Shoaib & Ullah, 2021a, 2021b). Female students often have to exert additional effort to build similar networks or navigate environments where their contributions are undervalued, which hinder the full utilization of their skills and knowledge (Shoaib, Iqbal, & Tahira, 2021; Shoaib, Rasool, & Anwar, 2021). Addressing these inequities requires deliberate institutional strategies, including formal mentorship programs (Shoaib, Fatima, & Jamil, 2021), networking initiatives targeted at underrepresented genders (Shoaib, Ali, & Akbar, 2021), and policies that encourage equitable access to professional development, ensuring that all students maximize their cultural capital for academic and career advancement (Shoaib, Ali, Anwar, & Shaukat, 2021; Shoaib, Ali, & Naseer, 2021).

Theme 6: Intersectionality and Compounded Inequalities

The concept of intersectionality highlights how gender interacts with other social categories such as class, ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic status to produce compounded inequalities in access to cultural capital and academic success (Shoaib, Ali, Anwar, Rasool, et al., 2021). Students do not experience gender in isolation; their opportunities and constraints are shaped by overlapping identities that amplify disadvantage (Shoaib, Ahmad, Ali, & Abdullah, 2021). For instance, female students from lower socio-economic backgrounds face both gendered expectations and financial or cultural barriers that limit access to educational resources, mentorship, or extracurricular activities (Shoaib & Abdullah, 2021). Such compounded inequalities influence not only the acquisition of cultural capital but also its recognition and validation within universities and educational institutions (Shoaib, Abdullah, & Ali, 2021).

Intersectional dynamics also affect how students navigate institutional structures and negotiate their academic trajectories (Shoaib, 2021). Male students from marginalized ethnic or socio-economic groups similarly encounter obstacles, but these challenges often intersect differently with gendered expectations, shaping the forms of cultural capital that are valued or devalued (Ali, Shoaib, & Abdullah, 2021). Understanding these layered disadvantages is essential for creating equitable educational policies and interventions, as it moves beyond a binary analysis of gender to consider the complex realities of students' lived experiences (Ahmad, Shoaib, & Shaukat, 2021). By addressing intersectional barriers, institutions foster environments where all students, regardless of gender or intersecting identities, have the opportunity to acquire, deploy, and be recognized for their cultural capital, promoting more inclusive pathways to academic success (Abdullah & Shoaib, 2021a; Ahmad, Ahmad, Shoaib, & Shaukat, 2021).

Theme 7: Student Agency, Resistance, and Negotiation of Gender Norms

Students are not passive recipients of gendered cultural capital; they exercise agency in negotiating, resisting, and redefining the gendered expectations embedded within educational institutions (Abdullah & Shoaib, 2021b; Shoaib, Abdullah, & Ali, 2020). Female students, in particular, adopt strategies to assert their competence, seek visibility, or challenge restrictive norms, thereby transforming their cultural capital into recognized academic achievement (Shoaib & Ullah, 2019). Male students also navigate expectations around masculinity, balancing assertiveness with collaboration, to maximize their academic and social opportunities (Ahmad, Ahmad, & Shoaib, 2016). This active engagement demonstrates that cultural capital is not merely inherited or constrained by socialization but has been strategically mobilized in response to institutional and societal pressures (Shoaib & Rafique, 2015).

The negotiation of gender norms is closely linked to students' academic trajectories and self-perception (Rafique & Shoaib, 2015). Acts of resistance such as participating in male-dominated disciplines, taking leadership roles, or pursuing unconventional academic interests allow students to expand the scope and recognition of their cultural capital (Shoaib, Shaukat, Khan, & Saeed, 2013). However, such strategies are often met with varying degrees of institutional and peer support, reflecting the persistence of gendered power relations in educational settings (Shoaib, Latif, & Usmani, 2013). Understanding student agency highlights the dynamic interplay between structure and individual action, revealing how students both reproduce and challenge gendered inequalities (Anwar, Shoaib, & Javed, 2013). Encouraging environments that support diverse expressions of cultural capital thus empower students to overcome restrictive norms and achieve equitable academic success (Shoaib, Saeed, & Cheema, 2012).

Theme 8: Institutional Policies, Equity, and Pathways for Inclusive Academic Success

Institutional policies play a critical role in shaping how gendered cultural capital is recognized, valued, and deployed within universities and educational institutions (Shoaib, 2021). Policies related to admissions, curriculum design, mentorship programs, resource allocation, and assessment practices either reinforce existing gendered disparities or promote equitable opportunities (Shoaib, 2021). Institutions that fail to address implicit biases, unequal access to resources, or gendered expectations risk perpetuating structural barriers that limit the academic success of marginalized students (Anwar, Shoaib, & Shahid, 2024; Anwar, Shoaib, Zaman, & Arshad, 2024; Arshad, Anwar, & Shoaib, 2024). Conversely, intentional policies designed to ensure equity, inclusivity, and support for underrepresented genders create pathways for all students to effectively leverage their cultural capital, enhancing both academic achievement and professional development (Abdullah, Usmani, & Shoaib, 2023; Anwar, Shoaib, & Mustafa, 2022; Mariam, Anwar, & Shoaib, 2022; Naseer, Shoaib, Ali, & Bilal, 2021).

Equity-focused institutional strategies extend beyond policy formulation to the creation of supportive environments that encourage participation, representation, and recognition for diverse student groups (Shoaib, 2021). Examples include gender-sensitive mentoring programs, inclusive pedagogical practices, flexible access to learning resources, and initiatives that actively address intersectional barriers. By

embedding equity in institutional structures, universities have not only mitigated the effects of historical and cultural biases but also foster a culture where students of all genders are empowered to develop, deploy, and have their cultural capital acknowledged (Ali, Shoaib, & Syed, 2021; Anwar, Shoaib, & Zahra, 2021; S Mariam, Anwar, Shoaib, & Rasool, 2021; Naseer, Shoaib, Ali, & Ahmad, 2021). Such approaches ensure that academic success is not predetermined by gendered socialization or access disparities, but is attainable through deliberate institutional support and inclusive practices (Shoaib, 2021).

Theoretical Insights

The concept of cultural capital, as articulated by Bourdieu (1986), provides a foundational lens to understand how non-economic resources such as skills, knowledge, dispositions, and credentials mediate educational success. Bourdieu emphasizes that these resources are socially distributed and often reproduce existing inequalities, as institutions reward cultural competencies aligned with dominant social norms. In the context of higher education, gendered socialization shapes the acquisition of cultural capital, creating differential readiness and confidence among male and female students (Lareau, 2011). For example, boys have been socialized toward assertiveness and public engagement, aligning with institutional expectations, whereas girls have been encouraged toward compliance and relational skills, which are less readily recognized in academic evaluation systems (Arnot & Reay, 2007). Epistemic structures within curricula further reinforce gendered patterns of cultural capital, privileging knowledge and behaviors associated with masculinity (Francis & Skelton, 2001). Classroom dynamics, teacher expectations, and pedagogical strategies amplify these effects, as participation and visibility often determine the recognition of academic competence (Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). Access to mentorship, professional networks, and institutional resources constitutes another dimension of gendered cultural capital, shaping both immediate academic outcomes and longer-term career trajectories (Eagan et al., 2014). Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) highlights that gender does not operate in isolation; students' experiences are mediated by socio-economic status, ethnicity, and other social markers, compounding inequalities. Finally, student agency demonstrates that cultural capital is not purely deterministic; students strategically negotiate and resist gendered expectations to enhance their academic outcomes (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Reay et al., 2009). Collectively, these theoretical insights underscore the complex interplay between gender, cultural capital, and institutional structures in shaping educational success.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that academic success in higher education is profoundly shaped by gendered cultural capital, reflecting the interplay of socialization, institutional structures, and individual agency. From early childhood, gendered norms influence the acquisition of knowledge, dispositions, and skills, resulting in differential preparedness for university-level engagement. Within educational institutions, curricular biases, pedagogical practices, and classroom dynamics further reinforce gendered advantages and constraints, privileging forms of cultural capital aligned with dominant masculine norms. Access to mentorship, professional

networks, and institutional resources also remains uneven, disproportionately affecting female students and those from marginalized socio-economic or ethnic backgrounds. Regardless of these structural constraints, students exercise agency by negotiating and resisting restrictive norms, strategically mobilizing their cultural capital to achieve academic recognition. Institutional policies that prioritize equity, inclusivity, and resource accessibility are therefore critical to mitigating gendered disparities. Overall, the findings highlight that understanding and addressing the gendered dimensions of cultural capital is essential for creating equitable academic environments, ensuring that all students fully leverage their knowledge, skills, and social resources to achieve academic and professional success.

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