

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIAL STUDIES AND THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN BENU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between students' attitudes towards Social Studies and their academic performance in colleges of education in Benue State, Nigeria. Guided by two specific purposes and two research questions, employed a correlational research design with a population of 900 students, from which 300 students were selected using stratified random sampling across three colleges. Data were obtained through the Students' Attitude towards Social Studies Questionnaire (SATSSQ) and Students' Academic Performance Scores (SAPS). The instruments were validated by experts in Social Studies, and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the SATSSQ was determined using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient method. The Findings reveal among others that there was a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.62, p < 0.05$) between students' attitudes and their academic performance. Also, Students' attitudes account for 38% of the variation in their performance, suggesting that attitude plays a critical role in learning outcomes. The study recommends implementing learner-centered teaching, strengthening guidance and counseling, providing academic support, revising the curriculum for relevance, enhancing lecturer professional development, and establishing institutional reward systems to improve students' attitudes and performance in Social Studies.

Keywords: Students Attitudes, Academic Performance, Social Studies, Colleges of Education.

Introduction

Social Studies, as an interdisciplinary subject, plays a vital role in shaping individuals' understanding of their social environment and developing responsible citizenship. It is designed to equip learners with the knowledge, values, and skills necessary to function effectively in their communities and contribute meaningfully to national development. Social Studies is integrated into teacher education programs to promote civic responsibility, tolerance, cooperation, and national unity among student-teachers. In the context of Colleges of Education, where prospective teachers are trained, students' attitudes toward Social Studies remain critical to both their academic achievement and professional preparedness. Attitude,

encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioural orientations, has long been linked to student engagement and learning outcomes (Şener, 2021). However, students' attitudes towards Social Studies in Nigerian Colleges of Education, especially in Benue State, remain a concern. Attitude significantly influences teaching and learning: positive attitudes tend to increase motivation, engagement, and academic achievement, while negative attitudes can lead to disinterest and poor academic performance (A'ishatu & Bayero, 2021; Imran, Panti, Richard, Omego, & Oluwadamilola, 2025).

Benue State is a region characterized by ethnic diversity and socio-political challenges. The role of Social Studies in fostering unity and social

consciousness is particularly important. Preliminary evidence suggests that many students hold negative attitudes toward Social Studies, which correlates with poor academic performance (Wushishi, 2021). Multiple factors — including teaching methods, curriculum relevance, teacher competence, and the lived experiences of students — are likely to shape these attitudes. The importance of examining students' attitudes toward Social Studies in this context lies in its potential to inform curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers on improving both delivery and perception of the subject. Since Colleges of Education train future teachers, the attitudes formed at this level have downstream effects on how Social Studies is taught at primary and secondary levels.

Research has shown that integrating modern pedagogical methods — such as blended learning, e-learning, and the use of ICT — can positively affect students' performance and attitudes (A'ishatu & Bayero, 2021; Imran, Panti, Richard, Omego, & Oluwadamilola, 2025). Also, perceptual factors such as whether the curriculum content reflects students' real-life and societal issues are crucial in determining whether they perceive the subject as relevant rather than outdated. Despite these insights, there is still a gap in localized research focusing specifically on students' attitudes toward Social Studies in Colleges of Education in Benue State. Given Benue State's socio-political landscape, including inter-communal tensions, rural-urban disparities, and ethnic diversity, understanding attitudes in this setting is socially and educationally imperative.

Furthermore, with ongoing reforms in teacher education and increasing calls for the adoption of ICT-enhanced and blended pedagogies, a reassessment of how students engage with Social Studies is timely. Recent evidence suggests that adopting blended learning or other interactive

approaches leads to better academic outcomes and more positive attitudes compared to more traditional lecture methods (A'ishatu & Bayero, 2021). Empirical findings indicate that when Social Studies is taught by qualified and motivated educators using student-centered and participatory methods, students display more favorable dispositions toward the subject. Conversely, rote learning or passive instructional methods are associated with apathy and negative attitudes (Imran, Panti, Richard, Omego, & Oluwadamilola, 2025). It is against this background that the present study investigates the relationship between students' attitudes toward Social Studies and their academic performance in Colleges of Education in Benue State.

Two key theoretical models underpin the understanding of attitudes in education. The Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen (1991) posits that attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence individuals' intentions and actions. Applying this model, students' intentions to engage with Social Studies are shaped not only by their personal attitudes but also by peer influence and their perceived ability to succeed in the subject. Additionally, Vygotsky's Social Constructivism emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). This suggests that a student's environment—especially the socio-political context of Benue State—could significantly impact their attitude towards a socially-oriented subject like Social Studies.

Observations and preliminary reports from some Colleges of Education in Benue State suggest that many students exhibit low enthusiasm, poor participation, and a general lack of interest in Social Studies. This trend raises questions about the effectiveness of teaching methods, curriculum relevance, and the perception of the subject's value in students' personal and

professional development. Attitudes toward Social Studies can have far-reaching implications, not only for academic performance but also for the broader goal of nurturing socially responsible educators. Without a clear understanding of the nature and influence of students' attitudes, efforts to improve the teaching and learning of Social Studies may remain ineffective. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the attitudes of students toward Social Studies in Colleges of Education in Benue State, Nigeria.

In summary, while there is a substantial body of research on attitudes toward Social Studies in Nigeria, most of it focuses on the primary and secondary school levels. There is a clear research gap concerning how students in teacher-training institutions, particularly in Benue State, perceive the subject. This study, therefore, seeks to contribute to the evolving discourse by exploring the nature, and implications of students' attitudes toward Social Studies in Colleges of Education within the state.

The specific objectives of this study include:

1. To identify the relationship between students' attitudes and their academic performance in Social Studies?
2. To evaluate the extent to which students' attitudes influence their performance in Social Studies.

Hypotheses

The study was be guided by the following hypotheses:

1. There is no significant relationship between students' attitudes and their academic performance in Social Studies
2. There is no significant influence of students' attitude on their performance in Social Studies

Methodology

The study adopts a correlational research design to examine the relationship between students' attitudes and their performance in Social Studies. The study was conducted in; the Federal College of Education Odugbo, the State College of Education Oju and the State College of Education Katsina-Ala in Benue State, Nigeria. The population of the study was 900 comprising all Social Studies students in the three Colleges of Education. A sample size of 300 students were selected using a stratified random sampling technique. Two instruments were used for data collection: Students' Attitude towards Social Studies Questionnaire (SATSSQ) – a structured questionnaire designed to assess students' attitudes toward the subject. Students' Academic Performance Scores (SAPS) – obtained from their most recent Social Studies examinations to measure their performance, the SATSSQ was subjected to content and face validity. The researchers submitted the drafted items to three lecturers, first to two experts in Social Studies Department, School of Arts Social Science and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation, the reliability of the SATSSQ was determined using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient method. A pilot study was conducted, and a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above was considered acceptable. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the relationship between students' attitudes and their academic performance. Simple Linear Regression Analysis was used to determine the extent to which students' attitudes influence their academic performance.

Results

The results of the study were presented based on data obtained the study.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between students' attitudes and their academic performance in Social Studies

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Analysis of the Relationship between Students' Attitude and Academic Performance

Variables	N	Mean (x)	SD	r-value	p-value	Decision
Students' Attitude	300	2.86	1.14	-0.62	0.001	Significant
Academic Performance	300	48.2	10.5			

The correlation coefficient $r = -0.62$ indicates a moderate negative relationship between students' attitudes and their academic performance. Since the p-value (0.001) is less than 0.05, the result is statistically significant. This means that as students' attitudes toward Social Studies

become more negative, their academic performance declines.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of students' attitudes on their performance in Social Studies

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Students' Attitudes and its Influence on Academic Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)
Constant	60.42	2.45	-	24.68	0.000
Students' Attitude	-5.83	1.15	-0.62	-5.07	0.001
$R^2 = 0.38$					

The regression results indicate that students' attitudes significantly influence their academic performance ($p = 0.001$). The negative coefficient (-5.83) implies that for every one-unit increase in negative attitude, students' performance decreases by 5.83 marks. The R^2 value of 0.38 means that 38% of the variation in students' academic performance is explained by their attitudes.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study shows that there is a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.62$, $p < 0.05$) between students' attitudes and their academic performance. This suggests that as students' attitudes toward Social Studies become more negative, their academic performance declines. This result is consistent with Imran, Panti, Richard, Omego, and Oluwadamilola (2025), who found that the use of WhatsApp-based e-learning significantly improved junior secondary students' attitudes toward Social Studies,

which in turn enhanced their performance. Similarly, Muhammad, Hassan, Sulaiman, and Rilwanu (2023) reported that teachers' attitude and motivation had a substantial positive influence on students' academic achievement in Social Studies in Colleges of Education in North-East Nigeria. These findings underscore the role of students' and teachers' attitudes in shaping academic outcomes. . The significant negative relationship suggests that addressing students' negative perceptions through effective teaching strategies, motivational programs, and student engagement initiatives can improve academic outcomes.

The findings of this study shows that students' attitudes account for 38% of the variation in their performance, suggesting that attitude plays a critical role in learning outcomes. The negative regression coefficient (-5.83, $p < 0.05$) indicates that as students' attitudes become more negative, their academic scores decline significantly. Similarly, Wushishi (2021) investigating students' attitude

toward the teaching and learning of Social Studies in Niger State College of Education found that more positive attitude are linked with higher academic achievement in Social Studies. This aligns with the Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), which posits that students who perceive a subject as valuable and attainable are more likely to exert effort and achieve better results. Conversely, those with negative attitudes are less likely to engage in meaningful learning, leading to poor performance.

The findings of this study align with the research objectives, providing insights into how students' attitudes influence their performance in Social Studies in Colleges of Education in Benue State, Nigeria. These findings are also compared with existing literature for validation.

From a theoretical perspective, Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) supports this finding. TPB states that students' attitudes influence their behavioral intentions, which in turn affect their actual learning behaviors. A student who believes that Social Studies is difficult or irrelevant will be less likely to study effectively, participate in class discussions, or engage in learning activities, leading to poor performance. The study's findings align with existing literature, including Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1985), Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which suggest that students' perceptions, motivations, and attributions significantly influence their academic success. Given the impact of negative attitudes on performance, it is imperative for educational stakeholders—including teachers, curriculum planners, and policymakers to develop effective strategies for improving students' perceptions of Social Studies. Addressing students' negative attitudes towards Social Studies is not just a matter of improving academic performance; it is also essential

for nurturing well-informed, socially responsible citizens who appreciate the relevance of Social Studies in understanding societal issues and fostering national development.

Educational Implications of Findings

The findings of this study have several important educational implications for students, teachers, curriculum developers, policymakers, and educational institutions. Since students' attitudes significantly predict their performance in Social Studies, addressing negative attitudes is essential for improving academic outcomes and fostering a deeper understanding of the subject.

1. Implications for Students

- Students with negative attitudes toward Social Studies are more likely to perform poorly, which may affect their overall academic progress and career opportunities in education and social sciences.

2. Implications for Teachers and Teaching Methods

- Traditional lecture-based methods should be replaced with student-centered approaches like collaborative learning, inquiry-based learning, and project-based learning to enhance students' interest.

3. Implications for Curriculum Development

- Curriculum developers should incorporate digital learning tools, multimedia resources, and case studies to make Social Studies more engaging.

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that students' attitudes play a significant role in determining their academic performance in Social Studies in Colleges of Education in Benue State, Nigeria. The study established that a majority of students hold negative perceptions of Social Studies, viewing it as boring and difficult, which

directly contributes to their poor performance. The correlation analysis showed a statistically significant negative relationship between students' attitudes and their academic achievement, meaning that as students' attitudes become more negative, their performance declines. Furthermore, the regression analysis indicated that students' attitudes account for a substantial portion of the variance in their academic performance, reinforcing the need to address these perceptions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Social Studies lecturers should adopt learner-centered and interactive teaching strategies—such as group discussions, debates, and real-life problem-solving activities—that make the subject engaging and relevant to students' daily lives. This will help improve students' perceptions and attitudes toward the subject.
2. Colleges of Education should strengthen guidance and counseling units to provide regular orientation and motivational programs for students. These services can help students develop positive mindsets toward Social Studies and understand its importance for personal and national development.
3. Remedial classes, peer mentoring, and tutorial sessions should be organized for students who struggle with Social Studies. These interventions can build their confidence, reduce negative attitudes, and enhance overall academic performance.
4. The Social Studies curriculum should be linked to practical societal issues such as civic responsibility, governance, conflict resolution, and sustainable development. This will help students see the real-world value of the

subject, encouraging more positive engagement.

5. Professional development workshops and training should be provided for lecturers on innovative pedagogical strategies, classroom management, and motivational techniques. Well-trained lecturers are more likely to inspire students, thereby improving their attitudes and performance.
6. Colleges of Education in Benue State should implement policies that reward student participation, collaboration, and achievement in Social Studies. Recognition and incentives can motivate students to adopt more positive attitudes, leading to improved academic outcomes.

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