

Relationship between Teachers' Attitudes and Social Studies Students' Academic Performance in Junior Secondary Schools in Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study is on relationship between teachers' attitudes and social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger state, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study was guided by one research question and one hypothesis. The population of the study consists 193,304 students and 3,989 teachers. The sample size of three hundred and sixty three (363) students and twenty one (21) teachers responded to a ten (10) item questionnaire. The data collected were analysed using chi square; the hypothesis was tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Findings revealed that there was significant relationship between teachers' attitude and social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger state. It was concluded that teachers' attitude improves social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger State. It was recommended that teacher's attitude should be considered for employment, assignment of responsibilities and promotion.

Keywords: attitudes, teacher, student, academic, performance

Introduction

The knowledge of social studies is quite inestimable in importance in the society. It helps the educational system work towards achieving set national goals. Qualitative education is an instrument for effective national development. The quality of education is expressed in the quality of teaching. Good teaching helps the young student to live successfully in the present world and adapt himself as well as he/she grows in age and ability. Qualitative and successful teaching makes provisions for the varying abilities and interest of the students and depends primarily on teachers' personal qualities, professional competences and appropriateness of the teaching techniques to the age level of the learners (Adeloye, 2002). A teachers' attitude to teaching will certainly affect his or her performance in the classroom; attitude is about emotions and feelings, and effective teachers willingly share emotions and feelings, as well as a sincere interest and care about their students' academic performance. If a teacher appears not interested or careful about a particular subject or student, he/she will be unable to foster a supportive learning environment. Teachers with

negative attitudes may not be as approachable to students as teachers who are positively motivated.

Education is a character building process, enhancing students' personality and making the student rational, capable, responsible and intelligent. The saying that schools are the nurseries of the nation and teachers are the architects of the future are not mere figurative expressions but truthful statements as significant as they are suggestive. Thus, educational institutions are the seed beds of culture, where children in whose hands quiver the destiny of the future are trained and groomed to grow as statesmen, patriots and nation builders who determines the progress of the land while in their approach to problems they bear the imprints and influence of the training they receive in the hands of their teachers. Hence, the teacher's instructional competence is an important factor in disseminating knowledge to the students.

Teachers' attitudes, has witnessed a steady decline from a large number of teachers who could not make learning take place, to teachers who could make students to unlearn what they have accidentally learnt somewhere else. The exodus of competent personnel from the teaching profession largely due to its unattractiveness in terms of prestige, allowances and salaries, coupled with the issues of death and retirement, has led to glaring cases of teachers' shortage in Nigerian secondary schools. Teachers are regarded as the most imperative school-based factors that influence student's academic levels. Poor academic performance by numerous students in junior secondary schools has gained significant attention by most researchers in the field of educational management. Previous study on students' academic performance by Kangali (2012) indicates that although there exist several factors that influence students' academic performances, teachers' attitudes remain one of the major determinants of students' academic performance. According to Adunolo (2012), teaching is a collaborative process which encompasses interaction by both learners and the teacher.

Ortese (2006) opines that the kind of education required to meet these challenges of teacher's negative attitudes is by all estimation outside the competences of ill-trained, barely educated teachers, who are capable of causing students to unlearn what they might have accidently learnt. The academic performance of Government secondary schools students in social studies over the years has been on a decline as a result of unprofessional behaviour by teachers, teachers' attitudes, which affect teachers' productivity and students' academic performance (Abu, 2006). It is in support of the foregoing that Ortese (2006) states that teachers' education is central to matching these new changes with the required personnel. In other words, teachers' education programme has to produce qualitative teachers that will produce students who will not only fit into the emergent society, but will also provide solutions to new problems of the Nigerian nationhood. If teachers are crucial in the attainment of national goals through education, then, there is need to take a second look at teachers' attitudes, especially when national goals, economic, political, social and personal needs change. Teachers' attitude could affect how well a teacher plans and prepares for his/her lessons. The attitude of a teacher, consciously

or unconsciously, greatly affects students' academic performance. It has been established that teachers' attitudes highly influence students' interest in learning.

The purpose and content of social studies is viewed as being closed to African traditional citizenship education; viewed from this perspective, the developmental trend of social studies education in Nigeria can be traced through the African traditional education, colonial, post-colonial and the integrated instruction phrases (Africa Social and Environmental Studies Programme [ASESP], 1994). African traditional education was basically citizenship education; Nigeria with other African nations had a system of education that integrated the young members into the society through the inculcation of cultural practices, values, and belief. The goal of the system of education was to make individuals functional and productive members of the society.

Social studies is one of the subject in Nigerian schools which help the educational system work toward achieving set national objectives (Kadiri, 2009). According to him, the general objectives of social studies may be listed as follows:

1. To give man adequate information and knowledge about his society and the wider world.
2. To create in man awareness and appreciation of the benefits and the results of scientific and technological discoveries and invention and make him see how these affect his everyday life.

An attitude is a mindset that affects how a person thinks and acts. Attitude can influence a person's performance positively or negatively. For instance, negative attitude towards one's job will result in negative performance. Similarly, attitude could also affect how well a teacher plans and prepares for his/her lessons. The attitude of a teacher consciously or unconsciously, greatly affects students' academic performance. It has been established that teachers' attitudes highly influence students' interest in learning (Ozdemir, 2012). Moreover, personality traits of the teachers are more powerful and influential than the course content or instructional strategies used in the classroom.

Attitude as a concept is concerned with an individual way of thinking, acting and behaving. It has a very serious implication for the learner, the teachers, the immediate social group with which the individual relates to the subject and learning environment (Yara, 2009). Teachers' behaviour in and out of the classroom could affect students' learning either negatively or positively (Ikejiaku, 2006). Teachers' attitude directly affects students' attitudes; teachers' attitude are in turn influenced by their culture and belief system (Yara, 2009). Sudhakar and Selvakumar (2013) define attitude as a mental set or disposition, readiness to respond to situations on the basis of individual performance, knowledge and characteristics.

A good classroom strategy requires full interest and support from teachers and learners. If a teacher appears not interested or careful about a particular subject or student, he/she will be unable to foster a supportive learning environment. In addition to that, teachers

with negative attitudes may not be as approachable to students as teachers who are positively motivated. So, students find it difficult asking such a teacher questions on the grey areas of the subject he/she teaches. This implies that teachers' attitude towards their students and teaching in general is very important for students' success. In the same vein, teachers need to be highly interested in the subjects and topics they teach.

The misconception in many quarters is that anyone could teach social studies as long as the individual is educated no matter the discipline. This trend has partly been responsible for the poor academic performance of students and also why such teachers do not handle the subject well because they lack the basic methodological and philosophical principles of the subject. Teaching is a profession that needs to be guided with all seriousness but in our society today teaching is seen as the last option when unemployed graduate are looking for what to do to get paid. There are cases of teachers who lack the interest in teaching but are found teaching in the secondary schools; they did not receive any training and this may lead to poor students' academic performance in social studies. Students of social studies in Nigeria with reference to Niger State Ministry of Education (2018) have their academic performance in social studies below expectation as evident in internal examination. Students were usually prepared for terminal examinations from time to time; unfortunately teachers' inability to cover all aspects of the school syllabus as a result of inadequate knowledge on the part of the teachers contributes to student's failure. For instance, of all the students that sat for JSCCE in social studies, it was recorded that only an approximate 32.28% passed while an approximate 67.72% of failure are recorded.

Aina et al., (2015) reported that teachers' attitudes can either positively or negatively predict student's performance in social studies. However personal and professional attributes that have been identified as being representative of teachers include the ability to show a genuine interest in teaching and enthusiasm for learning, a pride of one's personal appearance, skills in adapting to change, accepting responsibility for actions both inside and outside the classroom, the desire to take a cooperative approach towards parents and school personnel, punctuality and regularly in attendance and the ability to establish a genuine rapport with students. Social studies, as one of the core subjects in junior secondary schools, is facing attitudinal challenges in the society which take toll on teaching and learning effectiveness of the subject. The challenge is not only from the subject teachers and the students, but also from the parents of the students concerned. It is against this backdrop that this study was set to study the relationship between teachers' attitudes and social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger state, Nigeria.

Objective of the study

The objective of this study is to:

1. determine the relationship between teachers' attitude and social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger state.

Research question

1. What is the relationship that exists between teachers' attitude and social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger State?

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between teachers' attitude and social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger state.

Significance of the study

This study is titled relationship between teachers' attitude and social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger state, Nigeria. The study is significant to the educational planners, the curriculum planners, teachers, students, and the school administrators in Nigeria. Relationship between teachers' attitude and social studies students' academic performance will be well known to the planners and administrators and the results of the findings will help the curriculum planners and educational planners in making suggestions towards the improvement of educational policy in Nigeria.

This study on the relationship between teachers' attitudes and social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger state Nigeria was delimited to the three senatorial zones in Niger State. These are Chanchaga, Bida, and Kontagora. Hence, the study will cover social studies teachers and students from two selected junior secondary schools in each zone. This is delimited to determine the relationship between teachers' attitudes on social studies student's academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger State.

Methodology

The research design that was adopted for this study is survey design. The target population for this study comprised all the junior secondary school teachers and students in Niger state, Nigeria. The teachers and students involved in this study are from the various junior Secondary Schools in the three senatorial zones of Niger state. The population for this study according to the 2019/2020 school population is 197,293 comprising of 193,304 students and 3,989 teachers. The sample size of 384, including 363 students and 21 teachers, was drawn from six schools distributed across the State.

The instrument that was used for data collection in this study is a questionnaire titled Teachers' Attitude and Students' Performance Inventory (TASPI). The instrument, developed by the researchers, comprises of three sections (A-C) of which Section A provides personal data of the respondents, section B provides academic qualification of the respondents while section C provides response of the respondents. It was reviewed by experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation and social studies. This is to ascertain the construct and content validity of the instruments.

Pilot study was conducted at Government Day Secondary School (GDSS) Tafa, Niger State. It involved the administration of twenty five (25) copies of questionnaire on the respondents; reliability of the instrument was calculated using test- re-test method. The method involved administering the instrument on a group of respondents at varied times and recording of the scores at each time during the pilot study. The results obtained from each administration were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to achieve the reliability result. The reliability index obtained was 0.87. This indicated that the items were reliable within the acceptable limit; this is in line with Andale (2016) who stressed that the ability index of an instrument should vary between 0-1. It was based on the reliability scores indicated, it is affirmed that the instrument for this study is considered reliable.

A letter of introduction was collected from the Department of Educational Foundations and Curriculum, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria to the respective Inspectorate Divisions of Niger state Ministry of Education, under whose jurisdiction the sampled schools were selected. The permission sought from the divisions allowed the researchers with the help of two research assistants who were teachers from the sampled junior secondary schools to administer the questionnaire to the target secondary schools in the study area over a period of six (6) weeks. It involved the administration of 384 copies of questionnaire to the respondents. Research assistants were employed and trained on the modalities of distribution as well as collection of research instruments filled on behalf of the researchers.

The research question was analysed by descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. Also, the null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance using Chi-square.

Presentation of results

Research Question: What is the relationship that exists between teachers' attitude and social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger State?

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between teachers' attitude and social studies students' performance in junior secondary schools in Niger State.

The results of the data obtained were analyzed using χ^2 -test. The summary of the analysis is presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Chi-square (χ^2) test on the relationship between teachers' attitude and social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger State

Variables	Mean	Std. D	χ^2 -Cal.	Df	P-value	Decision
Teachers' Attitude	2.12	.621	34.57	382	.012	Rejected
Students' Performance	2.43					

The result revealed that social studies teachers' attitude had significant relationship on students' academic performance in social studies in junior secondary schools in Niger State. From the results obtained on table 1, the P-value of .012 is less than 0.05 alpha level of significance and χ^2 calculated is obtained as 34.57 at 382 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant relationship between teachers' attitude and social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary school in Niger State, was rejected.

Summary of findings

Teachers' attitude relates significantly with social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger State.

Discussion of the findings

The finding of the study indicates that teachers' attitude relates significantly with social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger State. This is as the p-value of 0.012 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, which led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is significant relationship between teachers' attitude and social studies students' academic performance. This finding is in line with the finding of Kadiri (2009) who reported that positive teachers' attitudes are fundamental to effective teaching and students' academic achievements. Another study by Ozdemir (2012) indicated a number of elements that constitute teachers' attitude that will facilitate a caring and supportive classroom environment. These elements include caring, motivation, teachers'-student interaction, democratic practices to promote students' responsibility, effective use of lesson, constructive interaction with learners and high expectation to promote learners' academic performance. Also, Yara (2009) conducted a study on the teachers' attitude as a correlate of students' academic performance in geography in secondary schools in Enugu. The findings show that attitude of teachers correlated positively and significantly with the student's academic performance; poor governments attitude to teachers' welfare, lack of job satisfaction, poor remuneration and delayed salary and absent of teaching materials/instructional aid were found to influence the attitude of teachers.

The present study is similar to Shittu and Oanite (2015) which was conducted to study on teachers' attitude in secondary schools. The study is similar in the following areas; the previous study was conducted in secondary schools while the present was also carried out in secondary schools; data for the previous study was collected using questionnaire, while data collected for the current study was questionnaire, but the study differ in some ways, the past research used simple percentage to analyze the research questions, while the present researchers used chi square.

Conclusion

Sequel to the findings from this study, it is concluded that the teachers' attitude improves social studies students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Niger State. This was evident from the significant relationship recorded on the research objectives and

research hypotheses of this study that revealed the positive relationship between the teachers' attitude and social studies students' academic performance.

Recommendations

From the findings and the conclusion reached in this study, it is recommended that:

1. Social studies teachers should always behave well and portray positive attitude towards the students so that it can positively affect the students' academic performance in the class.

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