

**SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AND THE CULTURE OF
SILENCE IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF FEMALE
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF DELTA STATE
UNIVERSITY, ABRAKA**

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Abstract: *This study examined the impact of social studies education on addressing the culture of silence in Nigeria. A descriptive research design was adopted and data was collected via a survey of 275 female undergraduatetestudents of Delta State University, Abrakausing non-probabilistic sampling techniques. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Linear regression analysis with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 23. The results of the study showed that social studies education have a positive and strong relationship with the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria. The result of the study also revealed that social studies education has a significant influence on breaking through the culture of silence in Nigeria. Therefore, it was recommended among others that government and policy-makers should intensity effort to review social studies education curriculum in Nigeria universities with emphasis on the place of social studies education on addressing the culture of silence and the inculcation of moral values.*

Keywords: *Social Studies; Education; Culture of Silence; Sexual Violence*

Introduction

Social studies education is subject designed to foster in learners better understanding of the cultural values that guide the interactions of man with his social and physical environment. Social studies is the most integrated of all subjects at the various levels of education and the most appropriate course of study in the university curriculum to meet the moral and cultural goals and foster national integration of the country. According to Njoku and Nwokah (2018, p. 249), social studies is “primarily concerned with human relationship. That is, how man in turn alters his environment to satisfy individual and group needs. It is about how man attempt to deal with certain pertinent problems, issues and questions arising from his use and misuse of his environment as well as how man draws upon his experiences to plan for the future”. In the views of Poatob (2015, p.1), social studies “provide students with the knowledge, skills and ability they need in both their personal and public lives. Thus, social studies as a problem-solving discipline can partly achieve when students are equipped with the relevant information about the society in which they live and what happens in the world around them”.

Obama, 2009 cited in Opoh, Edinyand and Ogbaji (2014, p 125) affirms that “we need the insights and critical thinking skills gained in history and social studies to fight poverty and homelessness, crime and discrimination, and to make out nation fairer and free. A nation that is tending towards growth and development must lay emphasis on a re-orientation and re-organization of institutions and a transformation of the people’s welfare. Thus, the role of social studies education in engineering national development cannot be overemphasized.

However, Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2013, p 210) noted that “social studies education in Nigerian schools, colleges and universities has failed in its educational mission in Nigeria” indeed, an enormous gap continues to exist between intended changes and actual practices in social studies education in Nigeria. This position was re-echoed by Osakwe (2012, p4) and Njoku and Nwokah (2018, p 254) that “social studies in Nigeria should begin to focus on restructuring and conceptualizing to make the subject more relevant to current challenges, events and developments in the country”.

Awosusi and Ogundana (2015, p 35) averred that “the culture of silence contributed to the prevalence of sexual violence in Nigeria and factors such as fear of stigmatization, government policy, rape myths and poor response from law enforcement agents played prominent roles in preventing the sexually violated victims from reporting”. In responding to the foregoing, Umaira (2017 p91) posits that “without proper guided or social studies education, girls and women are probably to face high levels of sexual abuse

and rape. At this point, one many ask, does social studies education has the capacity to break through the culture of silence in Nigeria? The answer to this question is the mainstream of this study using female undergraduate students of Delta State University, Abraka as case study.

Review of Related Literature

Social Studies Education

A good understanding of the concept of education will take us back in history to the origin of the world. The world 'education' originated from two latin words, 'Educere and Educare'. means to draw out or lead out, while 'educare means to nourish, bring up or raise" (Njoku&Nwokah, 2018, p 250). Education according to Osakoya, 2005 cited in Omieibi-Davids (2011, p 21), is "the leading out of the in-born powers and potentialities of the individuals in the society and acquisition of skills, attitudes and competencies necessary for self-realization and coping with life's problems. This definition connotes two things; the first is that individuals are born with certain innate qualities so that no one could be aid to be completely without any human or creative qualified. These individuals could be or not be aware of these innate qualities and thus, have to be helped to their utmost realization in order to be effective within the society and be useful to themselves. The second is that there are skills and qualities which the individuals need but does have them at the proper level, these they have to learn. The process of acquiring education to cope with life's challenges means that it equips us with knowledge and competencies to face the issues of everyday living".

Social studies as "a unique area of discipline is committed to transmitting and forming the values of citizens in Nigeria. Social studies has come to be accepted as a discipline that assists students to acquire the basic knowledge, skills and positive attitudes needed to be responsible citizens and contributing members of the society" (Alberta, 2000 cited in Opoh et al; 2014, p44). There is no acceptable definition of social studies as scholars hold different conceptions about the subject matter. However, a point on which most social studies authors agree is that the discipline is a study of the society having man as its central theme. According to Uche (1980, p17), "social studies is the field of study in which contents and purpose focus on relationship". Okobiah (1984, p3) conceptualize social studies as "an inter-disciplinary approach to the study of human beings in group interrelations with their physical and social environments. Similarly, Dubey, Onyabe and Prokupek, 1980 cited in Awopetu (2001, p 128) sees social studies as "a process of education which utilizes the study of human life for the purpose of

giving students the opportunity to practice solving problems of crucial importance both for the individuals and the society. It deals with the reciprocal relationship existing between man with the tools, to solve the many problem facing him”.

Njoku and Nwokah (2018, p 255) aver that “the introduction of social studies in Nigerian schools is as a result of the reflection of rapidly altering circumstances of social, economic and political situations within the country. The goals of social studies are concerned with rapid social change, changing values, general pluralism and other factors which today’s students will eventually have to deal with”. In the views of Opoh et al (2014, p 144), in the Nigerian context, the goals of social studies curriculum is the building of sound and balanced mind as a foundation for functional social education directed towards the development of intelligent, responsible and self-directing citizens. Integrating and dispensing social knowledge through the instrumentality of social studies curriculum is directed towards the following objectives: (i) self-confidence and initiatives, (ii) power of imagination and resourcefulness, (iii) desire for knowledge and continued learning (iv) sense of compassion for the less fortunate (v) sense of respect for and tolerance of the opinion of others and (vi) social values and attitudes such as cooperation, participation, interdependence, open-mindedness, honesty, integrity, obedience, diligence and trustworthiness”. In the context of this study, social studies is a discipline design to help the young citizens solve social problems.

Therefore, social studies education according to Njoku and Nwokah (2018, p 254), “teaches as well as enlightens students on how to use knowledge and experiences to solve problems. It is culturally relevant and real; it is functional by inculcating specific social and practical skills; it is continuous and lifelong and it is comprehensive and wholesome”. Social studies education is presently taught in all colleges of education and universities in Nigeria,. Virtually all universities that offering social studies education award degree in social studies up to the Ph.D level. “The Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) has been a very strong and formidable pressure group in the promotion of social studies education in Nigeria. The association has organized many seminars, conferences and workshops with the aim of promoting social studies and helping to mobilize the Nigerian citizenry to take active part in civic responsibilities and to show more patriotism to the course of the country. Other social studies organizations that have promoting the teaching of social studies in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria include the Social Studies Teacher association of Nigeria (SOSTAN) and the National Association of Social Studies Educators (NASSE).

Culture of Silence

Silence according to Basso (1970, p 213) is “a social construct. In some cultures, silence is seen as an accepted behavior while in others it is interpreted as a symbol of distress” Akoja and Anjorin (2020, p 8) posit that “the culture of silence is the behavior of a group of people that by unuttered agreement do not mention, discuss or acknowledge a particular subject. It is the act of keeping an unspoken agreement or make one not to speak about what happened to him or her” Malgorzata (2012, p 555) avers that “silence is link to fear of negative consequences both for the victim and the perpetrator as well as the perception that adults fail to act on reports”. This figure further explains the views of Malgorzata the culture of silence.

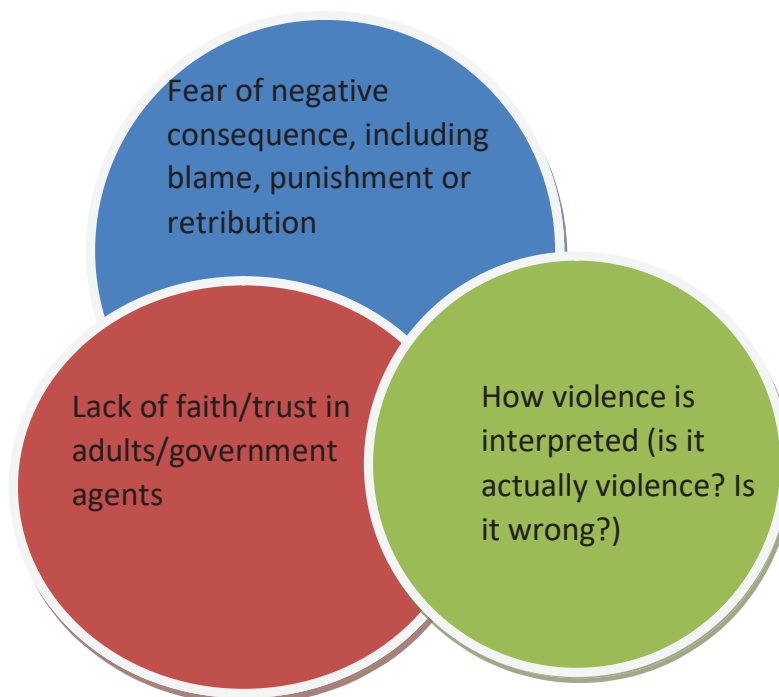


Fig 1: *Silence is linked to fear and social norms*

Sources: *Author’s construction, 2021*

In supporting the foregoing, Awosusi and Ogundana (2015, p 31) affirm that “in Nigeria, reports from mass media have shown that the rate of sexual violence against children and women is on the increase. Despite the increase in the prevalence of sexual violence, reported incidence from observation is a tip of the iceberg, because many cases of sexual violence go unreported pointing to the fact that the available data on sexual violence may not be enough to estimate the true scale off the problem”. Although not all women and girls keep silence, but most do because they are sad and uncomfortable about the subject if brought up or discussed around them, “Some victims do

not just feel used, they fear not being believed, they fear retaliation and shame. Young women and girls may be afraid that revealing a history of sexual violence will undermine their chances of marriage and victims may consider it futile to speak up if the state lacks appropriate judicial systems and measures to punish offenders adequately” (Eze, 2013, p 66), According to Decker and Sherman, 2016 cited in Akoja and Anjorin (2020, p 9), “women are mistreated and abused by people in power. It is so common for women to stay quite about assault cases and there is an assumption perpetrators have about the women not being given chances to speak which also strengthens their silence”.

The Role of the Social Studies Education in Breaking the Culture of Silence

One of the major factors responsible for the prevalence of sexual violence across the world and Nigeria in particular is the culture of silence and the negative social norms are responsible for the growing culture of silence among women and girls which social studies education can play an active role in shaping. In Nigeria, “many sexually traumatized victims seem to find it difficult to disclose the incidence or the assailant because of the need to protect their identity. Documentation is an important aspect in combating sexual violence, but it is disheartening that many sexual assaulted victims do not report to allow for proper documentation. It is the right of sexually violated victim to choose whether to report or not but one should not be ignorant of the fact that reporting sexual assault will enhance and strengthen prosecution of the perpetrators. Various factors may influence the disclosure of sexual violence such as inadequate and inappropriate sexuality socialization or sexual abuse prevention within the culture and families of a young girl or a child may affect the disclosure of sexual violence in adulthood” (Awosusi & Ogundana, 2015, pp 33-34). Presently, there are vast numbers of social ills among teenagers and youths worldwide, including Nigeria. Teenagers are facing similar social ill such as drug abuse, abortion, bullying, free sex, alcohol problems among others. In Nigeria, some predominant social issues include rape, drug abuse, robbery, cultism, alcohol problems, abortion and other immoral acts. Nigerian society is deteriorating little by little, the high degree of social problems in Nigeria calls for urgent review of our education, particularly social studies education to realize the primary aims and objectives for which education is intended. Therefore a continuous nurturing of moral values through social studies education will make individuals responsible to themselves, their environment and the nation at large” (Kabir, 2014, pp 6-7).

The “culture of silence has aggravated the social problems partly from humiliation and intimidation of the victim by the police as well as embarrassment of the public acknowledgement; the situation including being ostracized by those who consider rape as bringing dishonor to a women’s family and community. This culture of silence reinforces the stigma already attached to the victim rather than to a perpetrator, as the dominant perception is that, girls or women have provoked the abuser to attack, victims in many of the incidence are unwilling to testify about their experiences. The long-term effects of rape depend largely on the individuals ego, strength, social support system and the way she was treated as a victim” (Umaira, 2017, p 90). The “high degree of social problem rampant among the youths and teenager can be reduced through a concerted effort involving different stakeholders through public enlightenment campaigns and social studies education, social, cultural and religious meeting as well as the mass media” (Eze, 2013, p 67).

Liu and Fahmy (2011, p 47) suggest that “social studies education is needed to achieve the goals of breaking the culture of silence. One of the ways in which social studies education can do this is to create awareness and empower women in order to bridge knowledge gaps on sexual violence”. Social studies education plays an active role by creating awareness, improving knowledge and changing attitude of citizenry which most times discharged various anti-social behaviours and encourage the breaking of the culture of silence. Uchechukwu (2011, p 12) submits that “social studies education has the capacity of inculcating cultural values and breaking the culture of silence in Nigeria, Africa and across the globe”. Adediran and Onifade (2013, p 43) posit that “social studies education helps students demonstrate critical thinking and inquiry skills with which they process information to solve a wide variety of social problems”. Similarly, Njoku and Nokah (2018, p 255) concludes that “the goals of social studies education are concerned with rapid social change, changing values, general pluralism and other factors with which today’s students will eventually have to deal with including the culture of silence, in this era of political and social mobilization for a greater happier and more just tomorrow, no school subject can be more relevant than social studies education”. In their study Valls, Puigvert, Melgar and Garcia-Veste (2016, p 1537) exploring “the issues of silence in Spanish Universities found that 62% of the students known or have experienced sexual assault in the school environment while 13% could identify violent situations. They identified two main challenges contributing to the problem as under-reporting of crimes due to fear, stalking, threats and refusing to acknowledge or identify violent situations. They advocate for social studies education as an intervention and support for education as an

intervention and support for victims”. Therefore, one way to break the culture of silence and discourage the rise in rape and assault is through women and girls’ participation in continuous social studies education.

Theoretical Framework

In an attempt to place this study in its proper perspective, the need for a theoretical framework of analysis is very fundamental. The theoretical framework of analysis adopted in this study is the spiral of silence theory. The theory formulated by Kennamer (1990) has the central premise that people fear rejection and social isolation, the more they perceive they are in the minority on social issues, the more silence they will be on such issues. The spiral of silence theory “underscores the danger associated with the increasing pressure people feel which makes them hide their views or feelings when they think they are in the minority; this may be worsened by the fear of reprisal or vengeance by those who hurt them” (Awosusi & Ogundana, 2015, p 34). The “risk of stigmatization and rejection of survivors impose a culture of silence, preventing women and girls from reporting crime against them (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003, p 1394). Shoemaker, Breen and Stamper (2000, p 79) study on “the fear of social silence to test the fear of isolation assumption in relation to the spiral of silence theory and opinion formation. The results of their study among others showed that the fear of isolation comes with social anxiety”. In the final analysis, relevance of the spiral of silence theory to this study is based on its ability to justify that the fear whether one would receive desired support or not could be an essential factor in breaking the culture of silence. Victims of sexual violence are often silent due to the fear of stigmatization, fear of who to trust among law enforcement agencies and agents, fear of whether they will have fair hearing and judgment including the fear of fund needed to push their case through at the court.

In line with the literature review, the following objectives and null hypotheses were formulated for the study.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, this study sought to:

- i) examined the relationship between social studies education and the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria
- ii) investigated the extent to which social studies education influence the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria

Hypotheses of the study

The following null hypotheses were formulated for testing:

H₁: There is no significant relationship between social studies education and the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria

H₂: There is no significant social studies education influence the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design and data was collected via a survey of 275 female undergraduate students of Delta State University, Abraka using non-probabilistic sampling techniques comprising of purposeful and convenience techniques. A questionnaire was used to gather the primary data. The questionnaire consisted of 15 items structured along a 5-points likert type scale which ranks responses on a scale of (1) strongly disagree (SD) and (5) strongly agree (SA). Out of the 275 copies of questionnaire administered, 193 were retrieved and analysed given us a response rate of 70%. The study was validated using content and construct validity tests to ensure that the questionnaire items were appropriate and relevant to the objectives of the study. A pilot study was also conducted to pre-test the instrument and Cronbach alpha method was used to establish the internal consistency of the items and the results showed coefficients of 0.813 and 0.824, which satisfied the general recommended level of 0.70 for the research indicators (Cronbach, 1981). Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and linear regression analysis with the aid of statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 23.

Results of the Study

Table 1: Correlation Matrix

| Variables | Social Education | Studies | Breaking of the culture of silence |
|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Social Education | 1 | | |
| Studies | Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N | 1 | |
| Breaking of the culture of silence | Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N | 0.733** 0.005 193 | 1 |

**Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2tailed)

Source: SPSS version 23, 2021

Linear Regression Analysis

Table 2: Model Summary^b

| Model | R | R ² | Adj-R ² | Std. Error of estimate |
|-------|-------|----------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | 0.583 | 0.410 | 0.386 | 0.172 |

i) Predictors: (constant), social studies education

ii) Dependent variable: breaking of the culture of silence

Source: SPSS version 23, 2021

Table 3: ANOVA^a

| Model | | Sum of square | Mean | Df | Coefficient | f-stat | Sig | D.W |
|-------|------------|---------------|-------|-----|-------------|--------|--------------------|-------|
| 1 | Regression | 28.317 | 3.291 | 3 | 0.138 | 21.450 | 0.005 ^b | 1.921 |
| | residual | 17.593 | 0.515 | 187 | | | | |
| | Total | 45.910 | | 190 | | | | |

i) Predictors: (constant), social studies education

ii) Dependent variable: Breaking of the culture of silence

Source: SPSS version 23, 2021

Discussion of Results

Table 1 shows the correlation between social studies education and breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria. There exists a significant positive relationship between the predictor and dependent variables ($r=0$, $n=193$, & $p < 0.05$). This implies that social studies education has a positive relationship with the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Table 2 shows R^2 value of 0.583 which revealed that social studies education independently account for 58.3% of the variation in breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria. The coefficient of 0.138 in table 3 further indicated that a one percent increase in social studies education results in 13.8% increase in breaking of the culture of silence. The F. statistics of 21.450 revealed that the model is statistically significant at 0.05 significant levels. The Durbin-Watson statistics of the model which shows 1.921 implies absence of serial autocorrelation in the regression analysis. Therefore, the results among others showed that there is strong and positive relationship between social studies education and the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria. Also, the results revealed that social studies education exert a positive and statistically significant influence on the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria. These findings are in agreement with the views of Liu and Fahmy (2011), Adediran and Onifade (2013), and Valls et al (2016).

Conclusion and Recommendations

While the study focused on how social studies education has been effective in creating awareness changing students' attitude, improving their knowledge and discouraging the culture of silence in Nigeria, it cannot be concluded that social studies education can address completely the culture of silence. The study acknowledged the capacity of social studies education in breaking of the culture of silence among female undergraduates of Delta State University, Abraka. Therefore, it is not surprising that the study

revealed that social studies education has a positive influence on the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria. Also, the relationship between social studies education and the breaking of the culture of silence was confirmed. Based on the findings of this study, the following policy recommendations were made:

1. Government and policy makers should intensify effort to review social studies education curriculum in Nigerian Universities with emphasis on the place of social studies education on addressing the culture of silence and the inculcation of moral values
2. The women and girls population should be educated to dispel many of the rape myths that hinder them from reporting sexual violence
3. For social studies education to realize its ultimate goal in Nigeria, efforts should be made for teachers' training, forums, seminar and workshops across the country.

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