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STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN SOCIAL STUDIES AS CORRELATES OF MORAL VALUES AND PERCEPTION IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Africans attach much importance to their culture and tradition. These moral values which are the things that people feel are right, proper and desirable to them and so they are highly cherished. The Nigerian government and policy makers have noted the importance of Social Studies as an inter-disciplinary subject which emerged on the curricula of primary and secondary schools as a result of the quest for relevance in the Nigerian education. The colonial education system was criticized for not being relevant both in purpose and content to the immediate needs of the Nigerian child and the society at large. Equally, most students are interested in Social Studies because it is perceived as a discipline which can promote good behaviour. Therefore moral values which are considered desirable that every good citizen should possess are those that could be achieved through the teaching of Social Studies. A 30 item achievement test was administered on 150 junior secondary school students randomly selected from five secondary schools in the south-west region of Nigeria. Data were analysed using Pearson Moment Correlation (PPMC). The findings of this study revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between students' level of moral values and their perception of Social Studies. Therefore, these call for improved approaches of teaching Social Studies because the subject can positively influence students' moral values.

KEYWORDS

Moral Values, Perception, Social Studies, Students' Performance.

INTRODUCTION

 Social Studies is primarily concerned with the study of people, their activities and relationships as they interact with their physical and socio-cultural environment. Its methodology lays emphasis on finding out, understanding and coping with various problems confronting human beings in the course of survival in their environment. Numerous scholars in the field defined Social Studies as a discipline through which human beings learn about the problems of survival (Ajitoni, 2008; Animasaun, 2005; Fadeyiye, 2005; Ogundare, 2000). As an inter disciplinary subject, Social Studies emerged on the curricula of primary and secondary schools. Today, in facing the challenges of positive values and attitudes, Social Studies is a major part of the school curriculum. It celebrates the uniqueness of the child as it is expressed to each child's intelligence, personality and potential for development (Adeyemi, 2005).

The curriculum of Social Studies has adapted a student centered approach. In this process, understanding the students' perceptions towards Social Studies curriculum is of great importance. The activities that are included in the Social Studies curriculum are researching, drama, and group work activities, field trips, cooperative learning, discussion, mind mapping, brainstorming to mention a few. The integration of information and student activities can help revitalize teachers and students. This can help to improve and develop the quality of education by providing curricular support in difficult subject areas. To achieve these objectives, teachers need to be involved in collaborative projects and development of new teaching strategies. However, the neglect of teaching moral values in schools is hurting our students and causing problems in society. If a person has never learned any moral values, how will she or he able to discern the difference between right and wrong? That is basically the essence of moral values education

Every day students are exposed to violence, dishonesty, and other social problems in the media and the real world. In our daily news and media reports according to Ojebiyi and Salako (2010), one is fed with one serious act of misbehavior or the other in our educational institutions. Such acts include disregards for rules, violation, agitation, secret cult activities, intergroup feuds, abduction, injuries or death to mention just a few. Adu (2004), attributed all to absence of a sense of desirable moral values. Social Studies as a discipline if properly programmed and effectively taught should help to solve social problems that are facing developing countries and the world at large where the old norms are fast losing their grips and no effective substitutes to replace them (Fadeyiye, 2005).

Knowledge gained in school is only one goal of education. The primary goals of education should be enabling students to gain knowledge and moral values. But the real change in the parameters of Social Studies is in its gradual incorporation of the most worrying health issues of our times. As people adjust to situations, as a result of their knowledge, experience and social interactions with other people Social Studies is expected to enable its learners adjust to prevailing circumstances (Ojebiyi and Salako, 2010). Students are expected to develop positive attitudes and values which are the anticipated outcomes of Social Studies teaching because it is designed to nurture the child in all aspects of life – cognitive, spiritual, emotional, moral, social and physical. It is against this background Social Studies as a subject has relevance to everyday life. The underlying philosophy is the teaching of the young about national, international and ethnic concepts as a way of building global citizenship (Yusuf, 2004).

THE GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL STUDIES

The philosophy of Social Studies Education is geared towards formulation of ideas: Integration for national development and the interaction of persons are all aspects of the subject. The objectives stated according to National Policy on Education (Faideye, 2005):

- (1) Development of a capacity to expect, recognize, tolerate, adapt to and encourage social change;
- (2) Development of a capacity recognize, analyze and deal intelligently with complexity and ambiguity in social, economic and political issues;
- (3) Development of a capacity to experience multiple loyalties and identifications;

- (4) Development of a sense of involvement in and sensitivity to the realities of the human condition to moral, social, economic and political situations;
- (5) Development of an understanding of and skills in the formulation of proposition, in distinguishing descriptive, explanatory, predictive and value claims; and in the use of models of inquiry and problem solving.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

MORAL VALUES AND DELINQUENCY

The role of morality on delinquent behavior has only briefly been explored in the literature, despite the potentially important implications of research findings. Many of the studies that have explored moral values and delinquency have called for future research in this area. Brezina and Piquero (2007) indicate in particular that the relationship between peer involvement and moral beliefs is "under-developed theoretically" and make a request for further research on these topics. Piquero et al. (2005) examined the moderating effects of moral beliefs on delinquency in a sample of 10th grade students and found a gender difference in the way that delinquency related to moral beliefs. The results pointed out that female students' past delinquency was related to later delinquent acts regardless of moral beliefs, but male students' past delinquency was only related to later delinquency for males who scored low on a scale of moral beliefs. Such findings suggest that females who commit delinquent actions may fall into a delinquent role that is difficult to transition out of, whether or not they feel their actions are morally acceptable.

Therefore, for female youth, there may be other more important variables influencing their decision to engage in delinquent behaviors, whereas male youth may be more influenced by their moral values. Similarly, Mears, Ploeger, and Warr (1998) investigated the role of moral values and gender on delinquency; however, they specifically explored how delinquent peers affected this relationship. The study found that as an adolescent's moral disapproval of criminality increases, the effect of delinquent peers is reduced. However, the results showed that, the effect of delinquent peers was stronger for male offenders than for female offenders. Thus, when female offenders with strong moral values (determined by the degree of wrongness the offender assigned to various actions) associated with delinquent peers the effects of the peers were eliminated, yet when male offenders with strong moral values associated with delinquent peers the effects remained.

THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL STUDIES

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. (NCSS Task Force on Standards for Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies, 1993, p. 213)

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The colonial education system was criticized for not being relevant both in purpose and content to the immediate needs of the Nigerian child and the society at large. Equally, most students are interested in Social Studies because it is perceived as a discipline which can promote good behaviour. Therefore moral values which are considered desirable that every good citizen should possess are those that could be achieved through the teaching of Social Studies. The study will prompt the stakeholders to uphold the moral values by encouraging the teaching of Social Studies in school. Similarly this study will build in students right values needed for societal development. Finally, this study will promote the right attitude in learners.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Most adolescents engage in anti-social behaviours which include car theft, sexual indulgences, fighting, smoking, thuggery, cultism, prostitution to mention a few. The problem is a complex one accentuated by poverty, broken home, cruelty and rejection. Social Studies embodies sound education for everybody. Social Studies aim at developing good citizenship in the learners because the subject trains children to a full and useful life in the society. Social Studies also place more premiums on the development and inculcation of right attitudes and have the capability to eradicate juvenile delinquency in our schools. This study therefore examined students' performance in Social Studies as correlates of moral values in learners.

OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the perceptions of students about Social Studies
- To determine if there is any relationship between students' perceptions and academic performance
- To determine the effect of moral value on students' perceptions

HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were generated and tested at 0.05. Level of significance:

- **H01:** There is no significant relationship between students' perception of Social Studies and their academic performance in the subject.
- **H02:** There is no significant relationship between students' perception of Social Studies and their level of moral values.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a pretest, post-test quasi and control experimental design.

PROCEDURE

The study was carried out among junior secondary school students of five secondary schools in Ogun State in south-west Nigeria. Using the random sampling technique, a sample of (150) students were selected for the study. Thirty students were selected from each of the five schools, the age of the participants ranged between 13 and 18 years with a mean of 14.84

INSTRUMENTATION

The study employed the following standardized instrument and was analyzed using inferential statistics of Pearson product moment correlation to test the hypotheses.

ATTITUDINAL SCALE ON SOCIAL STUDIES (ASOS)

The first instrument used is the Questionnaires/attitudinal scale for data collection.

SECTION A: This consists of the demographic data of the students such as school, gender, and ethnic background.

SECTION B: This consists of twenty five Likert scale items and students will be expected to react to each statement based on 4-points Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

(4 strongly agree, 3 for Agree, 2 for Disagree and 1 for Strongly Disagree).

ACHIEVEMENT TEST ON SOCIAL STUDIES (ATSS)

The second instrument used is the achievement test on Social Studies. The preparation of copies of the performance test was guided by the 9-Year basic education curriculum (Social Studies) for Junior Secondary 1-3 by Nigerian Educational and Research Development Council (NERDC) and Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC).

RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENTS

Using cronbach alpha, the attitudinal scale has its reliability coefficient = $\alpha = 0.89$.
 For the achievement test, the reliability coefficient using cronbach alpha 20 is $\alpha = 0.77$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One research question was answered in this study:
 Research question: How do students perceive Social Studies as a subject?

FINDINGS

TABLE 1: ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTION-HOW DO STUDENTS PERCEIVE SOCIAL STUDIES?

No	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	- X	STD.D
1	Most students have interest in Social Studies	90 (60.0)	43 (28.7)	10 (6.7)	- (0.0)	3.39	97
2	Social Studies is simple to pass	82 (54.7)	49 (32.7)	8 (5.3)	2 (1.3)	3.29	1.06
3	Social Studies promote moral in students	80 (51.6)	53 (35.2)	6 (4.1)	- (0.0)	3.18	1.20
4	The content of Social Studies is related to the society	80 (53.3)	27 (18.0)	24 (16.0)	10 (6.7)	3.06	1.27
5	Social Studies is just like any other subject	34 (22.7)	47 (31.3)	39 (26.0)	24 (16.0)	2.53	1.13
6	Social Studies must be offered at the senior school level	72 (48.0)	37 (24.7)	21 (14.0)	12 (0.0)	3.29	2.49
	Weighted Average	3.12		78%			

Table 1 shows that the students agreed that most students have interest in social studies ($x = 3.39$), that social studies is simple to pass ($x = 3.29$), that social studies promote moral in students ($x = 3.18$) that the content of social studies is related to the society ($x = 3.06$), that social studies is just like any other subject ($x = 2.53$) and that social studies must be offered at the senior secondary school level ($x = 3.29$). The weighted average is 3.12 which is equivalent to 78%. This implies that the perception of the students is on the positive side and can be rated up to 78. Hence, there is a significant relationship between students' perception of Social Studies and their academic performance in the subject. Positive perception amounts to high performance.

RESEARCH H01

There is no significant relationship between students' perception of Social Studies and their academic performance in the subject.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION

Variable	N	Mean	Std D	R	P	Remark
Students' performance	150	16.43	5.80	.733	.000	Significant
Students' perception	150	19.71	10.28			

Table 2 revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between students' perception and their performance in Social Studies ($r = 0.733$; $P < .05$). Therefore, H01 is rejected. The positive relationship implies that the better the students' perception, the better their academic performance.

RESEARCH H02:

There is no significant relationship between students' perception of Social Studies and their level of moral values.

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION (PPMC)

Variable	N	Mean	Std. D	R	P	Remark
Students' level of moral values	150	15.98	3.77	.378	.000	Significant
Students' perception of Social Studies	150	19.71	10.28			

Table 3 revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between students' level of moral values and their perception of Social Studies ($r = 0.378$; $p < .05$). So, H03 is rejected. The positive relationship implies that the better students' perception of social studies, the better their moral values. Fadeiye (2005) supports this finding; he stated that social studies as a discipline is geared towards ensuring good citizenship in Nigeria. A cursory look at the social studies curriculum at all levels of education shows that the subject is tailored towards ensuring good citizenship education. Attitudes, values, skills, behaviours such as respect for leaders, parents, love, patriotism, dignity of labour and other positive attitudes are promoted in social studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

On the basis of the findings of the study and subsequent discussions with special consideration of the nature of Social Studies and its effect on moral values of students, the following recommendations are made:

Firstly, while propagating science and technology, Social Studies should not be relegated to the background by stake holders in the education industry. Social Studies aims at understanding human relationships and producing citizens with skills, competences, moral values and reasoned judgment to effectively live, interact, interrelate and contribute positively to the social, economic, political and cultural development of the society (Ajitoni, 2008). The mass media can be used to emphasize the importance of Social Studies.

Only qualified Social Studies teachers must be employed to teach the subject and not novice. Instructional environments and the ability of instructors to develop teaching strategies are germane for the transfer of knowledge and attitude. Qualified teachers would be able to make lessons lively and interesting by providing various learning experiences for the learners. Developing appropriate knowledge and right attitudes towards people is essential for peaceful co-existence in any society. It has been postulated that with the right type of attitude and appropriate knowledge, students better understand the nature, complexity and development of societies throughout the world (Bennet, 2006; Garmon, 2004; Lee, 2006).

The government at all levels should provide resources in terms of finance, physical, material and human resources for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies. There is the need to re-examine Social Studies curriculum because there are current societal issues that needs to be included in the curriculum since Social Studies draws its contents from the society. The learners too should be involved in curriculum planning and implementation in order to build a meaningful understanding of concepts which they can use to solve various problems in their lives.

For these principles to be effectively translated into action, children and youth must be provided with learning experiences which relate, as far as possible, to the challenges of their everyday lives. Schools are strategically placed to make a significant contribution to this process and by so doing play their appropriate role as exemplars of values and moral action. For this to be possible, schools must act out of a fundamental understanding of the multiplicity of factors which influence the development of children and youth. They must focus on working with all social action groups with viable programmes which cater to children and youth and this should include parents and community groups. School rules and regulations, teaching and other staff relationships must be infused with democratic principles and the quality of the physical environment must be shaped deliberately to continually and consistently provide opportunities that support and reinforce the adoption of positive values within the school, the family and the nation.

Community groups that aim to help maintain an environment that facilitates the development of positive values in children are a crucial aid to any values education programme. The truism that parents alone cannot bring up a child is at the basis of the importance of community groups. Their activities ultimately complement that of the school in ensuring that the child is presented with values that lead to a future that ensures good citizenship. In particular, community groups should endeavour to lay good examples for the children to emulate those characters and traits that are properly valued by our society.

CONCLUSIONS

Taking a clue from Adu (2004); attitudes of students have effects on his/her school work and learning attitudes in general. If a student has a positive attitude about teachers and likes school work, it is almost inevitable that he would experience some success. He will work more effectively and therefore achieve some goals. This is illustrated in tables 1 and 2 where students' academic performance was high as a result of their perception of Social Studies. Most students are interested in Social Studies because it is perceived as a subject that promotes moral values and its contents are related to societal values. Therefore, for Social Studies to achieve its high objectives and influence the right type of attitudes in the learners there is the need to improve the teaching and learning of Social Studies.

Training of Social Studies teachers must be embarked upon in terms of in-service training, seminars, workshops, symposium where they could be exposed to modern teaching methods and rudiments of the teaching profession. This would go a long way in improving teaching and learning of Social Studies. Also, improved remuneration and better condition of service will serve as a positive reinforcement for teacher as they would be stimulated to work harder.

The greatest challenge that is facing our nation Nigeria is how to cope with the inadequacies and disruptive students' reactions. The frequency of the occurrences can be drastically reduced to manageable level, through the adoption of management, strategies which can take into account all the sources and factors that could interplay to generate adverse behavior from students.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study is limited to the students' performance in social studies as correlates of moral values and perception in selected secondary schools. However, another study can be replicated by looking at teaching methods as it affect academic performance in social studies or looking at students' attitude to Social Studies as correlate to their academic performance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge God for given us the grace to complete this research work. We also appreciate all the authors and scholars whose works were used to complete this research work. Our appreciation also goes to the students who are the respondents/sample for their quick and prompt response to the questionnaires. Above all, we owe the school principal our gratitude for the permission given to us to use the students and the classroom.

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