
SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AND GENDER-BASED ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: THE INFLUENCE OF UNTAUGHT CURRICULUM CONTENTS

Festus Hephzibah OJIEH & Lucky Omoede AIMIYEKAGBON

Department of Curriculum and Instructional Technology,
University of Benin, Benin City

Abstract

The work investigated the influence of untaught topics in the junior secondary school Social Studies curriculum on the students' academic performance. It also examined the outcome of students based on gender. The Ukwuani Local Government Area in Delta State, Nigeria, was the study's focus. This study employs an ex post facto research design. The study was directed by three research questions, two of which were hypotheses. The population of the study was of 5,508 junior secondary school students from which 280 students were sampled using multi-stage sampling procedure. A validated checklist was used to collect data on untaught topics; while a pro-forma was designed to collect student's record on academic performance. Simple percentage was employed to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using chi-square statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The analysis revealed that several Social Studies topics were untaught, and this significantly hindered students' academic performance. Meanwhile, gender did not significantly influenced student' academic performance due to untaught topics. The study recommended among others that Post- Primary school board supervisors and school administrators should be strengthened to monitor and

ensure comprehensive curriculum coverage and that more training and motivation be given to teachers to increase their commitment.

Keywords: Untaught topics, Social Studies curriculum content, Academic performance, Gender.

Introduction

The concept of curriculum in education refers to the totality of planned learning experiences provided by schools to enable students acquire knowledge, develop skills, and adopt values for personal and societal development. Specifically, the Social Studies curriculum for junior secondary schools is designed to equip learners with the competencies necessary to function effectively as responsible citizens in a dynamic and pluralistic society (Obioma, 2018). This curriculum integrates elements from History, Geography, Civics, Economics and Sociology to provide a holistic understanding of social and environmental phenomena. By addressing topics such as Cultural Heritage, Civic Responsibility, Environmental Sustainability, and National Integration, the Social Studies curriculum seeks to promote critical thinking, problem solving skills, and social awareness among students (Adepoju, 2019). The relevance of Social Studies as a tool for citizenship education and national development cannot be quantified, making it a vital subject in the junior secondary school curriculum. It empowers learners with the knowledge, values and skills for living in society by providing an understanding of social structures and how to operate in them. However, how far students benefit from this subject depends largely on the manner in which it is implemented in practice. Findings from a number of studies show that a significant portion of the Social Studies curriculum has either not been wholly or partially taught as a result of constraints such as limited instructional time, insufficient teaching materials, and teacher related challenges (Adeola, 2019; Akinbode, 2021) , as such impinged on students' academic outcomes.

Academic outcomes continue to be an essential indicator of the quality of instruction and learning. The extent to which students achieved curriculum objectives is usually determined by tests, assignments, and examinations. Performance at junior secondary school is influenced

by several interacting variables, including the quality of teaching and instructional resources available within a learning environment; but also crucially the breadth of curriculum coverage (Obioma 2018). In building scope and the framework of Social Studies, academic performance is more than just about test scores; there is a reflective quality mapped against how students grasp and apply knowledge in a manner that embodies our values as a society.

The Nigerian Social Studies curriculum nurtures cognitive, affective, and psychomotor growth. It exposes students to cultural heritage, civic duties, environmental sustainability and social justice among others which are crucial for inculcating critical thinking and sense of social responsibility (Adepoju, 2019). Yet, when the topics that are most fundamental to the subject are not even covered they prevent students from getting a solid knowledge base. This damages their fundamental concept ability as well as makes it hard for them to relate with other topics that follow which affects their academic performance in total (Akinbode, 2021).

Assessment in Social studies consists of written examinations, oral presentations, and project-based assignments to evaluate students' conceptual understanding of each of the relevant knowledge areas (Bamidele, 2020). However, the effectiveness of the assessment is frequently dictated by the coverage, implying that when substantial information is left untaught, student performance during evaluations is likely to be affected. The gaps in coverage are often an essential indicator of insufficiency as it leaves learners ill-prepared to face subsequent lessons, examinations, and assessments (Okonkwo, 2020).

The missing topics leave a pedagogical trail that suggests that the teaching processes were incomplete, thus making learning in the given area difficult and non-sequential. The coverage of the subjects in the Social Studies syllabus is interconnected and cumulative. Therefore, gaps in coverage present barriers to subsequent learning and understanding of new topics. According to Eze and Uzochukwu (2020), the identified weaknesses in coverage are often the underlying cause of poor performance in termly assessments and examinations.

Similarly, Adeola (2019) reports that students taught topics with incomplete coverage recorded significantly poorer results in the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination compared to their counterparts who studied the same course with complete coverage.

The influence of the weakness in coverage on the academic performance of the students is also dependent on the gender of the learners. From the available evidence, it is evident that male and female students often respond differently to the omissions in the curriculum. For instance, male students are more likely to utilize alternate learning resources to bridge the gaps in their knowledge, whereas female students are more reliant on the teacher and therefore record significantly poorer results when particular topics are not covered in class. According to Adeyemi and Bamidele (2020), the inclination to engage in independent learning among male students is limited by their capacity to access the appropriate learning material. In addition, Okon (2019) explains that the female students are subjected to social expectations and responsibilities that prevent them from compensating for the loss of lessons.

Thus, the influence of untaught topics is not equal across genders. Although both male and female students are negatively affected, research shows that female students tend to be more disadvantaged (Nwachukwu, 2021). This is emphasized to a particular extent where male students might show the marginal high academic resilience, which may be partly accounting for greater promotional opportunities hence individualized academic independence and leaderships (Idowu & Olalekan, 2018). However, not arriving at an absolute advantage as both groups perform poorly when core issues are omitted (Babatunde & Okechukwu, 2020).

In some socio cultural contexts like Ukwuani Local Government Area, these disparities are aggravated by patriarchal attitudes to education that spares few disadvantages among females in educational attainment and opportunities. Female students often face additional barriers, such as limited access to educational resources and cultural restrictions that discourage active participation in class activities. As a result, the omission of certain topics in Social Studies curriculum has a disproportionately negative impact on their

academic performance. Topics related to Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Civic Responsibilities are crucial for empowering female students to challenge societal norms and pursue academic excellence (Eze, 2020).

Other research suggests that male students tend to perform better in tasks that require spatial reasoning and abstract thinking while female students excel in verbal communication and collaborative learning (Okonkwo, 2020). When Social Studies topics that align with these strengths are left untaught, students may struggle to engage with the curriculum, leading to disparities in academic performance (Eze & Onwuegbuna, 2023). In the same vein, the omission of topics such as Governance, Leadership and Entrepreneurship negatively affects male students by making them to struggle in skills and knowledge required to excel in their role in society and likewise, reduced their academic performance.

In a nutshell, the existing evidence indicates an unambiguous answer: providing students with less than full coverage of the Social Studies curriculum reduces achievement and fails to meet some of the broader goals for teaching in this subject area. This not only generates gaps in knowledge but also demotivates students and promotes inequality. It also shows that the direction of findings of all the research studies on untaught topics and gender based academic performance of students reviewed so far is not unidirectional. This helps reinforce a demand for additional research on the issue, thus this present study.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. examine the untaught topics in Junior Secondary School Social Studies curriculum contents in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State;
- ii. determine the extent the untaught topics in Junior Secondary School Social Studies curriculum contents influence students' academic performance; and
- iii. determine the influence of untaught topics in Junior Secondary School Social Studies curriculum contents on students' academic performance based on gender.

Research Question

What are the untaught topics in Junior Secondary School Social Studies curriculum contents in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at the significance level of 0.05 alpha:

1. Untaught topics in Junior Secondary School Social Studies curriculum contents do not significantly influence students' academic performance?
2. There is no significant influence of untaught topics in Junior Secondary School Social Studies curriculum contents on students' academic performance based on gender.

Methods

The research design employed in the study was ex post facto. A total of 5,508 pupils from public Junior Secondary Schools in Delta State's Ukwuani Local Government Area made up the study's population. A sample of 280 students was chosen using a multi-stage selection technique. There were two tools used to gather the data. The first was a checklist of topics in Social Studies curriculum contents from which students were made to tick the topics they were not taught on a scale option of "Taught Topic" and "Un-taught Topic". The second was a pro-forma to collect students' academic performance/records from schools. It was validated by experts. The checklists were given to the 280 students to fill while the pro-forma was used by the researcher assisted by the school based teachers to collect records of students' academic performance. The 280 sampled students were gotten from 10 schools through random selection of 28 students each. After administration of instruments, one school had one topic untaught, three schools had two topics untaught, four schools had three topics untaught while the remaining two schools had four topics untaught. Some of the untaught topics overlap among the 10 schools. Overall the untaught topics were eight in all. The data collected were analyzed using frequency for the research question and Chi-square statistics for the hypotheses.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the untaught topics in Junior Secondary School Social Studies curriculum contents in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State?

Table 1: Distribution of Topics in Social Studies Curriculum Contents in Junior Secondary Schools in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State

S/N	Topics in Social Studies	Decision
1.	History of Nigerian social studies	Taught
2.	Family as primary social group	Taught
3.	Large/small family size	Taught
4.	Meaning and characteristics of culture	Taught
5.	Similarities and differences among cultures in Nigeria	Taught
6.	Agents of processes of socialization	Taught
7.	Road safety club as an agent of socialization	Taught
8.	Common social problems in Nigeria	Taught
9.	Ways of solving contemporary social problems	Taught
10.	Our roles in promoting safety in our community	Taught
11.	Common crimes, causes and effects	Taught
12.	General objects of social studies	Taught
13.	Family as the basic unit of society	Taught
14.	Cultures and social values	Untaught
15.	Types of marriage	Untaught
16.	Obstacles in marriage	Untaught
17.	Group behavior Social and health issues	Untaught
18.	Democratic process	Taught
19.	Components of social studies contents	Taught
20.	Roles of extended family members in child development	Untaught
21.	Human trafficking	Untaught
22.	Harmful traditional practices	Taught
23.	Promoting peaceful living in our society	Untaught
24.	Social conflicts	Untaught
25.	Managing and resolving conflicts	Taught
26.	Cultism and its control in our society	Taught
27.	Preventing drugs trafficking	Taught

Table 1 reveals the distribution of topics in Social Studies curriculum contents in junior secondary schools in Delta State's Ukwuani Local Government Area. The table shows that out of the 27 topics in Social Studies curriculum contents in junior secondary schools 19 were taught while eight were untaught. According to the table, respondents

agreed that the following subjects were not taught: cultures and social values; marriage types; marriage difficulties; group behavior, social and health concerns; extended family members' contributions to child development; human trafficking; encouraging peaceful living in our society and social conflicts.

Hypothesis 1: Untaught topics in Junior Secondary School Social Studies curriculum contents do not significantly influence students' academic performance?

Table 2: Chi-square Summary on Influence of Untaught Topics in Social Studies Curriculum Contents in Junior Secondary School and Academic Performance

Category	Academic Performance	df	Chi-square	Sig. (2taile)
Pass	118	1	6.914	.009
Fail	162			
Total	280			

Table 2 shows a chi-square value of 6.914 and a p-value of .009, testing at an alpha level of 0.05. Since the p-value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the conclusion is that there is a significant influence of untaught topics in Social Studies curriculum contents in junior secondary school on academic performance.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the influence of untaught topics in Junior Secondary School Social Studies curriculum contents on students' academic performance based on gender.

Table 3: Chi-square Summary on the Influence of Untaught Topics of Secondary School Social Studies Students' Academic Performance Based on Gender

Category	Performance			df	Chi-square	Sig.(2taile)
	Fail	Pass	Total			
Sex	Male	89	67	156	.094	.759
	Female		73	51		
	Total		162	118		

Table 3 shows a chi-square value of .094 and a p-value of .759, testing at an alpha level of 0.05. Since the p-value is higher than the alpha level of 0.05, therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and the conclusion is that there is no significant difference in the performance of junior secondary school Social Studies students due to untaught topics based on gender.

Discussions

The finding reveals that majority of the prescribed curriculum topics were taught. These untaught topics, which are cultures and social values; types of marriage; obstacles in marriage; group behavior, social and health issues; roles of extended family members in child development; human trafficking; promoting peaceful living in our society and social conflicts are central to the realization of Civic and Social Studies objectives. Their omission corroborates Okonkwo (2020) and Akinbode (2021) that incomplete curriculum coverage is a significant predictor of poor academic outcomes as students are ill-prepared for examinations and lack of firm grasp of essential concepts. Given Social Studies' mandate to prepare students for responsible citizenship (Adepoju, 2019), leaving out such topics undermines both academic and civic competencies.

Results revealed that incomplete curriculum contents coverage influence students' academic performance negatively. This is corroborated by the findings of Adeola (2019), Okonkwo (2020) and Akinbode (2021), which found that students in schools where large portions of Social Studies curriculum contents remained untaught performed significantly worse in national examinations compared to their counterparts in schools with complete curriculum coverage.

Finding revealed that the influence of untaught topics in Social Studies on students' academic performance based on gender was not significant. This finding negates the studies of Idowu and Olalekan (2018), Eze (2020), Bamidele (2020), Okon (2020), Nwachukwu (2021), Okonkwo (2020), and Eze and Onwuegbuna (2023), which found out that untaught topics affect both gender, but that females were more adversely affected due to lower access to informal academic support structures and additional domestic responsibilities

that reduced their time for independent study. The finding that there is no significant difference in academic performance based on gender lends support to Babatunde's (2020) position that the quality and completeness of instruction exert a stronger influence on students' outcomes than biological or age-related factors at the junior secondary school level. This indicates that, within this category, pupils' performance in academic tasks is contingent upon factors related to the curriculum, rather than individual attributes. Simply put, it was observed that the students' academic success is majorly dependent on how well the curriculum is taught. It can be concluded that appropriate use of the course structure minimizes the disparities often recorded in the performance of pupils from various demographical backgrounds.

Conclusion

The study established that omissions in the Social Studies curriculum have an effect on the academic performance of Social Studies students in Ukwuani Local Government Area. Although there was no significant difference in the achievement of the boys and girls, the study unveiled that good implementation of the curriculum has a greater effect on the achievement of the students. The research further shows that omission of certain aspects of the curriculum deprives learners of the opportunity to learn specific aspects of civic education which the Social Studies course aims to offer. It can be concluded that lack of inclusion of certain aspects of the curriculum not only affects the academic performance of the students but also adversely affects civic education in the local government area.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Social Studies teachers should strive continuously to cover all aspects of the curriculum within the course duration. This can be done by proper planning, time management and adhering strictly to the scheme of work. It is further recommended that heads of institutions and the Post Primary Education Board supervise and monitor the implementation of the curriculum in the local government area. There is a need for constant teacher training and seminars on Social Studies teaching to augment their knowledge and skills in the art of teaching so that they can achieve maximum performance of the students. The ministry of education should boost

the morale of these teachers and provide incentives for research, motivation, and proper work environment.

Generally, the study suggests that factors that influence optimal student performance are more important in the art of teaching Social Studies rather than the demographical characteristics of the students. As such, more emphasis should be placed on boosting the skill set of Social Studies teachers in order to meet maximum performance in the course. Further effort should be focused on ensuring that all aspects of the curriculum are taught appropriately.

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