

**PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL STUDIES
IN BUILDING A JUST AND EGALITARIAN
SOCIETY IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between Social Studies and the development of a just and egalitarian society by examining its contributions to social justice, human rights, economic equality, democratic governance and multicultural inclusion. The study employed descriptive survey research design of a correlational type. The study population comprised of primary school teachers. The sample for this study was 110 primary school teachers and multistage sampling procedure was employed. Simple random sampling technique was used to select four local government education authorities in Lagos State. These are; Ikeja, Alimosho, Agege and Badagry from the 20 Local Government Education Authorities. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 4 schools each from the LGEA's. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 8 caregivers from each of the schools. One research instrument was used for the study, titled 'Social Studies Curricula in Building a Just and Egalitarian Society

(SSCBJES)'. Reliability of the instrument was done with the use of Cronbach Alpha technique and the coefficient valued of $\alpha = 0.78$. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance. The study recommended among others that schools should include topics on human rights, democracy and economic justice in Social Studies curricula to equip students with the knowledge needed to challenge inequality.

Keywords: Social Studies, Curricula, Building, Egalitarian society, Human rights. Justice.

Introduction

Social Studies as a multidisciplinary field, plays a crucial role in shaping societies by instilling values of justice, equity and social responsibility. In an era marked by economic disparities, social inequalities, and political conflicts, the imperatives of Social Studies in fostering a just and egalitarian society cannot be overemphasized. Social Studies education encompasses history, civics, geography, economics and sociology, all of which contribute to an individual's understanding of societal structures and promote ethical citizenship (Banks, 2020). Social Studies contribute to raising a just and egalitarian society by promoting civic engagement, fostering critical thinking, advocating for human rights, addressing social injustices and encouraging democratic participation.

A just and egalitarian society is one where all individuals have equal access to opportunities, resources and rights, regardless of their background, gender, race or socio-economic status. Justice in society implies fairness in legal systems, economic structures and social interactions, while egalitarianism emphasizes equal distribution of power and wealth. According to Sen, (2009), true justice is not merely about fair institutions but, also about equitable outcomes that improve the well-being of individuals. The foundations of such a society are built upon principles of human dignity, inclusivity and fairness, which Social Studies education actively promotes.

The characteristics of a just and egalitarian society include equal rights and opportunities, every individual has the same legal, political and social rights, such as access to education, healthcare and employment (Sen, 2009). Fair distribution of wealth and resources, economic systems are structured to reduce extreme wealth disparities and ensure a more balanced distribution of income (Piketty, 2014). Social inclusion and non-discrimination, there is no discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity and religion or disability, ensuring all individuals participate fully in society. Democratic participation, people have equal access to political decision-making and governance structures, promoting representation and fairness. Justice and fairness in legal systems, the law is applied equally to all individuals, with no preferential treatment for specific groups or classes.

Social Studies fosters an egalitarian society by equipping individuals with knowledge, value and skills necessary to advocate for equality, justice and social inclusion. Through subjects like history, civics, economics and geography, Social Studies help individuals understand societal structures and the importance of fairness and equity. Social Studies contribute to achieving an egalitarian society in the following ways, Social Studies education emphasizes human rights, democracy and the importance of social justice. In studying historical movements such as the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, the abolition of apartheid in South Africa and global feminist struggles, individuals learn about the fight for equal rights and the necessity of dismantling oppressive systems. Furthermore, Social Studies encourage individuals to become advocates for marginalized communities by understanding systemic discrimination and proposing solutions for inclusive policies, (Amnesty International, 2021). Reducing social and economic inequalities, economic disparity is a significant barrier to egalitarianism. Social Studies curricula that cover economic systems help individuals understand the causes of wealth inequality and the policies that can promote fair economic distribution (Stiglitz, 2012). For example, discussions on progressive taxation, universal basic income and social welfare policies help individuals recognize how governments can reduce

poverty and provide equal opportunities. Learning about the role of trade unions, fair wages and labour rights also empowers individuals to advocate for economic justice.

Encouraging civic engagement and political participation, an egalitarian society is one where all citizens actively participate in governance and decision-making. Social Studies educate individuals on their rights to vote, engage in policy-making and hold leaders accountable (Parker, 2010). In studying democratic principles and government structures, individuals learn how to contribute to political processes, advocate for marginalized groups and promote policies that ensure equality in governance. Additionally, Social Studies teach about the dangers of political corruption and authoritarianism, encouraging citizens to demand transparency and fairness in leadership. Social Studies help dismantle stereotypes and prejudices by providing a broad perspective on different cultures, traditions and beliefs. Through global history and cultural studies, individuals develop respect for diversity and inclusion (Banks, 2020). For example, understanding the contributions of different ethnic groups to national development fosters appreciation and reduces discrimination.

Social Studies teach peace education by equipping individuals with conflict resolution skills, negotiation tactics and mediation techniques. Analyzing past conflicts such as world wars, civil wars and ethnic clashes, enable individuals understand the importance of diplomacy and peaceful co-existence. This knowledge fosters a culture of dialogue, tolerance and reconciliation which is essential for maintaining a fair and just society. Promoting environmental justice and sustainability, environmental justice is an integral part of an egalitarian society. Social Studies discuss how environmental issues disproportionately affect marginalized communities, emphasizing the need for policies that protect vulnerable populations. For example, climate change and pollution often impact low-income communities the most, limiting their access to clean water, healthcare and sustainable livelihoods. Social Studies emphasizes the importance of sustainable development, responsible resource management and climate action to ensure that all individuals,

regardless of their socioeconomic status, benefit from a healthy environment.

Social Studies is a powerful tool in promoting justice and equity in many ways which includes, fostering civic awareness and responsibility. Social Studies education empowers individuals with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities in society. In studying governance systems, constitutions and legal frameworks, citizens become aware of their civic duties, including voting, paying taxes and advocating for social justice (Parker, 2010). Moreover, civic education within Social Studies curricula, fosters democratic values such as tolerance, respect for the rule of law and the protection of minority rights. A just and egalitarian society requires individuals who can critically analyze social issues and make informed decisions. Social Studies promote critical thinking by encouraging individuals to evaluate historical events, political ideologies and economic policies from multiple perspectives (Engle & Ochoa, 2017).

For instance, the study of civil rights movements, revolutions and social transformations helps individuals understand the importance of advocacy and the need for systemic change. Ethical reasoning which is a core component of Social Studies, ensures that individuals consider fairness, justice and morality when addressing societal issues (Noddings, 2013). Social Studies education highlights fundamental human rights, including freedom of speech, equality before the law and access to basic necessities such as healthcare and education. In examining historical injustices such as slavery, colonialism and apartheid, individuals develop an understanding of systemic oppression and the importance of fighting against discrimination. Furthermore, Social Studies emphasize the role of international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and human rights watchdogs in promoting global justice. When individuals are educated on these matters, they are more likely to challenge oppressive structures and work towards an equitable society (Amnesty International, 2021).

Addressing social inequalities and economic disparities, economic disparities are a major barrier to achieving a just society. Social Studies education examines economic policies, labour rights

and social welfare programmes that can bridge the gap between the rich and the poor (Stiglitz, 2012). For instance, studying the effects of capitalism, socialism and mixed economies enables individuals to understand wealth distribution and advocate for policies that reduce poverty and unemployment. Moreover, Social Studies highlight the importance of social mobility and equal opportunities, ensuring that marginalized groups receive adequate support to participate in economic activities (Piketty, 2014). Encouraging environmental and social responsibility, a just society also considers environmental justice, ensuring that resources are equitably shared and that vulnerable populations are not disproportionately affected by climate change and environmental degradation. Social Studies teach sustainability, ethical consumerism and environmental policies that protect future generations. When individuals understand the link between social justice and environmental responsibility, they advocate for fair policies and practices that benefit all members of society (Raworth, 2017).

The factors of building a just and egalitarian society include, social justice, human rights education, economic equality, democratic participation and multicultural inclusion. Social justice refers to the fair distribution of opportunities, resources and privileges in society. Social Studies promote this by teaching historical and contemporary injustices and encouraging individuals to advocate for fairness. Social Studies play a vital role in promoting human rights awareness. Social Studies curricula introduces individuals to documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Geneva Conventions (UNESCO, 2015). Recognizing human rights violations, Social Studies enable individuals examining historical and modern cases of human rights abuses such as genocide, gender-based violence and political oppression (Donnelly, 2013). Developing a sense of global citizenship, Social Studies encourage students to respect diverse cultures and advocate for marginalized groups.

Social Studies address economic inequality by equipping students with knowledge of economic systems and policies, teaching economic literacy, understanding taxation, inflation, income

inequality and government economic policies. Analyzing labour and social welfare systems, Social Studies help students in studying policies such as minimum wage laws, unemployment, and social security (Piketty, 2014). Encouraging entrepreneurship and financial inclusion, teaching business skills and microfinance solutions to empower economically disadvantaged groups stems from Social Studies curricula (Todaro & Smith, 2015). Social Studies contributes to multicultural inclusion by teaching cultural awareness. Learning about different traditions, customs and histories fosters respect and reduces prejudice.

Despite the transformative potential of Social Studies, several challenges hinder its effectiveness in fostering a just and egalitarian society. Such challenges include, lack of inclusive and decolonized curricula, many educational systems still focus on eurocentric perspectives, ignoring the histories and contributions of marginalized groups. In some educational systems, Social Studies curricula lack depth in addressing critical issues such as racism, economic inequalities and human rights (Merryfield & Wilson, 2005). Political interference, governments and political entities sometimes manipulate Social Studies content to serve their interests, limiting exposure to diverse perspectives and to promote a particular political ideology, limiting discussions on social justice and equality (Apple, 2004). Social Studies education is underfunded, besides, many teachers are not adequately trained to teach Social Studies in a way that encourages critical thinking, social activism and to facilitate discussions on justice and equality (Giroux, 2011).

The pursuit of a just and egalitarian society remains a fundamental goal of modern governance, yet persistent inequalities, social injustices and systemic discrimination continue to hinder progress. Despite legal frameworks in promoting human rights and equality, economic disparities, political exclusion and cultural biases create barriers that prevent individuals and communities from accessing opportunities fairly. One of the major challenges facing contemporary societies is the widening economic gap between the rich and the poor, which limits access to quality education, healthcare and employment opportunities. According to Stiglitz, (2012), the

increasing concentration of wealth among a small percentage of the population contributes to social instability and limits economic mobility for marginalized groups. Additionally, social discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion and disability further exacerbates inequality. Women and minority groups often face systemic barriers in accessing leadership positions, fair wages and political representation (Nussbaum, 2000). Given these pressing issues, there is need for a comprehensive examination of the role of social structures, policies and education especially through Social Studies, in fostering a just and egalitarian society. This study therefore seeks to explore the imperatives of Social Studies education in addressing these systemic injustices, promoting social responsibility and equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to advocate for fairness and equality. The specific objectives are to:

- i. determine the influence of Social Studies on the promotion of justice and equality in building a just and egalitarian society; and
- ii. examine the influence of Social Studies in shaping public awareness and attitudes toward human rights and social responsibility.

Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no significant influence of Social Studies on the promotion of justice and equality in building a just and egalitarian society.

H₀2: There is no significant influence of Social Studies in shaping public awareness and attitudes toward human rights and social responsibility.

Methods

The study employed descriptive survey research design of a correlational type. The study population comprised of primary school teachers. The sample for this study was 110 primary school teachers and multistage sampling procedure was employed. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 4 local government education

authorities in Lagos State these are: Ikeja, Alimosho, Agege and Badagry from the 20 Local Government Education Authorities. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 4 schools each from the LGEA's. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 8 caregivers from each of the schools. One research instruments titled 'Social Studies Curricula in Building a Just and Egalitarian Society' (SSCBJES) was used for the study. Reliability of the instrument was done using Cronbach Alpha technique and the coefficient valued of $\alpha = 0.78$. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

H₀1: There is no significant influence of Social Studies to the promotion of justice and equality in building a just and egalitarian society.

Table 1: Influence of Social Studies to the promotion of justice and equality in building a just and egalitarian society

Variable Mean	Std.	D N	r	Sig. Remark
Promotion of justice and equality in building a just and egalitarian society	13.420	5.231		
Contribution of Social Studies	33.557	13.080	.995**	000 significant

Table 1 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between contribution of Social Studies education to the promotion of justice and equality in building a just and egalitarian society ($r = .995$; $p < 0.05$). This implies that Social Studies has a correlates with the promotion of justice and equality in building a just and egalitarian society. The null hypothesis 1 is rejected.

H_0 : There is no significant contribution of Social Studies education in shaping public awareness and attitudes toward human rights and social responsibility.

Table 2: Influence of Social Studies education in shaping public awareness and attitudes toward human rights and social responsibility

Variable	Mean	Std.	DN	r	Sig.	Remark
Shaping public awareness and attitudes towards human rights & social responsibility		13.141	4.202			
Contribution of Social Studies		110	.989**	.000		significant
		30.776	11.050			

Table 2 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between Social Studies education and shaping public awareness and attitudes toward human rights and social responsibility ($r = .989$; $p < 0.05$). This implies that Social Studies education has a correlates with shaping public awareness and attitudes toward human rights and social responsibility. The positive relationship implies that building a just and egalitarian society could be achieved with Social Studies education. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussions

The findings made in the analysis of hypothesis one shows that there is a significant positive relationship between social studies education and promotion of justice and equality in building a just and egalitarian society. Social Studies education has a correlates with justice and equality and building a just and egalitarian society. This agrees with Bank (2020) as he asserts that Social Studies help dismantle stereotypes and prejudices by providing a broad perspective on different cultures, traditions and beliefs. Through global history and cultural studies, individuals develop respect for diversity and inclusion.

The findings made in the analysis of hypothesis two shows that there is a significant positive relationship between Social Studies education and shaping public awareness and attitudes toward human rights and social responsibility. This implies that in shaping public awareness and attitudes toward human rights and social responsibility, a just and egalitarian society could be built. This agrees with Parker (2010) as he opines that by shaping public awareness and attitude towards human rights and social responsibility people are encouraged in civic engagement and political participation, enabling them to be aware that an egalitarian society is one where all citizens actively participate in governance and decision-making. Social Studies educate individuals on their rights to vote, engage in policy making and hold leaders accountable.

Conclusion

Social Studies education is a powerful tool in fostering a just and egalitarian society. Through civic engagement, critical thinking, human rights advocacy, and social justice initiatives, social studies equip individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to challenge inequalities and promote fairness. To fully realize its potential, policy makers must ensure that Social Studies curricula are inclusive, unbiased and reflective of diverse perspectives. Teachers should receive proper training to facilitate meaningful discussions on justice and equity. Ultimately, a society that values Social Studies education is more likely to achieve sustainable justice and equality for all.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made: Schools should include topics on human rights, democracy and economic justice in Social Studies curricula to equip students with the knowledge needed to challenge inequality. Educators should receive specialized training on how to teach Social Studies in a way that fosters critical thinking, civic engagement and activism. Schools should organize field trips, volunteer programs and social justice initiatives that allow individuals to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts. Textbooks and learning resources

should reflect diverse perspectives, including contributions from historically marginalized communities. Digital platforms, social media and online courses can be used to expand access to Social Studies education and engage students in global discussions on justice and equality. To move toward a just society, governments should implement policies that ensure equal access to resources, uphold democratic values and protect the rights of all individuals.

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