

Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers' Knowledge of and Attitudes to Democratic Values in Osun State, South-West. Nigeria.

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Abstract

Negative characteristics such as intolerance, animosity, apathy, laziness, a preoccupation with money, and a dedication to one's own ethnic group or religion characterize Nigerian politics. It follows that there has been insufficient absorption of democratic values and practices. The present study is predicated upon the investigation of pre-service Social Studies, knowledge of and attitude to democratic values. The study adopted the descriptive research strategy, with 270 participants drawn at random from the two public Colleges of Education in Osun State. The reliability of a self-constructed survey instrument was determined with the help of education specialists. In this work, the researchers tested two hypotheses using inferential statistics at a 0.05 level of significance. Pre-service Social Studies educators' knowledge and outlook were shown to be significantly correlated, although their average scores were significantly different from one another. According to the results, it would be wise for the state to place a premium on teaching and learning democratic ideals. It is also suggested that the government provide in-service training for Social Studies teachers so that they may learn more about democratic principles and the problems and solutions related with democracy.

Key words: social Studies, pre-service teacher, knowledge, attitude, Democratic values

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1. Introduction

The concept of democracy as a form of governance has emerged as a significant criterion for evaluating effective governance, development, and international acceptance among states. The United States of America, along with many European countries, are now undertaking initiatives aimed at promoting the democratization of other nations worldwide. The continent of Africa is not exempt from the Western world's endeavor to promote democratic governance. The presence of poverty, corruption, violence, and political instability in African countries has contributed to their reliance on more politically developed democratic nations, hence facilitating and intensifying the push factor.

According to Bello (2019), the introduction of democratic principles and the corresponding election procedures in Nigeria has been a gradual process, marked by a number of challenges stemming from extended periods of military control, the lack of a constitution representing the interests of the people, and instances of electoral violence. The preceding elections under the context of democracy were mostly characterized by instances of electoral malpractices and other sorts of irregularities. Supporting the aforementioned perspective, Bastien (2017) claimed that the political history of Nigeria is characterized by a narrative replete with instances of societal instability, electoral violence, coup d'état, political assassinations, and other related occurrences. The 2023 general election in Nigeria exhibited a degree of peacefulness, however it was not devoid of several anomalies. On Saturday, February 25, 2023, Adeowu (2023) monitored the results of the Presidential and National Assembly elections. Many people believe that the elections were fair and successful. However, there were reports of electoral violations such as underage voting, money being distributed at polling places, voters' record tampering, diversion of electoral materials, ballot box grabbing, and illegal possession of guns. The conclusion of this observation is that there may be a deficiency in the correct internalization of democratic ideals and culture,

which might potentially hinder the emergence of the most qualified candidates. After an extended period of political independence, the flourishing of democratic principles and culture has been hindered.

Given a comprehensive grasp of the theoretical and practical aspects of the democratization process, it is anticipated that the government will prioritize democratic principles and political culture to a greater extent. According to Falola (2021), In this context, the Nigerian government has implemented a range of political initiatives, established institutions, and promoted educational processes to revive the awareness of young individuals regarding their political entitlements and indispensable responsibilities in the pursuit of Nigeria's national preservation and the maintenance of its democratic stability. According to Akinyetun (2021), the significant presence of young individuals and their psychological disposition inside the Nigerian setting positions them as crucial players in the overall progress and development of the nation. It's also worth noting that younger people make up a larger share of the voting population than do middle-aged or older people (Suliver, 2020). Notwithstanding this reality, young people experience marginalization and exclusion from political and consequential decision-making processes.

According to Akinpelu (2021), the significance of the involvement of young people in the progress of a country cannot be overstated. This phenomenon is closely linked to the notion that the progress of a country, whether it in political, economic, or religious spheres, is intricately intertwined with the role and influence of young individuals (Trucco and Ulmann, 2016). According to Ololade (2021), the upshot of this is that young individuals possess a significant numerical advantage to adopt political leadership roles across many levels. Consequently, it becomes imperative to instill suitable democratic knowledge and demonstrate the essential values necessary for democratic environments.

The inclusion of Social Studies in the school curriculum is undeniably pertinent to the instruction and cultivation of democratic principles. The fundamental focus of Social Studies is the cultivation of norms, skills, values, and attitudes in order to foster the development of well-informed citizens. The structure of Social Studies includes significant elements such as concepts and generalizations, which play a crucial role in its educational framework. These elements involve the instruction of fundamental principles related to democracy, elections, human rights, leadership, followership, and good government. According to Ibezim (2019), the inclusion of the topic in citizenship education highlights the significance of values and attitudes. It is important to recognize that all social values are both transferable and desired. This research seeks to investigate the level of knowledge and attitudes towards democratic principles among pre-service Social Studies Teachers in Osun State, based on the aforementioned background.

2. Conceptualizing the Essence of Social Studies in Entrenching Democratic Values

The inclusion of Social Studies as a fundamental component of the school curriculum underscores its focus on fostering positive behavior, attitudes, and values. According to Fadeyiye (2008), the subject matter is oriented towards promoting good citizenship in Nigeria. This educational approach provides learners with the chance to gain knowledge and develop an appreciation for the favorable features of our nation's existence. The discipline imparts knowledge pertaining to democratic norms and ideas. The discipline of Social Studies imparts to students the essential democratic principles and ideals. According to Ajetunmobi (2019), it has been argued that the discipline of Social Studies has a significant role in fostering a sense of patriotism and nationalism.

According to Andrew (2004), the inclusion of Social Studies in educational curricula may serve as a catalyst for fostering political culture and democratic principles, both of which are fundamental elements for encouraging active political engagement. In summary, the academic discipline of Social Studies within the educational context serves to facilitate students' acquisition of fundamental information, skills, values, and positive attitudes that are essential for engaging in active political engagement and assuming the role of a responsible and responsive member of society (Olufowobi, 2018). It is essential for every responsible administration to actively promote positive political, cultural, and democratic ideals by incorporating notions and generalizations within the field of Social Studies.

3. Democratic Values Knowledge and Attitude

Knowledge encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and comprehension attained via the process of learning. According to Bloom, as stated in Oyetade (2003), the concept of knowledge refers to the ability of a student or person to demonstrate their recollection or recognition of concepts or occurrences that they have

encountered over their educational journey. According to Adeowu (2012), democratic knowledge refers to the collection of information, ideas, and facts that individuals possess on civic and political concepts and issues. Democratic ideals are learned via several channels of socialization, including educational institutions, such as schools, as well as other agents such as the family, the media, peer groups, religious organizations, and political parties. According to Onyinbo (2019), a crucial factor for the successful functioning of democracy in any country is the public' comprehension of government operations and political affairs. Undoubtedly, a significant factor contributing to political indifference in Nigeria is the population' limited understanding of civic and democratic norms.

According to Decesso, as described in Oyetade (2003), attitude refers to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions that shape our perceptions, emotions, and actions towards others, as well as their perceptions, emotions, and actions towards us. The concept of attitude towards civic and democratic values pertains to the manifestation of personal sentiments, expressions, or inclinations on subjects related to civic and democratic principles. The level of information about the political system is a contributing factor in shaping an individual's disposition towards civic and democratic principles. The civic engagements or behaviors of citizens are contingent upon their understanding of democratic principles and practices, since these concepts are intricately connected and mutually reliant.

In a study conducted by Falade (2011), many criteria were found as drivers of the degree of awareness about democratic principles and attitudes among citizens in various regions of the globe. These factors include the kind of governance, ecological conditions, cultural concerns, and the dynamics inside the classroom, among others. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2013), democratic principles include many key elements. These include the presence of a reliable election system, an impartial and autonomous judiciary that operates without fear or favor, the guarantee of freedom and accessibility to information, the promotion of internal democracy within political parties, and the principle of universal adult suffrage. Democratic values are a set of societal standards that are highly regarded and seen beneficial for the establishment and maintenance of a democratic system. The basic democratic ideals include many key principles, including liberty, the pursuit of pleasure, the common good, justice, equality, diversity, truth, popular sovereignty, patriotism, the rule of law, and checks and balances. According to Chandan (1999), democratic principles include concepts such as liberty, political freedom, personal freedom, and economic freedom.

Democratic values refer to the set of views that a society collectively upholds as inherent rights, namely, the basic human rights. This pertains to the attitudes and customs that foster the pursuit of self-actualization among individuals within a society. Democratic principles are seen to include sound political culture and national orientation as well. According to Igwe (2019), democratic values include widely acknowledged attitudes, cultural norms, and belief systems that serve to foster and strengthen democracy and the principles of good governance. Democratic ideals, culture, and principles are essential shared values that are crucial for the maintenance of democracy as a widely accepted form of governance. According to Tekindal (2017),

4. The Study Area

Osun state is situated in the southwestern region of Nigeria. The geographical location of Osun state is situated between latitude 7°50' and longitude 4.5°. The historical formation of Osun state occurred via the administrative actions of the Babangida regime on August 27, 1991, when it was separated from the preexisting Oyo state. The inhabitants of Osun state may be traced back to Oduduwa, the founder of the Yoruba ethnic group. Osun state has 12 higher educational institutions including both private and public. However for the purpose of this study, the population under consideration consists only of pre-service social studies teachers enrolled in the two colleges of Education that are owned by the state government. These colleges are situated in Ilesa and Ila – Orangun with respective population of 7300 and 9500.

5. Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between knowledge of and attitudes of pre-service Social Studies teachers' to democratic values.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between mean scores of males and females pre-service Social Studies teachers' knowledge of and attitudes to democratic values.

6. Methodology

This survey design was adopted to examine the pre-service Social Studies knowledge of and attitude to democratic values in Osun State. The population for this study was made up of Social Studies students' in government owned Colleges of Education in Osun State with a particular reference to 200 level students. The sample consisted of 270 students who are mainly Social Studies students purposively selected for the purpose of this research work. The researcher designed two instruments' for the study. They are Students' Democratic Value Knowledge Test (SDVKT) and Students' Democratic Values Attitude Scale (SDVAS). Experts' validation of the instruments was done before they were administered and pilot tested outside the coverage of the study with the help of research assistants. The respondents were given the questionnaires in their respective schools. Collection was done immediately after the response. Hypotheses were tested at

7. Analysis and Results

Analysis of data was done with the use of ANOVA and T-test. The analysis is arranged according to the hypotheses that were generated at 0.05 level of significant.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between knowledge of, and attitudes of pre-service Social studies to democratic value.

Table 1: Relationship between Pre-service' Social studies Knowledge of and Attitudes to Democratic Values

| Variables | N | Mean | SD | Cal. r- value | Crit. value | Df | P | Decision |
|--------------------------------------|-----|----------------|-------|---------------|-------------|-----|-----|-------------|
| Knowledge variable Attitude variable | 270 | 22.53 27.40 | 6.408 | 0.470 | 0.195 | 268 | .05 | H1 rejected |

The findings shown in Table I indicate that the computed t-value of 0.470 exceeds the crucial r-value of 0.195 at a significance level of 0.05. The null hypothesis, which posits that there is no statistically significant relationship between the knowledge and attitudes of students towards democratic values in the field of Social Studies was rejected. This indicates that there is indeed a correlation between the knowledge and attitudes of pre-service Social Studies teachers towards democratic values.

This is consistent with the research results of Omosehin (2004) and Adekunle (2022). In a study conducted by Adeowu (2012), the researcher examined the impact of a participatory voter education package on the levels of knowledge, attitudes, and voting behavior among pre-service Social Studies teachers. The findings of the study revealed a significant positive correlation between the scores of knowledge and attitudes towards voting. According to Ahmed (2014), an individual's opinions about a certain topic, idea, or problem are heavily influenced by their level of knowledge. The attitudes and knowledge of democratic values among pre-service Social Studies teachers may be influenced by various factors, including the parental background of the learners, the availability of learning resources in schools, the quality of teachers, the quality of textbooks, and the presence of a strong Students Union Government that serves as a training ground for students.

Hypothesis Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the mean scores males and females pre-service Social studies teachers knowledge and attitude to democratic values.

Table 2: T- test of males and females pre-service Social Studies Teachers' knowledge of and attitudes to democratic values.

| Subject | N | X | Si | Standard Error | Df | P | T-cal | T-Crit | Decision Rule |
|-----------------|-----|------|-------|----------------|-----|-----|-------|--------|---------------|
| Male students | 120 | 55.0 | 10.07 | 0.66 | 268 | .05 | 0.058 | 1.96 | 112 accepted |
| Female students | 150 | 51.1 | 11.22 | | | | | | |

The findings presented in Table 2 indicate that the calculated t-value of 0.058 is lower than the critical t-value of 1.96, with a degree of freedom of 268 and a significance level of 0.05. As a result, the null hypothesis, which posits that there is no statistically significant disparity in the understanding of democratic values between male and female students, is accepted. This finding suggest that the influence of gender on students' knowledge of and attitude towards democratic ideals is not statistically significant. The finding of the research validate the previous discovery documented by Adekunle (2022), which posited that there is no statistically significant disparity in the average scores of male and female students' comprehension of democratic principles. The potential factors contributing to this outcome may include the kids' home background, the school officials' attitudes towards student union activities, and the characteristics of the instructors within the school.

8. Implications of the Findings

The findings of the study have implications for teaching of democratic values in Osun State as well as other parts of the country. For instance, the pre-service teachers are under training and they are expected to teach at the foundational level our educational system. The fact that these set of learners have positive knowledge and attitudes to democratic values indicates that they were well informed about democratic values and political matters. Hence, there is every tendency that members of the community cannot be easily misled by selfish politicians. Gana cited by Falade (2011) argues that the low level of political education and low consciousness of the people had made them vulnerable to the fraudulent manipulations of the politicians and other dominant groups in the society. Lack of knowledge of democratic values may result into disputes by politicians and made the youths to participate in various electoral malpractices, thuggery, burning and looting, political apathy, lawlessness, political instability among others. However, with positive knowledge and attitude to democratic values it will affords the people the opportunity to know and appreciate the positive aspects of the Nigerian state national life. It will also affords the citizenry the opportunity of promoting the spirit of patriotism and nationalism which will invariably result in peace and cooperation, which are basic issues in democracy.

9. Conclusion

Proper knowledge democratic value and attitudes are requisites for effective political engagement. Going by the findings of this study, it is worth to note that majority of the sampled students have good knowledge of democratic values and their attitudes were found to be positive. Perhaps, this may account for why youth have historically been agents of change thus explaining why they are regarded as the future of many societies; they have play a significant role in the vision for development and should be included in all national development programmes. Also, the vibrancy and creativity of youths make them indispensable in politics. This argument is similar to Suliveer's (2020) assertion that youths represent asset for sustainable growth and development. If this is properly tapped and harnessed, it will help in ensuring political stability as well as providing the opportunity of doing away with all form of political ills.

10. Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned results, it is recommended that the government prioritize the enhancement of teaching and learning of democratic ideals. Authors and publishers are to be encouraged to write and publish

reading materials, focusing on concepts of democratic values in Social Studies. In order to deepen their knowledge, in - service training such as seminars, workshops, conference should be organized for Social Studies Teachers on issues of and challenges of democratization. Above all teaching and learning of democratic values should be encouraged at all our educational levels and school curriculum should be revisited with a view to integrating democratic values education. On a final note, participatory approach should be adopted in teaching and learning of democratic values. This would to make the values and traits more permanent.

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