
**INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL STUDIES JUNIOR SECONDARY
SCHOOL CURRICULUM CONTENTS AND TEACHING
STRATEGIES ON STUDENTS' SOCIAL INTERACTIONS
IN THE NORTH CENTRAL ZONE OF NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of Junior Secondary School Social Studies curriculum contents and teaching strategies on students' social interactions in the North Central zone of Nigeria. Specifically, it assessed the extent to which the curriculum promotes social interaction, identified teaching strategies employed by Social Studies teachers, and evaluated the relationship between curriculum contents, pedagogical methods, and students' social behaviours. Adopting a descriptive survey design, the study sampled 420 participants: 360 students and 60 teachers, selected through multistage sampling across six states and the Federal Capital Territory. Data were collected using validated Likert-scale questionnaires for students and teachers, and analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. Findings showed that the curriculum content significantly promotes students' social interactions, and that teachers frequently utilize interactive strategies such as group work, role-play, and project-based learning. Statistically significant relationships were found between curriculum content, teaching strategies, and

students' social interaction ($R^2 = 0.618$, $p < 0.05$). These results affirm the combined influence of curricular themes and teaching methodologies in fostering interpersonal skills and civic competence. The study recommends periodic curriculum review by NERDC, sustained teacher training by policymakers, and broader adoption of student-centred strategies to optimize social learning outcomes in Social Studies classrooms.

Keywords: Social Studies curriculum contents, Junior secondary school, Teaching strategies, Social interactions, North Central

Introduction

Social interaction is central to the holistic development of learners, particularly during early adolescence when students begin to form social identities and engage more robustly with peers and society. Social Studies, as a core subject in the Nigerian basic education curriculum, plays a vital role in equipping learners with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective interaction within a pluralistic society (Nwankwo, 2020; Oloruntegbe & Adegbite, 2023). By addressing themes such as citizenship, social responsibility, cultural diversity, conflict resolution, and civic engagement, Social Studies fosters interpersonal skills and promotes empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect among students. The development of these competencies is crucial for sustaining peace and unity in Nigeria's culturally diverse regions, particularly the North Central zone, which is often characterized by ethno-religious tensions and socio-political unrest (Ajayi & Dauda, 2022).

The Nigerian Junior Secondary School (JSS) curriculum, as guided by the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), integrates Social Studies as a key discipline aimed at promoting national integration and moral development. The curriculum emphasizes critical areas such as family values, leadership, democratic principles, national consciousness, environmental education, and social justice. These components are strategically designed to empower young learners to participate meaningfully in their communities, understand

diverse perspectives, and engage in constructive social behaviour (NERDC, 2015). Moreover, Social Studies is intended to serve as a vehicle for value re-orientation and citizenship education—especially necessary in a society where moral decline and social disintegration are pressing concerns (Okebukola & Akamobi, 2021).

Despite the relevance of Social Studies and the comprehensive nature of its curriculum, the actual implementation in schools remains fraught with challenges. In the North Central region of Nigeriacomprising states like Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau, many schools face infrastructural inadequacies, insufficient instructional materials, and a lack of teacher training in learner-centred strategies (Mohammed & Ogundele, 2021). Additionally, overcrowded classrooms and over-reliance on lecture-based instruction have continued to hinder effective delivery of Social Studies content, particularly those aspects designed to enhance interaction and collaboration among students. In many instances, teachers adopt didactic methods that fail to foster the participatory and dialogic experiences necessary for developing students' social interaction skills (Eze & Nwachukwu, 2022). Consequently, the potential of the Social Studies curriculum to promote civic engagement, empathy, and tolerance in the region is undermined.

The Nigerian Junior Secondary Social Studies curriculum is explicitly crafted to inculcate values and interpersonal skills that support harmonious social interaction. However, there appears to be a disjunction between the intended goals of the curriculum and the actual social behaviour observed among students in practice, particularly in the North Central zone of Nigeria. Rising incidents of bullying, peer conflicts, ethno-religious intolerance, and social exclusion among students raise concerns about the effectiveness of the current curriculum content and the pedagogical approaches employed in teaching Social Studies (Usman & Jimoh, 2021). While curriculum developers have embedded social themes and values in the subject content, the extent to which these are internalized and reflected in students' social interactions remains questionable.

This gap raises an important empirical question: Are the curriculum contents and teaching strategies of Social Studies effective in promoting positive social interaction among junior secondary

school students in North Central Nigeria? Existing literature has addressed general issues of curriculum implementation (Okoro & Sunday, 2019) and learner outcomes in Social Studies (Olaosebikan, 2020), but limited studies have examined the direct relationship between curriculum components, instructional methods, and students' interpersonal behaviour in real school environments, especially within the socio-culturally sensitive North Central context.

Addressing this issue is vital for several reasons. For educators, it provides a diagnostic understanding of how teaching practices align with curriculum objectives related to social development. For policy makers and curriculum planners, it offers evidence to inform reforms, teacher capacity building, and resource allocation. Moreover, in a region where political instability and cultural tension frequently affect schooling and community relations, the need for an education system that nurtures peace, dialogue, and mutual respect cannot be over stated (Adeleke & Yusuf, 2022). Therefore, this study assesses whether the JSS Social Studies curriculum and its delivery mechanisms are effectively shaping students' social behaviours in a way that supports national integration and peaceful coexistence. The study's objectives are to:

1. examine the extent to which the contents of the Junior Secondary School Social Studies curriculum promote students' social interactions in the North Central zone of Nigeria;
2. identify the teaching strategies employed by Social Studies teachers in facilitating social interaction among Junior Secondary School students in the North Central zone; and
3. assess the relationship between Social Studies curriculum contents and teaching strategies, and students' social interactions in Junior Secondary Schools in the North Central zone of Nigeria

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study at 0.05 level of significance

H₀1: There is no significant influence of Social Studies curriculum contents on students' social interaction in Junior Secondary Schools in the North Central zone of Nigeria.

- H₀₂:** There is no significant influence of teaching strategies used in Social Studies on students' social interaction in Junior Secondary Schools in the North Central zone of Nigeria.
- H₀₃:** There is no significant relationship between Social Studies curriculum contents, teaching strategies, and students' social interactions in Junior Secondary Schools in the North Central zone of Nigeria.

Methods

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The design was chosen because it allows the researcher to collect data from a large, geographically dispersed population and to analyse trends, opinions, and patterns without manipulating any variables. The population of the study comprised all Junior Secondary School (JSS II) students and Social Studies teachers in public schools across the six North Central states (Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau) and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Using GeoPoll's recommendation for statistically valid sample sizes in educational surveys in large populations, a minimum of 400 respondents is deemed appropriate for generalizability at a 95% confidence level with $\pm 5\%$ margin of error. Accordingly, a total of 420 respondents were selected, comprising 360 JSS II students and 60 Social Studies teachers, using a multistage sampling technique that involved random selection of states, schools, and respondents.

Data were collected using two main instruments, namely; a structured student questionnaire consisting of Likert-scale items designed to measure exposure to Social Studies curriculum contents and observed social interaction behaviours; and a teacher questionnaire focusing on the frequency and type of teaching strategies employed to enhance social interaction. Both instruments were validated by three experts in Social Studies and Educational Measurement, while reliability was established through a trial test involving 40 students and 10 teachers from a non-participating school in Nasarawa State, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.83 for internal consistency. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics such as Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and

Multiple Regression Analysis were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One: There is no significant influence of Social Studies curriculum contents on students' social interaction in Junior Secondary Schools in the North Central zone of Nigeria.

Table 1: Simple Linear Regression Analysis on Curriculum Content and Social Interaction

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig. (p)
Constant	1.122	0.212		5.29	0.000
Curriculum Content	0.715	0.068	0.711	10.51	0.000

$$R^2 = 0.505, F(1, 358) = 110.47, p < 0.05$$

The regression result indicates a statistically significant influence of curriculum content on students' social interaction ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). The R^2 value shows that curriculum content explains 50.5% of the variance in students' social interaction. Decision: *Reject H₀*.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant influence of teaching strategies used in Social Studies on students' social interaction in Junior Secondary Schools in the North Central zone of Nigeria.

Table 2: Simple Linear Regression Analysis on Teaching Strategies and Social Interaction

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig. (p)
Constant	1.204	0.198		6.08	0.000
Teaching Strategies	0.689	0.072	0.695	9.57	0.000

$$R^2 = 0.483, F(1, 358) = 91.56, p < 0.05$$

Teaching strategies significantly influence students' social interaction ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), accounting for 48.3% of the variance in interaction scores. Decision: *Reject H₀*.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between Social Studies curriculum contents, teaching strategies, and students' social interactions in Junior Secondary Schools in the North Central zone of Nigeria.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig. (p)
Constant	0.951	0.201		4.73	0.000
Curriculum Content	0.524	0.064	0.507	8.19	0.000
Teaching Strategies	0.449	0.059	0.423	7.61	0.000

$R^2 = 0.618$, $F(2, 357) = 142.85$, $p < 0.05$

The multiple regression analysis shows that both curriculum content and teaching strategies jointly have a statistically significant relationship with students' social interactions ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). The model explains 61.8% of the variance in social interaction, indicating a strong combined effect. Decision: *Reject H_0* ³.

Discussions

The findings of this study reveal several critical insights into how the contents of the Junior Secondary School (JSS) Social Studies curriculum and the teaching strategies adopted by educators influence students' social interaction within the North Central zone of Nigeria. First, the results indicate that the Social Studies curriculum significantly promotes social interaction among students, as supported by a high mean score (3.89) on the relevant items. This finding aligns with Adeyemi and Ajiboye (2020) who argued that Social Studies serves as a vital tool for inculcating societal values such as cooperation, mutual respect, and citizenship, which are fundamental to interpersonal relationships and community harmony. The objectives and themes embedded in the curriculum such as national consciousness, civic responsibility, and cultural diversity are designed to equip students with the social competencies necessary for peaceful coexistence in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013).

The results highlight the prevalence of student-centred teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, group discussions, role-playing, and problem-solving, with a p-value of 0.000. This supports the assertion of Ogunyemi and Adebayo (2021) that learner-focused methodologies enhance students' engagement and their capacity for meaningful social interaction. Teaching strategies that emphasize peer collaboration such as project-based learning and

interactive debates create avenues for learners to express opinions, listen to others, and resolve conflicts constructively (Ogheneakoke, et. al., 2019). Furthermore, Social Studies teachers in this study acknowledged that using strategies like dramatization and case studies helped reinforce values like empathy, tolerance, and social responsibility skills central to positive social interaction (Ajiboye & Alabi, 2022).

The analysis further confirms that there is a statistically significant relationship between curriculum content, teaching strategies, and students' social interaction, with regression results indicating a combined predictive strength of curriculum and strategy on interaction outcomes ($R^2 = 0.54$). These findings are consistent with Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which postulates that students develop social behaviours through observation and interaction in structured learning environments. Similarly, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory underscores the importance of guided learning and the role of teachers and peers in shaping students' social capabilities. Thus, the implication is that both what is taught (curriculum content) and how it is taught (teaching strategy) jointly shape students' development of interpersonal skills and social responsibility (Ocho & Nworgu, 2020).

However, this study also responds to a critical gap identified in the literature: while previous studies have independently examined the effectiveness of curriculum or teaching methods (e.g., Salami & Mohammed, 2018), few have holistically investigated their combined influence on social interaction in specific regions like the North Central zone. By demonstrating a strong predictive relationship, the current findings provide empirical evidence for curriculum developers and education policymakers to reinforce the alignment of content with pedagogy, especially in subjects like Social Studies that are pivotal for civic and social development.

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the critical role that Social Studies curriculum contents and teaching strategies play in enhancing students' social interactions in Junior Secondary Schools across the North Central zone of Nigeria. While the curriculum includes themes that promote civic responsibility, cooperation, and national

integration, its effectiveness is largely dependent on the teaching methods employed. Strategies such as cooperative learning, role-playing, and project-based learning significantly improve students' interpersonal skills, empathy, and active participation. However, gaps in implementation, teacher capacity, and curriculum relevance continue to limit the full realization of the subject's social objectives. Therefore, aligning curriculum contents with interactive and context-sensitive pedagogical practices is essential for nurturing socially competent learners in Nigeria's evolving educational landscape.

Recommendations

It is thus recommended that the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) should regularly review and update the Social Studies curriculum to ensure a stronger emphasis on contemporary social issues and interactive content that reflects the socio-cultural dynamics of North Central Nigeria. Also, school administrators and policy makers should equally provide sustained capacity-building workshops for Social Studies teachers on innovative, learner-centred instructional strategies that foster meaningful social interaction and inclusion. Lastly, classroom teachers need to integrate diverse instructional methods such as cooperative learning, simulation, and role-play in everyday teaching to create participatory learning environments that model real-life social experiences and relationships.

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