

Enhancing Civic Awareness and Environmental Responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The research adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprises all teachers, students, and policymakers in the three senatorial district of Ogun State. The sample of the study comprised of 78 teachers, 203 students, and 30 policymakers which was randomly selected. The instruments used for the study was researchers developed Questionnaire named Civic Awareness and Environmental Responsibility Questionnaire (CAERQ). The questionnaire consists of three sections (Sections A, B & C). The questionnaire was validated by three experts and the reliability of the research instrument was determined after a trial testing using a simple random sample of 20 respondents (teachers, students, and policymakers) from Ogun State, and a reliability coefficient of 0.72 and 0.85 were respectively obtained for civic awareness and environmental responsibility using Cronbach Alpha formula, which implies the instrument is reliable. The Results revealed that Civic awareness is negative and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Ogun State is positive. Also, there was significant difference between mean of civic awareness and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria. This study concludes that Social studies education plays a significant role in promoting civic awareness and environmental responsibility for sustainable development. It was recommended that integrating environmental education and civic education concepts such as citizenship, human right, democracy, rule of law, leadership, and responsibilities should fully be incorporated into social studies education at all levels of education.

Keywords: Social Studies Education, Sustainable Development, Civic Awareness and Environmental Responsibility

Introduction

Sustainable development is the capacity to meet the current needs without compromising future generations' abilities to meet theirs. This multi-faceted approach includes economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. However, in Nigeria, sustainable development is hindered by prevalent challenges such as poverty, environmental degradation, poor governance, and low civic awareness. Social Studies education serves a pivotal role in equipping citizens with the necessary knowledge and skills to address these challenges and fostering an informed citizenry that actively contributes to sustainable development. Sustainable development involves utilizing the environment for growth while simultaneously protecting and conserving it, ensuring that it can meet human needs both now and in the future. (Nursadiah *et al.*, 2018). Environmental issues can only be addressed by increasing awareness about them. Hence, one of the most effective ways to promote environmental protection and enhance environmental awareness is by bolstering environmental education in primary and junior high schools. (Ergin, 2019) Education serves as the catalyst for social engineering within society, leading to transitions and changes such as shifts in values, modes of thinking, material culture, and cultural norms. This includes fostering knowledge and attitudes toward the environment, influencing material culture patterns, ideas, family relations, political culture, and administrative structures at various levels. Through education, individuals become aware of the behaviors deemed acceptable within their culture and learn to modify their behavior accordingly. This process equips individuals with adaptive capacities, enabling them to adjust to societal changes. (Ezimah, 2021). In order to achieve civic awareness and environmental sustainability, social studies education is very crucial. The role of education, particularly Social Studies, in driving sustainable development has garnered significant attention in recent scholarship. Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2023) emphasize that education serves as a fundamental lever for promoting sustainability values and practices, particularly in developing nations where the understanding of sustainable practices is often limited. Nwankwo (2023) contributes to the discourse by highlighting Social Studies as an integrative discipline that combines historical, cultural, and environmental knowledge necessary for enabling critical thinking and informed decision-making. Social Studies is a transformative educational tool for promoting awareness of sustainable practices and civic responsibilities among students in Nigeria. Obi and Obiechina (2022) Opined that, the inclusion of contemporary issues such as climate change and

gender equity in the Social Studies curriculum fosters civic engagement, positioning the subject as essential for nurturing awareness among students. Jiboku and Nwankwo (2021) argue that the curriculum should focus on sustainable practices that align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure that students not only understand these concepts but are also prepared to implement them in their communities. Ogundipe (2022) states that Social Studies education equips students with the knowledge and skills necessary for responsible citizenship, highlighting its role in community development initiatives. Aro and Olaniyan (2022) assert that an effective Social Studies curriculum must be frequently updated to reflect current global challenges, including issues surrounding climate change, human rights, and social justice. Ibrahim and Lawrence (2023) stress the importance of integrating local contexts and cultural histories into Social Studies curricula to make learning relevant and impactful for students. Oyewole *et al* (2021) find that enhanced civic education influences students' understanding and belief in social justice, demonstrating the empowering potential of Social Studies. Ogunleye (2022) suggests that student-led environmental initiatives cultivated within Social Studies classes significantly improve ecological awareness and action among youths. These contributions collectively underscore the significance of Social Studies in fostering civic responsibility and environmental stewardship within the framework of sustainable development.

Ergin, (2019). Environmental Education opined that raising awareness about the importance of conservation, sustainability, and environmental protection. It empowers individuals to make informed decisions and take action to mitigate environmental issues, such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. Environmental education has numerous benefits, including: Promoting sustainable behaviors and lifestyles, encouraging responsible resource management, fostering a sense of environmental stewardship and responsibility, supporting the development of eco-friendly technologies and practices, enhancing ecological literacy and critical thinking skills, encouraging community involvement and participation in environmental decision-making and preparing future generations to address environmental challenges Social Studies instruction in Nigeria is designed to help students develop civic competence, understand social norms, and acquire the moral foundations required for national integration and peaceful coexistence (FRN, 2014). Through the study of topics such as social justice, human rights, conflict resolution, and inter-group relations, students learn to appreciate unity in diversity and develop the disposition to resolve conflicts amicably. As Obidike

(2022) noted, Social Studies, when properly implemented, fosters values of cooperation, respect, and mutual understanding, key pillars of peace building and democratic citizenship.

Statement of the Research Problem

Social Studies Education is expected to equip students, teacher and policy makers with the knowledge, values and environmental responsibility necessary for responsible citizenship and environmental stewardship. However, the extent to which Social Studies Education effectively promote civic awareness and environmental responsibility among students, teachers and policy makers remain questionable. In many schools and stakeholders conferences, the teaching of Social Studies appears to focus more on theoretical knowledge than on practical engagement, with real-life societal and environmental issues. As a result, students, teachers and policy makers may lack the motivation and commitment needed to contribute positively to sustainable development. In the light of this researcher intend to investigate enhancing civic awareness and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine enhancing civic awareness and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Specifically, the objectives of the study are to;

1. Examine civic awareness and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria
2. Find out Environmental Responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria
3. Determine Significant difference between civic awareness and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What is the mean of civic awareness through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria?
2. What is the mean of environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria?

4. What are the mean difference between civic awareness and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level

1. **H₀₁**: There is no significant difference between mean of civic awareness and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Methodology

The research adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprises all teachers, students, and policymakers in the three senatorial district of Ogun State. The sample of the study comprised of 78 teachers, 203 students, and 30 policymakers was randomly selected, the reason for using this technique was for every respondents to be given equal opportunity of being selected. The instruments used to gather data for the study was researchers developed Questionnaire named Civic Awareness and Environmental Responsibility Questionnaire (CAERQ). The questionnaire is a close-ended questionnaire and it consists of three sections (Sections A, B & C). Section A was used in collecting demographic data of respondents, Section B consists of statements on civic awareness through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria while Section C was used to collect data on environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria. All items was presented using a 5-point Scale in which Strongly Agree (SA) was awarded 5 points, Agree (A) 4 points, Undecided (U) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point respectively. The questionnaire named Civic Awareness and Environmental Responsibility Questionnaire was validated by three experts. Two lecturers from social studies and one lecturer from Guidance and Counselling Department both from Federal University of Education Ijagun, Ogun State, respectively. The reliability of the research instrument was determined after a trial testing using a simple random sample of 20 respondents (teachers, students, and 30) from Ogun State, who were part of the population but not part of the sample for this study. The administration was done once and a reliability coefficient of 0.72 and 0.85 were respectively obtained for civic awareness and environmental responsibility using Cronbach Alpha formula, which implies the instrument is reliable. The questionnaire

was administered on the groups within four weeks of the main study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions and t-test was used to analyze research hypotheses.

Results

Research Question One: What is the mean of civic awareness through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of civic awareness through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

SN	Item	N	Mean	Sd	Decision
1	I am aware the core rights and duties outlined in the national constitution.	331	1.99	0.58	Disagree
2	I am informed about local government decisions and policies	331	2.29	0.75	Disagree
3	I understand the process of voting and how to register	331	3.19	1.27	Agree
4	Are you aware of community-based organizations serving your area	331	3.30	1.33	Agree
5	I believe citizens should intervene if they see someone violating public rules	331	3.44	1.32	Agree
6	I do verify the credibility of political news before sharing it online.	331	2.01	0.85	Disagree
7	As I citizen of Nigeria, I engage in voluntary community work (e.g., charity, community cleaning.	331	3.22	1.31	Agree
8	I participate in campaigns to address local community problems	331	1.92	0.79	Disagree
9	I do attended a town hall or local council meeting in my area.	331	3.24	1.31	Agree
10	I have social media account to raise awareness about local issues	331	3.39	1.30	Agree
	Grand Mean	331	2.79	0.57	

Decision mean = 3.0

Table 1 indicates mean responses of civic awareness through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Ogun State. From the analysis, the respondents agreed with items 2, 3, 4, 5, 9 and 10 with mean values ranging from 3.44 to 3.19 with grand mean of 2.79. Except items 1, 2, 6 and 8 shows disagree, with mean ranging from 1.92 to 2.29. This implies that civic awareness through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Ogun State is negative, since grand mean of civic awareness response is 2.79 which is less than decision mean of 3.0.

Research Question Two: What is the mean of environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

SN	Item	N	Mean	Sd	Decision
1	I believe protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility.	331	3.04	1.394	Agree
2	Provision of Solid Waste disposal is available in our community.	331	1.96	.721	Disagree
3	I plant and care for trees and flowers in my surroundings.	331	3.37	1.350	Agree
4	I participated in environmental sanitation activities regularly.	331	3.26	1.309	Agree
5	My daily habits and decisions influencing my environment.	331	3.24	1.329	Agree
6	I encourage others to keep the environment clean.	331	3.54	1.310	Agree
7	I properly dispose of waste in designated in my environment.	331	3.18	1.265	Agree
8	I support environmental protecting programmes in my community.	331	3.29	1.335	Agree
9	I educate friends about environmental cleanliness.	331	3.17	1.284	Agree
10	I participate in recycling activities when available	331	2.18	.826	Disagree
		331	3.02	0.76	

Decision mean = 3.0

Table 2 indicates mean **responses of** environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Ogun State. From the analysis, the respondents agreed with items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 with mean values ranging from 3.54 to 3.04 with grand mean of 3.02 except items 1 and 10 shows disagree, with mean ranging from 2.18 to 1.96. This implies that environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Ogun State is positive, since mean of environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Ogun State response is 3.02 which is higher than decision mean of 3.0.

Research Question Three: What are the mean difference between civic awareness and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria?

Table: 3 Mean and standard deviation of civic awareness and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

School Type	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Mean Difference
Civic Awareness	331	27.99	5.70	2.24
Environmental Responsibility	331	30.23	7.66	

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of difference between civic awareness and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria. From the result, the mean and standard deviation of civic awareness and environmental responsibility are; civic awareness $\bar{X} = 27.99$, $SD = 5.70$ and environmental responsibility $\bar{X} = 30.23$, $SD = 7.66$, the mean difference is 2.24 in favour of environmental responsibility.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between mean of civic awareness and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Table 4: T-test Analysis of Mean of Civic Awareness and Environmental Responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Participants	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-cal	Df	p-value
Civic Awareness	331	27.99	5.70	4.26	660	0.00
Environmental Responsibility	331	30.23	7.66			

$p \leq 0.05$

Table 4 shows the t-test analysis of no significant difference between mean of civic awareness and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Ogun State, Nigeria. From table the t-cal of 4.26, $df = 660$, with $p=0.00$. Since $p < 0.05$, hypothesis one was not rejected. Therefore, there was significant difference between mean of civic awareness and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Civic awareness through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Ogun State is negative. This is in agreement with the study of Chukwu (2025). Influence of Social Studies Instruction on the Development of Global Citizenship and Peace building Skills among Secondary School Students in Abia State. Findings revealed that Social Studies instruction moderately influenced students' development of global citizenship values (overall mean = 2.74), enhancing awareness of global issues, cultural diversity, and civic responsibility. Similarly, Social Studies instruction positively impacted students' peace building skills (overall mean = 2.89), promoting tolerance, empathy, teamwork, and conflict resolution abilities. Also in support of Oyetunde (2017) who revealed that social studies education serve as a catalyst for sustainable national development by fostering civic consciousness and responsible citizenship.

It was established that environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Ogun State is positive. This is aligned with the study of Bakare, Kehinde-Awoyale & Wasiu (2023) who revealed that environmental education helps learners develop attitudes and behavior that promote environmental responsibility and sustainable living.

There was significant difference between mean of civic awareness and environmental responsibility through Social Studies Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria. This is in agreement with the study of Okoye, Nwoye, and Nwuba (2024) who evaluated the impact of innovative teaching methods in Social Studies on students' attitudes towards national integration in Anambra State. Their study revealed that the use of interactive and value-based teaching approaches significantly improved students' civic consciousness and sense of responsibility toward peaceful coexistence.

Conclusion

Social studies education plays a significant role in promoting civic awareness for sustainable development. Through the teaching of democratic values. Civic awareness and environmental responsibility cultivated through social studies education, encourages responsible behavior, active participation in governance, respect for diversity, and commitment to national development. Also Social Studies education serves as an effective platform for enhancing civic awareness and environmental responsibility for Sustainable Development in Ogun State, Nigeria

Recommendations

1. Integrating environmental education into social studies education curriculum will acquaint students, teacher and policy maker on waste disposal and conservation.
2. Civic concepts such as citizenship, human right, democracy, rule of law, leadership, and responsibilities should fully incorporated into social studies education at all levels of education.
3. Schools should organize activities such as tree planting, sanitation exercises, recycling projects and environmental clubs to help students develop.

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