

From Classroom to Global Impact: The Role of Social Studies Teachers in Building a Sustainable Future

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the critical role Social Studies teachers play in addressing global issues in the Nigerian educational context. Adopting a descriptive survey design, the study sampled 40 Social Studies teachers selected from 20 junior secondary schools in Ife Central Local Government Area of Osun State. A validated instrument titled the Questionnaire on Teachers' Roles in Solving Global Issues (QTRSGI) with a reliability coefficient of 0.76 was used for data collection. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and t-test analysis at a 0.05 significance level. Results revealed a high level of teacher engagement with global issues, with a weighted average of 3.21. No significant difference was found between male and female teachers' engagement ($t = -0.96$; $df = 38$; $p > 0.05$). The study concludes that Social Studies teachers are indispensable agents in cultivating students' global awareness and recommends increased support and professional development opportunities.

Keywords: Global Issues, Social Studies, Teachers' Roles, Civic Education, Global Competence

INTRODUCTION

The increasing complexity of global challenges such as terrorism, climate change, poverty, gender inequality, human trafficking, and youth unemployment has elevated the importance of global competence in education. Global issues are interlinked and impact all aspects of human existence, transcending national boundaries and demanding cooperative solutions. These crises threaten sustainable development and necessitate educational responses that equip learners with the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills to understand and act upon global matters (UNESCO, 2021).

Social Studies, a multidisciplinary subject, is particularly positioned to cultivate the competencies required to engage with these issues. Ajiboye (2010) notes that Social Studies promotes awareness of societal dynamics and fosters the development of values conducive to sustainable living. Odia (2014) similarly emphasises the role of the discipline in helping learners understand and respond effectively to local and global problems. According to Ogundare (2011), Social Studies helps individuals address challenges in their environment through critical thinking and informed decision-making.

The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE, 2012) has aligned Nigeria's Social Studies curriculum with global priorities. It includes vital themes such as climate change, gender equity, population, human rights, globalisation, corruption, and environmental degradation—issues also found in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These topics are not merely content to be taught, but critical areas that shape students' perspectives, encourage civic participation, and foster global competence (Bhargava, 2006; Bliss, 2000).

Despite this progressive curriculum, little empirical research has assessed how Social Studies teachers implement these global themes in practice. Teachers are central to transforming curriculum intentions into meaningful classroom experiences. They must not only convey factual knowledge but also inspire social action and critical engagement with real-world challenges (Ajitoni & Salako, 2014). Consequently, this study

investigates how teachers of Social Studies address global issues through their instructional roles and whether there are differences in these roles based on gender.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria and globally, the rising prevalence of issues such as terrorism, poverty, environmental crises, and youth unemployment underscores the need for education that promotes global awareness. While Social Studies is designed to achieve these objectives, the success of such efforts heavily depends on the role of teachers. Teachers shape learners' values, perceptions, and behaviours, making them instrumental in addressing global challenges. Existing studies have examined pedagogical approaches such as problem-solving, experiential learning, and appreciative inquiry in relation to global education (Ajitoni, 2011; Zhary & Han, 2012). However, there is a lack of focused research on how Social Studies teachers contribute directly to solving global issues. This study fills that gap by examining the roles played by Social Studies teachers in addressing global problems and determining whether gender differences exist in their engagement levels.

Objectives of the Study

The main trust of this study is to determine the roles of Social Studies teachers in addressing global issues. The study will also examine if there is significant difference in the role played by male and female teachers towards addressing global issues.

Research Questions

- i. What roles do Social Studies teachers play in addressing global issues?

Hypothesis

- i. There will be no significant difference between male and female teachers in addressing global issues

METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a descriptive survey design to explore the roles of Social Studies teachers in solving global issues. The study was conducted in Ife Central Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. A total of 20 junior secondary schools were randomly selected, and two Social Studies teachers from each school were chosen, resulting in a sample size of 40 teachers. One research question and one hypothesis were raised to guide this study. The instrument for data collection was a researcher-designed questionnaire, the Questionnaire on Teachers' Roles in Solving Global Issues (QTRSGI). The instrument consisted of 20 items structured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). Content validity was ensured through expert review, and test-retest reliability produced a coefficient of 0.76. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, mean scores, standard deviation, and percentage scores. Inferential statistics, specifically an independent sample t-test, were used to determine gender differences in teachers' roles at a 0.05 level of significance. Ethical considerations such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed consent were observed throughout the study.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What roles do Social Studies teachers play in addressing global issues?

Table 1: Summary of Teachers' Roles in Addressing Global Issues (N = 40)

S/N	Item Description	Mean	Std. Dev.
1.	I educate students on the potential impact of global issues	3.80	0.41
2.	I discourage students from engaging in terrorism	3.70	0.65
3.	I help students become globally competent citizens	3.23	0.77

4.	I encourage students to contribute positively to their communities	3.35	0.83
5.	I train students to understand environmental sustainability	3.30	0.76
6.	I expose students to diverse global perspectives	3.30	0.61
7.	I facilitate student discussions on global challenges and their effects on human survival	3.28	0.72
8.	I teach the implications of poverty, corruption, and social injustice	3.26	0.86
9.	I guide students on critical decision-making in resolving societal problems	3.28	0.72
10.	I help students recognise the interdependence of nations	3.20	0.94

Weighted Average = 3.21

The high weighted average suggests that Social Studies teachers in the area are significantly committed to using their classrooms as platforms for global education.

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference between male and female teachers in addressing global issues?

Table 2: T-test Analysis of Gender Difference in Teachers' Roles

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	df	p-value	Remark
Male	17	66.06	6.00	-0.96	38		Not Sig
Female	23	64.83	5.56				

The result shows no statistically significant difference between the roles played by male and female teachers in addressing global issues ($p > 0.05$), indicating equal levels of engagement across genders.

DISCUSSION

Findings from the research question revealed that Social Studies teachers in the area are significantly committed to using their classrooms as platforms for global education. This implies a growing awareness and intentionality among educators to address global issues through their teaching practices. This trend is consistent with global shifts in Social Studies education, particularly within the context of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), global citizenship education, and the need to prepare learners for complex, interconnected challenges.

Recent studies affirm that Social Studies teachers are increasingly integrating global education themes such as climate change, human rights, migration, global interdependence, and peace education into their lessons (Agboola, 2022; Ibijola & Ogunyemi, 2023). This commitment stems from a recognition that fostering globally aware citizens begins in the classroom. Social Studies, by nature, provides an ideal platform to instill values of global responsibility, empathy, and civic engagement among learners.

In Nigeria, for instance, efforts to decolonise the curriculum and infuse global perspectives have gained momentum, especially in Colleges of Education and secondary schools (Ajiboye & Odetoro, 2021). Teachers are aligning their content and pedagogy with global issues by using participatory methods, case studies, digital resources, and community-based learning to stimulate critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students.

Moreover, the professional development of Social Studies teachers plays a vital role in strengthening their commitment to global education. Programmes and workshops focusing on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and global citizenship have improved teachers' capacity and willingness to act as

facilitators of global understanding (UNESCO, 2020; Oladimeji, 2024). The infusion of digital tools and open educational resources has also broadened teachers' access to global themes, enabling them to link local realities with global concerns effectively.

Importantly, Social Studies teachers understand that addressing global challenges through classroom instruction contributes to national development. As such, their commitment is not merely an academic requirement but a patriotic and moral responsibility to prepare learners for leadership in a globalised world.

Result from the hypothesis revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the roles played by male and female Social Studies teachers in addressing global issues ($p > 0.05$) suggests that both genders are equally committed and engaged in promoting global education within the classroom. This finding is significant as it challenges traditional assumptions about gendered roles in education and highlights a more balanced approach to global responsibility among educators.

This outcome aligns with recent scholarship suggesting that when provided with equal access to training, resources, and professional development opportunities, both male and female teachers demonstrate comparable levels of enthusiasm and effectiveness in teaching global issues (Ogunlade & Adeyemi, 2022). In fact, the increasing emphasis on global citizenship education, climate literacy, and social justice has encouraged a more inclusive pedagogical approach, where engagement is driven more by professional orientation than by gender-based differences.

Moreover, Social Studies as a discipline naturally attracts individuals who are socially conscious and committed to societal transformation, regardless of gender (Adelakun & Okon, 2023). In this light, male and female teachers often see themselves as agents of change and tend to exhibit similar levels of involvement in addressing global concerns such as climate change, peace education, human rights, and sustainable development.

The finding also reflects the impact of gender-sensitive policies and reforms within Nigeria's educational system, particularly in teacher education. With increased awareness of gender equity and inclusion, both male and female educators are now more likely to be equally exposed to global education methodologies, curricular content, and capacity-building initiatives (UNESCO, 2021).

In practical terms, this parity means that educational interventions, training programmes, and curriculum reforms related to global education do not necessarily need to be gender-targeted but should instead focus on enhancing general teacher competence and access to relevant resources. Equal engagement across genders also promotes collaboration and peer learning, which are essential for modelling the values of global citizenship to students.

In fact, the absence of statistically significant gender differences in addressing global issues reflects a positive trend toward gender equity in Social Studies teaching. It underscores the idea that effective global education is a shared professional commitment, not constrained by gender distinctions.

CONCLUSION

Social Studies teachers play a pivotal role in equipping students with the tools needed to navigate and respond to global issues. The results of this study demonstrate that teachers in Ife Central Local Government Area are effectively engaging learners with content related to global citizenship and sustainable development. These efforts are indispensable in building a more informed, responsible, and proactive generation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and to ensure continued effectiveness, it is recommended that regular training sessions, workshops, and seminars be provided for Social Studies teachers on innovative strategies for teaching global issues. Governmental agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) should support these initiatives by providing funding and instructional materials.

Furthermore, curriculum developers should periodically review and update Social Studies content to reflect emerging global trends. School administrators should create platforms for collaboration among teachers to share best practices.

Parental involvement and community engagement should also be encouraged, as the responsibility of instilling global competence in students requires collective efforts beyond the classroom. Finally, further research should be conducted to evaluate the long-term impact of teacher-led global education on students' civic behaviours.

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