

## Original Research Article

## Demographic Variables of Undergraduate Students as Correlates of Attitude towards Studying Social Studies in Southwestern Universities in Nigeria

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Received: 28.03.2022

Accepted: 05.05.2022

Published: 02.06.2022

**Journal homepage:**<https://www.easpublisher.com>**Quick Response Code**

**Abstract:** The study examined the influence of gender, level of study, age as well as religion of undergraduate students on attitude towards studying Social Studies in higher institutions of learning. These were with the view of providing information on the influence of demographic variables on undergraduate students' attitude towards studying Social Studies in higher institutions of learning. The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study consisted of the Social Studies Education students of higher institutions of learning. The sample for the study comprised one hundred and sixty (160) students selected through multistage sampling procedure. Four states were selected out of the six states that made up southwestern Nigeria through simple random sampling technique. Four universities were purposively selected, one from each selected states, based on the fact that they are offering Social Studies as a course of study. Forty Social Studies students were selected through simple random sampling techniques from each of the four selected university. The forty students in each institution comprised ten (10) students each from Part 1 through to Part 4. The instrument used for the study is a self-developed questionnaire tagged Questionnaire on Students' Attitudes Towards Studying Social Studies (QSATSS). The instrument was validated and subjected to Cronbach alpha reliability test which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81. Data collected were analysed using simple percentages, frequency counts and Chi-square statistics. The results among others showed that the level of study has significant influence on undergraduate students attitude towards studying Social Studies ( $X^2 = 11.708$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The study recommended among others that undergraduate students should have positive attitude towards Social Studies as a field of study.

**Keywords:** Gender, Level of Study, Age, Religion, Undergraduate Students, Attitude, Social Studies.

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## INTRODUCTION

Social studies is a subject which is taught at various levels of education in Nigeria. It is taught under environmental studies now known as citizenship education which points to the importance attached to the study of Social Studies in Schools (Adebisi, 2016). The national council for social studies divides social studies objectives into four categories namely knowledge, skills, values and participation (Adekeye, 2017). These four categories of the learning of social studies are also addressed in the objectives declared by the Ministry of Education for both primary schools and Junior Secondary Schools (Adullahi, 2015).

However, over the years, there have been growing concerns about the attitude of students towards the study of social studies in schools. The need to adapt education to the needs of the Nigerian society started before and after independence. Many educational elites began to recognise that the functional inadequacies of the educational system inherited from the colonial education failed to develop positive values, attitudes and habits in our society because the social studies they taught was British oriented and has nothing to offer to the Nigerian child. Fafunwa (1974) observed that the educational system instead of developing positive values in the society which the African child lives tends to alienate him from his cultural environment. This was the reason behind the re-evaluation of the educational

system and the curriculum of the school and objectives that are relevant to the society.

The major ideas and philosophies behind the curriculum innovation in the 1969 National Curriculum Conference according to Akinlaye (2001) were:

- i. The need to make education more relevant to the needs of the individuals and the society;
- ii. The need to use education for national integration and socio-economic development;
- iii. The need to develop the right societal value and;
- iv. The need to make an individual responsible to the society in which he lives.

This been the case, the National Policy on Education (2004) has in recognition the important role that social studies will play towards the achievement of the country's educational aims and objectives. Thus, social studies were made a core subject. Hence, there is a greater responsibility for social studies teachers in Nigeria today than the days before independence; this is because the Nigerian youths now live in an environment characterized by social ills and moral decadence which have to be curbed at all cost. The youths therefore need social studies education which focuses on the problems and issues of human beings in their changing environments and seeks to develop desirable habits, values, attitudes and skills in order to solve them.

Researchers have concentrated much on the cognitive aspect of teaching in schools because of the importance attached to success in public examinations; however, there is interplay between the cognitive and affective areas of teaching. For example, Taylor (2001) have shown that there is a relationship between interest and developments in different school subjects, therefore, it is believed that favourable attitude towards social studies may influence to a considerable extent the uptake of knowledge in social studies.

Studies relating to specific aspects of pupils' attitude towards social studies and other related subjects have been undertaken by several researchers. Jekayinfa (2007) has reported that high grade in social studies at lower forms is a factor that can pull students to history in the secondary schools in Nigeria.

### **Social Studies**

Social studies has the responsibility of helping students to develop the knowledge, skills, attitude and values needed to participate in the civic life of their local communities, the nation and the world (Dubey, 2014). Social studies is the only subject which has the responsibility of developing civic competences and skills as its primary goal (Federal Government, National Curriculum for Primary School Social Studies, 2014). Social studies deal with man in relation to his environment. It is the study of man in society. The objectives of Social studies centers on man's existence

in his social and physical environment. It deals with the many factors or influences that bear on man's existence. Social studies look at man not as an island to him.

On the contrary, Social Studies looks at how Man lives in cooperation with others since his existence depends on pooling of resources and knowledge from many individuals. In other words it include the study of individuals and group of people and how they relate to one another. In so doing emphasis is placed on individual qualities like critical thinking, obedience, honesty, patriotism and so on. The study of Social Studies also stresses group or group's ideas such as cooperation, interdependency, peaceful co-existence, tolerance and adaptability and any other socially desirable habits, virtue, attitude and values.

### **Meaning and Definition of Attitude**

Attitude is the manner, disposition, feeling, or position with regard to a person, things, or events. It can be referred to as a person's viewpoint, mindset, or beliefs towards a person, places, things, or situations. The word 'attitude' stems from the Latin word 'aplus' meaning fitness or adaption. It is the mental state of preparation for action. The construct 'attitude' has originated from the field of social psychology (Allport, 1935). Attitudes reflect the overall evaluations of persons, groups, objects, and events in the social world and help to make the decision. Attitudes are important because they affect both the way we perceive the world and how we behave. However, the formal definitions of attitude vary according to their focus given by the social psychologists on the attribute of attitude (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Eagly & Chaiken 1993). Attitude refers to a set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviours toward a particular person, object, thing, or event. Attitudes are often the result of experience, learning, conditioning, observation, and social factors and can have a great influence over behaviour.

The definition of attitude became broader gradually as time passes over and the different social psychologists interpret the meaning of attitude relating to multiple dimensions. Attitudes are not innate but result from environment and experiences and can be changed over time. Attitudes are global issues and are the consequences of different incidence. Koballa (1988) has affirmed the three common disposition of attitude as:

- i) Attitudes are enduring and seem to remain relatively stable over time.
- ii) Attitudes are learned or acquired.
- iii) Attitudes are related to a person's behaviour, that is, students' actions reflect their feelings toward objects and issues.

As stated by Mohamed and Waheed (2011), student attitudes can be influenced by three groups of factors. The factors associated with the students themselves (anxiety, self-efficacy and self-concept,

motivation, and experiences at school, etc.), factors associated with the school teacher and teaching (teaching materials, classroom management, teacher knowledge, attitudes towards Social Studies, guidance, beliefs, etc.) and factors related to home environment and society (educational background, parental expectations, socio-economic status, parental education, etc.).

In the beginning, Allport (1947) introduced attitude as a classic definition (one dimensional) "mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experiences, exerting a direct or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related". However, in recent times, it is considered as the combination of three components affect, cognition, and behaviour (Syeda, 2016). The affective component is composed of emotions and beliefs about the attitude object. Emotions are the pleasure feelings of enjoyment in learning or bore feeling or difficult. Beliefs are the students' confidence in their abilities to learn the subject. Cognition or the cognitive component refers to an individual's beliefs or knowledge about the object, thoughts, and attributes that associate with a particular object. Similarly, behaviour or the behavioural component is concerned with student's actions, commitment, and performance. It also refers to past behaviours with regard to an attitude object. It is connected to students' motivation to learn, act, and perform the task.

### **Defining Attitude toward Social Studies**

The definition of attitude can mainly be categorized into three types according to the degree of the affect associated with a certain subject. The first type of definition of attitude that describes a one-dimensional aspect of attitude as the positive or negative degree of affect (emotion, feeling) associated with a certain subject (Osakwe and Itedjere, 2005). This definition suggests the definition of attitude toward Social Studies just as a positive or negative emotional disposition toward Social Studies (Makinde, 2006). The second type of definition explores the bi-dimensional aspects of attitude that comprise emotional response and beliefs regarding Social Studies (Daskalogianni & Simpson, 2000). The third type of definition explores the multi-dimensional (tripartite) aspects of attitude that consists of emotional response towards Social Studies, beliefs regarding Social Studies, and behaviour related to Social Studies (Di Martino and Zan, 2010; Syeda, 2016). The multi-dimensional definition of attitude toward Social Studies is more complex in the sense of affects that associates with Social Studies (which, however, have a positive or negative value), beliefs towards Social Studies, and behaviours related to Social Studies (Hart, 1989).

The simple definition of attitude as a positive or negative degree of affect or emotion toward Social

Studies means the positive attitude is a positive emotional disposition toward the subject and the negative attitude is a negative emotional disposition toward the subject. Meaning of the different three aspects of attitudes (affect, belief and behaviour) relating to Social Studies, affect refers to both emotions and feeling either positive or negative that depends on the situation perceived as pleasurable or anxious towards the subject. Belief generally refers to the facts shared by experts. Positive belief means that it is supposed to elicit a positive emotion towards Social Studies that may be positive or successful behaviour towards Social Studies. Beliefs are often used to assess the significance of the emotional dimension. Similarly, behaviour refers to positive generally means successful behaviour, in the school context, successful behaviour is generally referred to as high achievement. Similarly, a negative behaviour reduces desired actions, in the school context, the learners' engagement in learning Social Studies decrease, and thus the achievement level also becomes low. The problem related to teaching and learning Social Studies is a worldwide issue that many of the countries are facing the problem of poor performance in Social Studies, failure in Social Studies, and difficulty in understanding of basic concepts of Social Studies (Igbogbor, (2000).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The poor attitude of students towards the study of social studies in schools is an unsatisfactory state of affairs and imbalance in the educational sector in particular and the nation's development in general. Social studies as a course in the university level suggest the importance the government, parents and students themselves attach to the study. The phenomena increase in students' attitude towards the study of social studies in schools should not be allowed to remain for too long unattended to. The need to motivate students to develop positive attitude towards the study of social studies in school and to create a conducive environment for studying social studies is not disputable and cannot be over-emphasised. The unfortunate thing is that students' attitude towards the study of social studies in schools is fraught with a lot of problems. There is a general belief that whenever students perform poorly in their courses the teacher has not really taught them well. People hardly look at the problem from the point of view of the student's attitude towards the courses. Hence, this study investigated demographic variables of undergraduate students as correlates of attitude towards studying Social Studies education in tertiary institution in Southwestern Universities in Nigeria.

## **OBJECTIVES**

This study investigated students' attitude towards studying Social Studies education in tertiary institutions. The specific objectives were to:

- i. Examine the influence of gender of undergraduate students on their attitude towards studying Social Studies;

- ii. Determine the influence of level of study of undergraduate students on their attitude towards studying Social Studies;
- iii. Investigate the influence of age of undergraduate students on their attitude towards studying Social Studies; and
- iv. Examine the influence of religion affiliation of undergraduate students on their attitude towards studying Social Studies.

**Hypotheses**

- 1. Gender of undergraduate students has no significant influence on their attitude towards studying Social Studies
- 2. Level of study of undergraduate students has no significant influence on their attitude towards studying Social Studies
- 3. Age of undergraduate students has no significant influence on their attitude towards studying Social Studies
- 4. Religion of undergraduate students has no significant influence on their attitude towards studying Social Studies

**METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study consisted of the Social Studies Education students of higher institutions of learning. The sample for the study comprised one hundred and sixty (160) students selected through multistage sampling procedure. Four states were

selected out of the six states that made up southwestern Nigeria through simple random sampling technique. Four universities were purposively selected, one from each selected states, based on the fact that they are offering Social Studies as a course of study. Forty Social Studies students were selected through simple random sampling techniques from each of the four selected university. The forty students in each institution comprised ten (10) students each from Part 1 through to Part 4. The selected institutions include: Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti (Ekiti State), Adekunle Ajasin University, Ondo (Ondo State), Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (Osun State) and Olabisi Onabanjo, Ago-Iwoye (Ogun State). The instrument used for the study is a self-developed questionnaire tagged Questionnaire on Students’ Attitudes towards Studying Social Studies (QSATSS). It has two sections, Section A consisted of personal data of the respondents (i.e gender, name of institution, level, age, religion) while Section B consisted of fifteen (15) items with Likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was validated and subjected to Cronbach alpha reliability test which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81 and was considered high enough to elicit the desired response. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, simple percentages and Chi-square statistics.

**RESULTS**

**Table-1: Descriptive statistics of the respondents’ demographic information in the study area**

S/N	Variabiles	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<b>1.</b>	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	70	43.8
	Female	90	56.3
<b>2.</b>	<b>Level</b>		
	100 Level	40	25.0
	200 Level	38	23.8
	300 Level	40	25.0
	400 Level	42	26.3
<b>3.</b>	<b>Age</b>		
	15-20 Years	46	28.8
	21-30 Years	108	67.5
	31 Years and above	06	3.8
<b>4.</b>	<b>Religion</b>		
	Christianity	104	65.0
	Islam	49	30.6
	Traditional	07	4.4

N = 160

Results in Table 1 showed the descriptive analysis of the respondents’ demographic information in the study area. It can be deduced from the table that 70(43.8%) are male, while the 90(56.3%) are female. Considering their level of study, 40(25.0%), 38(23.8%), 40(25.0%) and 42(26.3%) are in 100 Level, 200 Level, 300 Level and 400 Level respectively. On age,

46(28.8%), 108(67.5%) and 6(3.8%) are in the age range of 15-20 years, 21-30 years and 31 years and above respectively. Also, on religion, 104(65.0%), 49(30.6%) and 7(4.4%) are Christians, Muslims and Traditionalists in the study area.

Hypothesis 1: Gender of undergraduate students has no significant influence on their attitude towards studying Social Studies.

The result of the gender of undergraduate students on their attitude towards studying Social Studies is presented in Table 2.

**Table-2: Chi-square analysis of the influence of gender on undergraduate students' attitude towards studying Social Studies**

Gender	Attitude			X <sup>2</sup>	df	Sig.
	Positive f (%)	Negative f (%)	Total f (%)			
Male	28(17.5)	42(26.2)	70(43.8)	0.965 <sup>a</sup>	1	.326
Female	43(26.9)	47(29.4)	90(56.2)			
Total	71(44.4)	89(55.6)	160(100.0)			

The result in Table 2 showed that gender has no significant influence on undergraduate students' attitude towards studying Social Studies in the study area ( $\chi^2 = 0.065^a$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that gender of undergraduate students has no significant influence on their attitude towards studying Social Studies is hereby accepted. The result implied that gender does not dictate the attitude of

undergraduate students towards studying Social Studies in the study area.

Hypothesis 2: Level of study of undergraduate students has no significant influence on their attitude towards studying Social Studies.

The result of the level of study of undergraduate students on their attitude towards studying Social Studies is presented in Table 3.

**Table-3: Chi-square analysis of the influence of level of study on undergraduate students' attitude towards studying Social Studies**

Level	Attitude			X <sup>2</sup>	df	Sig.
	Positive f (%)	Negative f (%)	Total f (%)			
100 Level	19(11.9)	21(13.1)	40(25.0)	11.708 <sup>a</sup>	3	.008
200 Level	25(15.6)	13(8.1)	38(23.8)			
300 Level	14(8.8)	26(16.2)	40(25.0)			
400 Level	13(8.1)	29(18.1)	42(26.2)			
Total	71(44.4)	89(55.6)	160(100.0)			

The result in Table 3 showed that level of study had significant influence on undergraduate students' attitude towards studying Social Studies in the study area ( $\chi^2 = 11.708^a$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, the null hypothesis stating that level of study of undergraduate students has no significant influence on their attitude towards studying Social Studies is rejected. The result implied that level of study does influence the attitude of

undergraduate students towards studying Social Studies in the study area.

Hypothesis 3: Age of study of undergraduate students has no significant influence on their attitude towards studying Social Studies.

The result of the age of study of undergraduate students on their attitude towards studying Social Studies is presented in Table 4.

**Table-4: Chi-square analysis of the influence of age of study on undergraduate students' attitude towards studying Social Studies**

Age	Attitude			X <sup>2</sup>	df	Sig.
	Positive f (%)	Negative f (%)	Total f (%)			
15-20	23(14.4)	23(14.4)	46(28.8)	0.987 <sup>a</sup>	3	.610
21-30	45(28.1)	63(39.4)	108(67.5)			
31 and above	3(1.9)	3(1.9)	9(3.8)			
Total	71(44.4)	89(55.6)	160(100.0)			

The result in Table 4 showed that age has no significant influence on undergraduate students' attitude towards studying Social Studies in the study area ( $\chi^2 = 0.987^a$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis stating that age of undergraduate students has no significant influence on their attitude towards studying Social

Studies is hereby accepted. The result implied that age does not have influence on the attitude of undergraduate students towards studying Social Studies in the study area.

Hypothesis 4: Religion of study of undergraduate students has no significant influence on their attitude towards studying Social Studies.

The result of the religion of undergraduate students on their attitude towards studying Social Studies is presented in Table 5.

**Table-5: Chi-square analysis of the influence of religion of study on undergraduate students' attitude towards studying Social Studies**

Religion	Attitude			$\chi^2$	df	Sig.
	Positive f (%)	Negative f (%)	Total f (%)			
Christianity	48(30.0)	56(35.0)	104(65.0)	1.218 <sup>a</sup>	2	.544
Islam	19(11.9)	30(18.8)	49(30.6)			
Traditional	4(2.5)	3(1.9)	7(4.4)			
Total	71(44.4)	89(55.6)	160(100.0)			

The result in Table 5 showed that religion has no significant influence on undergraduate students' attitude towards studying Social Studies in the study area ( $\chi^2 = 1.218^a$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis stating that religion of undergraduate students has no significant influence on their attitude towards studying Social Studies is hereby accepted. The result implied that religion does not have influence on the attitude of undergraduate students towards studying Social Studies in the study area.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study showed that gender does not dictate the attitude of undergraduate students towards studying Social Studies in the study area. This implies that irrespective of the gender of the students it has nothing to do with the attitude of students towards studying Social Studies. This finding is in contrast with the findings of Mensah and Yankson (2017) who reported that there are gender differences in attitude towards mathematics with girls showing more negative attitudes than boys.

In general, most of the studies reported that, compared with boys, girls lacked confidence, had debilitating causal attribution patterns, perceived mathematics as a male domain, and were anxious about mathematics (Hyde *et al.*, 1990; Sayers, 1994; Ma and Kishor, 1997; Vermeer *et al.*, 2000; Casey *et al.*, 2001). However, the result is in line with the finding of Ebiefie (2015) that the attitude of both sexes towards the Economics is the same. The level of study does influence the attitude of undergraduate students towards studying Social Studies in the study area. This implies that studying of the students influences their attitude towards Social studies and which will go a long way to affect their performance in a positive way. Meaning there will be a great improvement in the performance of the students academically.

Further, age does not have any influence on the attitude of undergraduate students towards studying Social Studies in the study area. This implies that age has nothing to do with the attitude of the students towards Social Studies. However, the result of the findings by Ebiefie (2015) showed a significant

relationship between students' ages and their attitude towards economics. The study further stated that the ages of the students will go a long way to determine their attitude towards the study of economics. So also, religion does not have any influence on the attitude of undergraduate students towards studying Social Studies in the study area. Meaning in respect of the religion of the students it has nothing to do with their attitude towards Social Studies.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of social studies in the School curriculum is well recognised by students as the only subject that is to provide citizenship education. In spite of this well-established fact, students do not attach much seriousness to the study of the Social Studies subject. The results of this study further demand the researcher to focus more on other variables that may have more impact on the students' attitude towards social studies. The study concludes that the factors other than demographic, the instructional factors, and individual factors may be the causing factors that attribute to students' negative attitude towards social studies. Thus, the teaching learning strategies that encourage learning, use of technologies in teaching that makes learning fun and motivational orientations should be utilized to promote positive attitude towards learning social studies.

Thus, this study recommended that the concerned authority should find out the ways to enhance students' attitudes towards social studies. The ministry of Education should institute policies that will bind teachers to adopt instructional methods that are learner-centered. This will make the teachers to adopt instructional pedagogies that will involve the students in the lesson. Also, the curriculum research and development of the ministry of Education should redesign the Social Studies curriculum to include new aspects that cater for the interest of the learners and influence the career aspirations of students in the School. This will make the contents of Social Studies interesting and place it to the needs of the current generation of learners.

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**Cite This Article:** Babatunde Adeniyi Adeyemi & Mary Mojirade Ayantunji (2022). Demographic Variables of Undergraduate Students as Correlates of Attitude towards Studying Social Studies in Southwestern Universities in Nigeria. *EAS J Humanit Cult Stud*, 4(3), 124-130.