

Impact of Gender on Affective Dispositions of Students in Colleges of Education

Bulus Mgwaongs Dalyop

(Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), Abuja, Nigeria)

Abstract: This study investigated the impact of the Social Studies curriculum on the affective dispositions of students of Colleges of Education in North-West Zone of Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to determine the level of NCE I and NCE III male and female students' affective dispositions in the area of empathy, compassion, appreciation of cultural diversity and respect for individual human rights. One hypothesis was generated and survey and causal comparative designs were adopted for the study. A sample of 3970 NCE students were carefully selected through a proportionate stratified sampling technique. A questionnaire was developed and tagged Student-Teachers' Affective Disposition Rating Scale (SADRS) and used for the study. Data were collected and analyzed using t-test statistic. Results indicated that, the Social Studies curriculum has significant impact on affective disposition of NCE social studies students. There was no significant gender difference in affective disposition of NCE III students in respect for empathy, compassion, and appreciation of cultural diversity. However, there was a significant gender difference in affective disposition of NCE III students in respect for individual human rights in favour of the male students among others. Based on these findings, the researcher made some recommendations on the way forward.

Key words: affective domain, gender, empathy, compassion, appreciation for cultural diversity, respect for individual human rights, social studies curriculum

1. Introduction and Background to the Study

Affective domain deals with the development of good character, feelings and the right attitude to life. It is the affective domain that emphasizes the total moral adjustment of students to the society. As an important component of the NCE social studies curriculum, the affective domain of the subject area provides, skills through which students can cope with the emotional impediments of life such as anger, anxiety, frustration, and the dark moods of despair.

The Social Studies curriculum advocates learning which is meant to cater for an individual's nature and interests (Tanner & Tanner, 1980). The affective dispositions involve the manner in which students deal with things emotionally, such as empathy, compassion (feelings), appreciation of cultural diversity, and respect for individual human rights (Banks, 1977). However, this area of the social studies curriculum is hardly emphasized by teachers even though it has been found to impact positively on emotional and academic well-being of students (Caine & Caine, 1994).

Bulus Mgwaongs Dalyop, Doctor, Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN); research areas: curriculum development and attitude dispositions in tertiary institutions. E-mail: damgwaongz@yahoo.co.uk.

Empathy is the ability to connect one's emotions to that of another (Plomin, 1990; Goleman, 1995). Hoffman (2000) sees empathy as foundation to moral and educational development. Thus, the connecting of one's feelings and emotions to another can be impacted through the social studies curriculum. Compassion is a feeling of sorrow or concern for another person's suffering or need accompanied by a subsequent desire to alleviate the suffering. Compassion motivates care-taking behavior (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner & Cohen, 2009; Shiota, Keltner & John, 2006). Compassion promotes attention to the needs of weak or suffering others, often motivating actions costly to the self for the benefit of others. Compassion also involves the concern for students who suffer or are vulnerable and spurs the motivation to enhance the welfare of others (Eisenberg, 2002; Lazarus, 1991; Nussbaum, 1996; Post, 2002).

In this regard, there has to be a deliberate effort to operate a supportive responsive pedagogy as it is a crucial role to play in transforming any students into a gender responsive environment necessary for nurturing a gender responsive pedagogy. The College of Education management is supposed to apply and monitor rules and regulations that address issues which will transform the College into a gender responsive environment. If there is no balance in teaching the cognitive and the affective domains, a curriculum which is not gender responsive can cause undue problems and inconveniences impacting negatively on the teaching and learning process. Kommers, Janassan and Mayas (1992) opined that the school environment house students from diverse cultures and this can be challenging, one of the most enduring successes of the school system is the variety of cultures that meet and co-exist freely. In classroom and after classroom, students of different gender and cultural backgrounds study together. Classroom diversity is one of the nation's greatest assets.

Back home in Nigeria, a similar, scenario could be explored. For instance, the culture of Yorubas, Igbo, Hausa which are regarded as the three prominent ethnic nationalities could be adopted in the teaching of cultural diversity for appreciation by the students. Similarly, there exist some minorities' cultural settings in Nigeria following the six geo-political zones of Nigeria federation, these aspects of ethnic organization could be reflected from core curriculum of social studies.

Human Rights are concerned with basic moral guarantees that people in all countries and cultures allegedly have simply because they are people. Human Rights are frequently held to be universal in the sense that all students have and should enjoy them, and to be independent in the sense that they exist and are available as standards of justification and criticism whether or not they are recognized and implemented by the legal system or officials of a country (Nickel, 1992).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and perpetuated by, most importantly, the European Convention on Human Rights (1954) and the International Covenant on Civil and Economic Rights (1966) emphasizes the moral doctrine that students are expected to learn through the domains of social studies curriculum.

The issue of gender differences in empathy is quite controversial. It is often believed that females are more empathetic than males. On average, impact of social desirability and gender stereotypes on empathy shows that female subjects scored higher than males on the Empathy Quotient (EQ) while male tend to score higher on the Systemizing Quotient (SQ). However, the author reported that women do not necessarily possess greater empathetic abilities than men, and perceived gender differences are the result of motivational factors (Slote, 2007).

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to find out if there are gender differences in the affective dispositions of NCE III students in their dispositions in the areas of empathy, compassion, appreciation for cultural diversity, and respect for individual human rights.

1.2 Hypotheses

The following hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female NCE III social studies students in their dispositions in the areas of empathy, compassion, appreciation for cultural diversity, and respect for individual human rights.

2. Methodology

The study adopted the survey and causal comparative design aimed at determining the impact of the Social Studies curriculum on the affective dispositions of students of Colleges of Education in North-West Zone of Nigeria. Causal-comparative research design was used to establish relationship between Social Studies curriculum and students affective dispositions in the areas of empathy, compassion, appreciation for cultural diversity, respect for individual human rights based on gender (Awotunde & Ugodulunwa, 2004).

The sample of Colleges of Education for the study was made up of six conventional Colleges of Education in the North-West zone of Nigeria. The sample for the students was made up of 40% of the whole population of NCE I, and NCE III Social Studies students in six conventional Colleges of Education in the North West Zone according to gender which was selected for the main study. The distribution of the sample of Social Studies NCE I was 1,648 males and 479 females giving a total of 2,127 students, while the distribution of the sample of social studies NCE III students was 1,266 males and 577 females giving a total of 1,843 students. The total sample of NCE I and NCE III students was 3,970 students

The choice of NCE I and NCE III was based on the fact NCE I students have not been exposed to NCE Social Studies curriculum and NCE III have been exposed to the curriculum for 3 years. The choice of NCE I further enabled the researcher to determine the extent to which social studies curriculum affects their affective dispositions in the areas of empathy, compassion, appreciation of cultural diversity, and respect for individual human rights before they are exposed to the NCE curriculum in social studies. Six research assistants were employed for this study. One of the criteria that was considered in selecting the research assistants was their qualifications

3. Instrumentation

One instrument was used for the purpose of data collection in this study. The Student-Teachers' Affective Dispositions Rating Scale (SADRS) was used for data collection based on the four variables, compassion, empathy, appreciation of cultural diversity, and respect for individual human rights in generating the 40 items for the rating scale. The rating scale was designed to determine the extent to which student-teachers have developed affective dispositions in terms of acquiring the affective components intrinsic in student's development as a result of their classroom exposure to social studies curriculum.

The data gathered from the SARDS instrument after administering to the respondents was subjected to statistical analysis, using t-test for independent samples.

4. Results

4.1 Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female NCE III students in their dispositions mean scores in the area of empathy, compassion, appreciation for cultural adversity and respect for individual human rights.

Table 1 Result of T-test Analysis on Gender Difference in the Empathy Mean Scores of NCE III Social Studies Students

Group	N	\bar{X}	Sd	df	t-cal	p-value
Male	1266	31.39	5.03	1841	1.67	.095
Female	577	30.97	4.89			

$P > .05$

For degree of freedom 1841 and level of significance .05, the calculated t-test statistics is given at 1.67 which is not significant. The general findings from the result shows that there is no significant gender difference in the mean scores of NCE III students in empathy dispositions.

Table 2 Results of T-test Analysis of Gender Difference in Compassion Means Scores of NCE III Social Studies Students

Group	N	\bar{X}	Sd	df	t-cal	p-value
Male	1266	31.08	4.28	1839	.99	.320
Female	575	30.87	4.29			

$P > .05$

For degree of freedom 1839 and level of significance .05, the calculated t-test statistics is given at; 995 which is not significant beyond 0.05. The general finding from the result shows that there is no significant gender difference in the mean scores of NCE III students in compassion dispositions.

Table 3 Results of t-test Analysis of Gender Difference in the Appreciation for Cultural Diversity Mean Scores of NCE III Social Studies Students

Group	N	\bar{X}	Sd	df	t-cal	p-value
Male	1266	30.71	4.24	1839	.10	.920
Female	575	30.69	4.00			

$P > .05$

For degree of freedom 1839 and level of significance .05, the calculated t-test statistics is given at .100 which is not significant beyond 0.05. The general finding from the result shows that there was no significant gender difference in the mean scores of NCE III students in the appreciation for individual cultural diversity.

Table 4 Result of T-test Analysis of Gender Difference in the Respect for Individual Human Rights Mean Scores of NCE III Social Studies Students

Group	N	\bar{X}	Sd	df	t-cal	p-value
Male	1264	7.11	1.19	1837	2.12	.034
Female	575	6.99	1.22			

$P > .05$

For degree of freedom 1837 and level of significance .05, the calculated t-test statistic is given as 2.12, which is significant beyond 0.05. The general findings from the result shows that there was a significant gender difference in respect for individual human rights in favour of males of NCE III social studies students.

4.2 Summary of Major Findings

From the results of data analyzed the following can be summarized about the study. There was no significant gender difference in the mean scores of NCE III Social Studies students in their affective disposition for empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity. However, there was a significant gender difference in the mean scores of NCE III Social Studies students in respect for individual human rights in favour of the male students.

5. Discussion

Tables 1–4 representing the hypothesis revealed the gender differences in the mean scores of NCE III students in their affective disposition for empathy, compassion, appreciation for cultural diversity and respect for individual rights. Both the t-test computed and the one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed no significant gender difference in the mean scores of NCE III students in empathy, compassion, and appreciation for individual cultural diversity but recorded significant gender difference in students respect for individual human rights. Thus, a significant difference exists, because male NCE III, Social Students demonstrated more respect for individual human rights than their female counterparts.

The possible reason for males having more respect for individual human rights than their female counterparts could be due to the fact that the North West Zone is predominantly dominated by Moslems, and where the woman is looked upon as a submissive person. Because the man is superior to the woman in the Islamic law, a man can marry up to four wives. This may tend to limit the woman's right. Most women are generally not given the right to be heard, from the cultural perspective though the legal rights of the women are there but not respected, recognized or enforced. So many women are ignorant of these laws.

This finding is consistent with the literature of Slote (2007) who stated that, the issue of gender differences in empathy is quite controversial. It is often believed that females are more empathetic than males. The author reported the impact of social desirability and gender stereotypes on empathy and found that female subjects scored higher than the males on the Empathy Quotient. Similarly, it was found that female participants scored higher on empathy self-report disposition measures and that these measures positively correlated with the physiological response. However, the author reported that women do not necessarily possess greater empathetic abilities than men, and perceived differences are the result of motivational factors (Slote, 2007).

6. Conclusion

The importance of Social Studies curriculum in achieving gender equality in civic education and inculcation of desirable affective domains of empathy, compassion, appreciation of cultural diversity and respect for individual humans cannot be underestimated. There is therefore, the need for understanding and deliberate teaching of these variables of affective dispositions in order to provide for equal access in the instructional delivery of Social Studies contents to students. Measures such as identification of fundamental human rights and rights of women should be deliberately enshrined in the curriculum. Similarly, deliberate efforts should be made to each of these rights to the students of different sexes in order to enhance the affective disposition of students.

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