

## DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SOCIAL STUDIES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UYO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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### *ABSTRACT*

*Each environment plays a part in shaping the development of the child academically and otherwise. Accordingly, a child gets from his environment all he needs to enable him develop best in all aspect. Students of urban surrounding have more opportunities to radios, educative film shows, electricity, televisions, well equipped laboratories and libraries etc that help or contribute in moulding their approaches when compared to rural location students regarding academic achievement. Gender can also be seen as having an effect on students' performance. This study therefore seeks to assess demographic variables as it relates to students academic performance in Social Studies in Secondary schools in Uyo Local Government.*

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### INTRODUCTION

It is a fact the key overriding factor for the success of students' academic achievement is the performance displayed by him or her. Student exposure can go a long way to bring about high academic achievement not only in social studies but also in other subjects. The educational analysis recently carried out in Nigeria by the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS, 2005) indicated that with the corresponding large number of unqualified social studies teachers, more than forty nine percent (49%) of student in Nigeria are unserious about social studies. According to him this problem is not only in the rural area but also in the urban area as well. This shows the numbers of student in every school learning the subjects to the junior school students have had their performance seriously affected by their demographic factors such as age, location and sex of the students.

The ability of student studying social studies as the prime factor attributed to the cause of students' consistent poor academic achievement in examinations. Researchers have carried out studies on students' demographic variables such as student age, gender, attitude and students' academic performance. For instance, Adepoju (2002) reported that a significant relationship exists between student variables such as gender, gender, and attitude and their academic qualification in social studies. Education and the learning outcomes of secondary school students, shows significant relationship between students demographic variables and academic achievement in social studies (Igwe, 1990). Other subjects affected here include Fine Art, Business Studies and Home Economics at Senior/Junior School Certificate level. Although, Ayodele (1997) found a positive relationship between students age, and students' academic achievement, school location has also been observed to influence students' performance positively or negatively. However, there is a high and significant relationship between student performance in social studies and global wastage ratio in basic education in Madagascar. The performance of student shows a greater relationship to students' achievement than either facilities or curricula. Nevertheless, studies have also shown that student gender exerts a great influence on the academic achievement. Ilugbusi, Falola and Daramola (2007) showed that learning experience in schools count significantly in the

determination of students' achievement in external examinations such as West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE), National Examination Council (NECO), National Business and Technical Education Examinations and the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination. According to them, stubborn student don't like the course. This may imply that such student when they enter into the exams hall they will get confused, mix up the content of the topics taught to the students and hence the students will receive wrong information or answers from their classmate when they are in exams hall which would definitely lead to poor achievement among the students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

From many indications it has observed from previous studies that demographic variables such as age, sex and school location have created much effect on students' academic achievement. In some cases male student do better than their female counterparts in social studies. Apparently other studies prove better results performed by the older students than the younger ones. Equally, in some cases urban and rural students perform differently. Therefore, the problem of this study is how well academic achievement in social studies at the Junior Secondary Certified Examination (JSCE) level could be explained by each of the demographic factors such as gender and location.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of this work is to examine the demographic variables and students academic performance in social studies in secondary schools in Uyo local government. Specifically, the study aimed at the following objectives:

1. To determine the influence of gender on students' academic performance in Social Studies.
2. To find out the influence of school location on students academic performance in Social Studies.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Concept of Social Studies**

One of the acceptable definitions of social studies is that which states that it is an integration of experience and knowledge concerning human relations for the purpose of citizenship education. Barth and Shermis (1977) and Onyabe (1978) defined social studies as a field of study that deals with the integration of knowledge, experience and effective use of resources for the purpose of citizenship education. Social studies is an interdisciplinary subject which has potential capabilities to achieve the aims of education than any other fields of learning. It is a subject which is expected to help in the promotion of consciousness and knowledge of and pride in the child's local culture as well as an understanding of other cultures both within and outside their national boundary (Makinde, 1999).

Another important role of social studies is that it aims at inculcating in the child the facts that bribery and corruption, nepotism and other allied evils are far from what Nigerians bargained for, when demanding and achieving self government. The subject, according to Makinde (1999), should assist the child to develop a patriotic attitude towards the welfare, fundamental human rights and development of the community and that of the country for a sustainable national development. Since the focal point of any form of education is the curriculum, social studies curriculum should be organized to reflect the demands of contemporary times by being open ended, flexible and dynamic in nature to incorporate all

relevant topics so as to be able to achieve the laudable objectives of education in general and those of the social studies in particular.

### **Content of Social Studies**

Objectives of education vary from society to society based on the problems and needs of the particular society. Therefore education has the primary tasks of:

- (a) Preserving and transmitting the cultural heritage to the young
- (b) Transforming the cultural heritage
- (c) Developing the individual

According to Hanson (1966) the role of education is to produce a nation that will be both modern and free. He said that in modernizing a nation, education should provide economic growth. This means that it must produce skilled manpower and growth in knowledge for research leading to productivity in the economy. These roles of education already outlined are so complex that the strategies to make the changes occur must be planned designed and must be delivered. This is known as curriculum content. Going by this conception, Gbamanja (1997) observed that content consists of subject matter drawn on the basis of problems, topics thus cutting across traditional subjects in the hope of achieving some kind of unity normally referred to as integration. In support of this, Gbamanja (1997) identified the learner, the society and subject matter as sources of curriculum content. This means that the social studies curriculum content must address social demand functions and action oriented learning of the people (learners). Appraisal of Social Studies in Junior Secondary School in Rivers State makes it reasonable to examine these sources of the social studies content, which would hopefully improve learners interests in the subject.

Proponents of the concept of this tripartite curriculum sources include Taba (1945) and Tyler (1949). In their contributions, Tanner and Tanner (1975) said that the survival of a society depends upon how that society addresses contemporary problems such as population growth and migration ethnic relation, fund, poverty, crime unemployment and drug abuse etc. This is important because the survival and prosperity of any nation depends squarely upon that society's capability in applying its problems, as all these constitute the content of the social studies curriculum (Gbamanja 1997).

### **Gender and Academic Performance**

Gender can also be considered as a possible factor in overall school success. Beattie (1970) found "the differences between boys and girls in achievement were as great as or greater than the differences between younger and older entrants" (p. 13). Beattie (1970) referred in part to the Green and Simmons (1963) study which detailed small yet noticeable differences between children who were the oldest and youngest members in their classes. Gray (1985) also studied gender differences, and stated, "sex differences have been shown to be related to academic success" (p. 10). Gray (1985) cited an earlier study by Gredler (1980), which found that "differences in academic achievement between younger and older entrants often were found only in boys" (p. 9). In an Australian study conducted with a sample of over 880 prep (equivalent to first grade) students, Boardman (2006) found that student gender was a factor in overall academic success, particularly in the area of reading. Male children often seem to be the focus of studies on gender differences in the classroom. In preschool classrooms across nine different states, teachers rated inappropriate behaviors such as aggression toward others, lack of attention, refusal to obey, and turning inward for both boys and girls between the ages of three and six (Feil, Severson, and Walker, 1998). Fifty-five percent of boys versus 45% of girls fell within these categories for inappropriate behaviors, causing the authors to propose a more effective screening measurement to reduce the overrepresentation of boys (Feil, Severson and Walker, 1998).

In a survey of school teachers and principals in the southeastern United States, Tomchin and Impara (1996) asked teachers in grades kindergarten through seventh grade to give input behind their reasoning when retaining students, with student gender as a possible factor for grade level retention. Teachers in the lower grades (kindergarten through third grade) reported that maturity was the second most important factor in their decision, second only to academic performance. While only two out of 96 teachers said they considered student gender in their decision to retain a student (Tomchin and Impara, 1996). Thompson and Cunningham (2000) reported, "Nationally, by high school, the retention rate for boys is about ten percentage points higher than for girls" (p. 3). Parents may also hold a perception about gender and academic success. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) stated "boys are more often redshirted than girls" (West, Meek and Hurst, 2000).

Ede (2004) urged parents and educators to look at gender linked to school success, and stated "gender needs to be considered, as it also plays a role in kindergarten performance" (p. 208). The author pointed out that girls "enjoy a slight advantage over boys entering kindergarten" in both letter and letter-sound recognition. Ede (2004) also noted "twice as many boys as girls (14 versus 7 percent) had difficulty speaking clearly," and "twice as many boys as girls (18 versus 9 percent) had difficulty paying attention" (p. 207). This lack of attention in class may result in lower academic performance levels, the primary factor considered by many teachers when recommending student retention (Tomchin and Impara, 1996). Oshima and Domaleski (2006) studied gender in relation to academic success in the reading and math domains. They found gender to be significant for predicting success in reading but not in mathematics in elementary and middle school. The authors determined age to be a "better predictor of reading than was gender through Grade 2," but "gender became a better predictor than age for Grades 3-5" (Oshima and Domaleski, 2006, p. 215). Regardless of the degree of emphasis one may put on a student's age or gender when it relates to academic success, there is reason to believe that both age and gender can be considered factors in a student's academic success.

Several empirical studies have proved significant influence of gender on the performance of students in social studies. For instance, Ade, (2001) carried out a study on the relationship between gender and students performance. The sample size of one hundred and thirty-two (132) students were selected using simple random sampling techniques from 16 Basic schools within the six circuits of the Cape Coast Metropolis participated in the study. The result showed the distribution of students by gender that the result there were 69(52.3%) female students and 63(47.7%) males. Clearly, more female students participated in the study than males. The disparity is not only slight but also a true reflection of the general gender differences currently existing among teachers in Basic schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

### **School Location and Students' Academic Performance**

According to Mbipom (2000), schools are either situated in one geographical location or the other. These geographical locations are either termed rural (remote) where modern facilities such as leisure, easy transportation, cultural heterogeneity, and cosmopolitan population are lacking or urban (city) where there are adequate facilities such as leisure, cinema, easy transportation, cultural heterogeneity, and cosmopolitan population. Unlike the rural schools where the population is relatively small and the students know one another by name, interactions are personal. Urban dwellers live individualistic life and only relate with people they feel like relating with, without any form of permanency. Ogili (2009) posited that the per capital income among rural people are low and there is general poverty. About 70%

of the rural populations are engaged in farming at subsistence level while the urban populations are mostly civil servants, traders and artisans. The effect of nature has compelled man to either settle or dwell in an urban or rural area. This educationally implies that in the rural settlement or location there is poor accessibility to the modern educational facilities and this serves as a hindrance to the motivation of a rural child to learning. Denga (1988) maintained that each environment plays a part in shaping the development of the child academically and otherwise. Accordingly, a child gets from his environment all he needed to enable him develop best. Students of urban surrounding have more opportunities to radios, educative film shows, electricity, televisions, well equipped laboratories and libraries etc that help or contribute in moulding their approaches when compared to rural location students regarding academic achievement. Effiong (2001) on his part opined that any two individuals with approximately equal intelligence but living in two separate and distinct environments may end up attaining unequal intellectual heights. Olasunkanmi (2007), in his research on the influence of school location on students' academic achievement in Lagos State, adopted a causal-comparative design with a random sample of 500 students from a population of senior secondary two students in the State. A six point likert type scale questionnaire titled SLSAAQ was administered. Independent t-test analysis was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 levels of significance. From the result, it was observed that students from rural areas tend to perform poorly while those within the urban areas tend to perform better due to the availability of modern educational facilities.

Another research by Oworye (2011) showed that there is a significant difference between the academic achievement of students in rural and urban secondary schools as measured by senior school certificate examinations. To him, the geographical location of schools has a significant influence on the academic achievement of students. Also he pointed out that uneven distribution of resources, poor school mapping, facilities, problem of qualified teachers refusing appointment or not willing to perform well in isolated villages, lack of good road, poor communication, and nonchalant attitude of some communities to school among others are some of the factors contributed to a wide gap between rural and urban secondary schools. Schools located in rural areas lack qualified teachers. It is because, they do not want going to rural areas that lack social amenities. They prefer to stay in urban schools. It is also observed that a lot of coaching of urban students is done to prepare them for public examinations, thus promoting the spirit of competition and rivalry that may be lacking in the rural pupils, probably, owing to limitations in exposure and experience. Also, the study has proven that students in urban areas had better academic achievement than their rural counterpart. In other word, students in urban locations have a very advantage of favourable learning environment that apparently enhance their academic performance. Gakhar and Asema (2004) found that X class rural students significantly achieved better in their annual previous examination than the urban students and also Jaganadhan (1983) found that the pupils from urban areas had better achievements than rural pupils.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Social Studies involves the acquisition of essential knowledge of history and Social Sciences, emphasizing gathering information from a variety of disciplines and experiences along with thinking, decision making, communication, social interaction, and civil participation. The gender factor has been observed to affect the performance of students in social studies. Equally, school location was also reviewed as one the demographic factors that affect performance of students in social studies as environment plays a part in shaping the development of the child academically and otherwise.

**Recommendation**

1. Resources such as maps, poster video tapes and compact disk showing real life situations should be employed for effective social studies teaching in classrooms.
2. Teachers should inculcate various methods of teaching to stimulate the understanding of both male and female students.
3. Provision of structures that will enhance teaching/learning such as library services, supply of consumable training materials, incentives to teachers, maintenance of infrastructure, tools and equipment among others should be available even in rural schools to enhance performance of students.

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