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FAMILY DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING IN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTHWEST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of family demographic factors on students' attitudes towards learning Social Studies in junior secondary schools in Southwest Nigeria. Specifically, the study examines students' attitudes towards Social Studies and assesses differences based on family type, structure, and size. A descriptive survey research design was employed, targeting Junior Secondary School Class II (JSS II) students across Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti States. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 1,125 students from 45 public secondary schools. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, the Students' Attitudinal Scale towards Learning of Social Studies (SASLSS), which demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89). Descriptive and inferential statistics, including t-tests and ANOVA, were used for data analysis at a 0.05 significance level. Findings reveal that 62.51% of students exhibited a negative attitude towards Social Studies, while 37.49% displayed a positive attitude. There was no significant difference in students' attitudes based on family type (monogamous vs. polygamous) or family structure (two-parent vs. single-parent households). However, a significant difference was observed based on family size, with students from smaller families (2–4 members) displaying more positive attitudes than those from larger families. The study concludes that while family type and structure do not significantly impact students' attitudes, family size plays a role. It recommends that educators adopt engaging instructional strategies to enhance students' interest in Social Studies, policymakers integrate family-oriented support mechanisms, and further research explore additional factors influencing attitudes towards Social Studies learning.

Keywords: Family demographic factors, Social Studies, Students, Attitude, Learning

Introduction

Education, in its most comprehensive definition, is a process aimed at instilling the information, skills, and attitudes required for individuals to navigate their environment efficiently. The main objective is to cultivate and advance the complete self-actualization of all individuals. Education is a process by which an individual obtains the physical and social competencies required by the society into which they are born, enabling them to be beneficial and contribute to societal growth (Adams et al., 2024). There are three primary kinds of education: formal, informal, and non-formal education. These educational modalities occur within a socio-cultural setting. Attitude is a fundamental aspect of human identity. Individuals routinely experience love, hatred, affection, aversion, preference, opposition, consensus, dissent, debate, and persuasion. All of these are evaluative responses to an item. Attitudes evolve and

shift with time. Durojaye (2009) assert that attitudes are shaped by three components: cognitive (beliefs, concepts, qualities), affective (feelings, emotions), and behavioural information (past events, experiences).

The attitude of students towards learning is crucial in the teaching and learning processes. The impact on students' learning results cannot be overstated. The manner in which an idea is presented in the classroom and perceived by students significantly influences the cultivation of a favourable attitude towards the subject (Awogbami et al., 2020). Attitudes are developed via the learning experiences of individuals. Attitudes may also result from imitation within educational contexts. Consequently, a student derives from the teacher's demeanour to cultivate his or her own attitude, which subsequently influences learning results. Educators ought to serve as exemplars whose conduct is emulated by students (Oladele & Opele, 2022). A favourable attitude towards learning indicates a good emotional disposition towards the subject, while a negative attitude corresponds to a negative emotional disposition (Durojaye, 2009). Numerous factors have been examined by researchers to elucidate why certain students excel or achieve superior academic achievement compared to others. The findings primarily focus on students' background elements categorised as student factors, family factors (culture), school factors, social factors, and peer factors (Crosnoe, et al., 2004). This research focusses on the social and cultural (family) aspects influencing students' learning outcomes. This study will examine certain family demographic characteristics (family type, family structure, and family size) to ascertain their impact on students' attitudes towards learning Social Studies in secondary schools.

The definition of family varies based on cultural and geographical perspectives. The family is a basic social and cultural institution, with its specific forms varying significantly across different locations. The family cultivates future citizens, nourishes and maintains adults, and participates in the daily operations of society. The family is an institution that influences a person throughout life (Akubue and Okolo, 2008). The family is the primary social organisation in all human civilisations and serves as the foundation for the creation of individuals. Parents are anticipated to assume essential tasks within the family. According to Ogunjobi, et al. (2023), the family serves as the foundation for a child's formal education, with the two primary family structures being monogamous and polygamous. A polygamous family consists of one man with several wives and children, whereas a monogamous family comprises one man, one wife, and children. The polygamous family structure is extensively practiced in African civilisation, notably in Nigeria. This refers to a scenario in which a guy has several wives, whereas a monogamous family, or nuclear family, consists of a father and mother cohabiting with their children.

In households with several individuals, the upbringing of children is often delegated to multiple carers, potentially resulting in both beneficial and detrimental impacts on the kid (Ogunjobi, et al. 2023). Some adolescents exhibit alterations in home dynamics that may manifest in the school environment. Indicators such as sadness, diminished academic performance,

irregular attendance, loss of self-esteem, and disorganisation may indicate adjustment difficulties related to the family structure of a student's household. Polygamous households seem to have more conflicts than monogamous households. In polygamous families, there is a higher number of female spouses who are frequently in conflict over their husband's attention. This friction also affects their offspring, resulting in more sibling rivalry in polygamous households compared to monogamous ones, as shown by Strife (2012). All of these factors appear to affect students' academic performance and their attitude towards learning.

A family is either disintegrated or whole. A shattered family, in this sense, refers to one that lacks structural integrity due to many factors, including parental death, divorce, separation, abandonment, and illegitimacy. The family structure may consist of a single-parent family or a two-parent family. A single-parent family, as defined in this research, is a family unit that has experienced dissolution due to factors such as parental death, separation, divorce, or abandonment, resulting in children being reared by single parents, stepparents, or relatives. A two-parent family is defined as a household in which both biological parents reside together.

A single-parent family comprises one parent and dependent children residing in the same household without the support of a co-parent, whereas a two-parent family involves both the father and mother jointly responsible for the care of the children (Peter, 2016). According to Peter (2016), family structure pertains to the makeup of the family and the interrelations among its members, while the functions of the family encompass the responsibilities performed to meet the requirements of its members. The two-parent family mostly consists of the father, mother, and their biological children, as well as occasionally their adopted children. The single-parent family comprises either the father or the mother together with the children (Peter, 2016). The preservation of a family unit does not inherently imply effective functioning or adequate care for the children, since various typical tensions, challenges, and even life-threatening concerns can arise within intact families. The structural examination of families is crucial, as the family serves as the primary informal socialising agent that shapes a child's development, ultimately influencing the child's destiny. It assists youngsters in identifying and attaining significant societal objectives. The home environment and structure may significantly influence a student's academic achievement, either positively or negatively.

The study noted that children from single-parent households are significantly correlated with a heightened risk of many adverse social, behavioural, and emotional consequences. This appears to result in diminished performance and a negative attitude towards learning in school, in contrast to children from two-parent households. Life in a single-parent family can be stressful for both the child and the parent, as these families encounter challenges related to limited financial resources and the adoption of new roles and responsibilities, which may impact the child's academic performance and attitude towards learning. Children in single-parent homes may have psychological and social issues that might impact their academic performance and attitude

towards learning. Two-parent households seem to provide greater time, affection, and supervision to their children compared to single parents, since the presence of two parents allows for mutual support during challenging parenting moments. Children from single-parent households may engage in delinquent behaviour due to a lack of stability, protection, and affection typically provided by both parents, which adversely impacts their academic performance. The researcher believes that a kid experiencing mother or paternal impoverishment may have scholastic difficulties, including truancy. The youngster may be deficient in essential resources such as tuition, textbooks, and uniforms. When single parents are overwhelmed by duties, they frequently exhibit irritability, impatience, and insensitivity towards their children's needs.

Documented data exists about the impact of family size on children' academic achievement across several disciplines in school (Ella, Odok & Ella, 2016). In this study, family size denotes the total number of children within a kid's family, including the child in question. Family size is defined here as either large or small. This is mostly dictated by the size of the family unit. Large families, regardless of socioeconomic status, are challenging to sustain; they are marked by a large number of children and disorder, which appears to hinder the learning process. They also contribute to several known issues in child-rearing, including inadequate nourishment, bad clothes, limited financial resources, lack of proper attention, disciplinary challenges, and malnutrition, all of which adversely affect children's academic achievement.

The study noted that students with fewer siblings tend to receive greater parental attention and have enhanced access to resources compared to those from larger homes. The increased attention and assistance appear to provide improved academic achievement and a favourable disposition towards learning. The size of the family may significantly influence the quantity of physical care and time each kid receives from their parents. The economic implications of big family size are elucidated in the study by OECD/UNESCO (2003), which noted that as family size increases, parents are unable to provide equal individual attention to each kid. They were unable to supply them with numerous resources essential for optimising their educational experience, including academic aids, tranquil and comfortable study environments free from television distractions, excursions to points of interest, recreational activities, and travel opportunities. According to them, the most significant finding is that parents of big families engage in less communication with their children compared to parents of small families.

An optimal atmosphere is essential for improving a child's academic achievement. An enriching family environment may elevate a prospective mediocre to an intellectual giant, whilst a constraining one can diminish a genius to mediocrity (Olakan, et sl.., 2013). Addressing children's needs, particularly educational requirements, is crucial in influencing their academic performance and attitude towards learning. Contrary to the belief that education and literacy start at school, the initial foundation for a kid is established at home. An optimal family setting equipped with sufficient educational resources will enhance the

child's intellectual and academic potential. Compact family units and monogamous structures frequently enhance children's academic achievement and attitudes towards learning.

This study therefore investigated the family demographic factors and students' attitude towards social studies learning in junior secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria. The specific purposes of the study were to examine:

1. the attitude of Junior Secondary School students to learning of Social Studies in Southwest, Nigeria; and
2. the difference in the attitude of students towards Social Studies based on their family type, family structure, and family size.

Research Questions

1. What is the attitude of students to learning of Social Studies in secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria?
2. What are the different attitudes of students towards Social Studies based on family type, family structure, and family size?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were generated for the study.

1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of students towards Social Studies based on their family type.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of students towards Social Studies based on their family structure.
3. There is no significant difference in the attitude of students towards Social Studies based on their family size.

Research Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine students' attitudes towards learning Social Studies in public secondary schools across Southwest Nigeria. The population comprised all Junior Secondary School Class 11 (JSS II) students in the region, which includes Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti States. The study aimed to obtain relevant data through a structured questionnaire to assess students' perceptions and attitudes towards the subject, considering various demographic factors. By employing a systematic sampling approach, the study ensured a representative selection of students from different states within the region. A multi-stage sampling procedure was utilised to select a total sample of 1,125 JSS II students from 45 secondary schools. In the first stage, three states were randomly selected. The second stage involved the proportionate random selection of 15 Local Government Areas (LGAs) from the chosen states. In the third stage, three public secondary schools were stratified and selected from each of the LGAs. Lastly, 25 students were systematically chosen from each school using stratified sampling, ensuring fair representation across different schools and regions. This rigorous sampling technique enhanced the study's reliability and generalisability to a broader population.

The research instrument used was a questionnaire titled "Students' Attitudinal Scale towards Learning of Social Studies (SASLSS)," which was developed by the researcher. The instrument comprised two sections: Section A collected demographic details such as gender, family background, and parental socioeconomic status, while Section B contained 20 Likert-scale items

measuring students' attitudes towards Social Studies. The face and content validity of the instrument were confirmed by experts in Social Studies and educational measurement, who reviewed and refined the questionnaire to ensure clarity and relevance. The reliability of the instrument was assessed through a pilot study conducted in two secondary schools outside the sample, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89, indicating high internal consistency and reliability. The administration of the questionnaire was carried out by the researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants. Permission was sought from school heads to facilitate smooth data collection. The direct administration of the instrument allowed for clarification of questions where necessary, enhancing respondents' understanding and ensuring a high response rate. The collected data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were used to answer research questions, while t-tests and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were employed to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. These analyses provided insights into students' attitudes towards Social Studies and helped to determine the influence of various demographic factors on their learning experiences.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the attitude of students to learning of Social Studies in secondary schools in Southwest, Nigeria?

Table 1: Summary of Students' attitude towards learning of Social Studies

Attitude of students	No of Respondents	Percentage
Negative (20.00 – 48.93)	692	62.51
Positive (48.94 – 80.00)	415	37.49
Total	**1107**	**100**

The data in Table 1 reveals that the majority of students (62.51%) exhibited a negative attitude towards learning Social Studies, while only 37.49% displayed a positive attitude. This suggests that a significant proportion of students may lack interest or motivation in the subject, which could be influenced by factors such as teaching methods, curriculum content, or perceived relevance of Social Studies to their future aspirations.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the attitude of students towards Social Studies based on their family type.

Table 2: t-test Analysis for difference in attitude towards Social Studies between students from monogamous and polygamous family

Variations	N	Mean	SD	Df	t_{cal}	P
Monogamous	912	48.92	5.69	1105	0.295	0.768
Polygamous	195	49.06	5.57			

P>0.05

The t-test analysis in Table 2 examines whether there is a significant difference in students' attitudes towards Social Studies based on family structure (monogamous vs. polygamous). The results indicate that students from monogamous families (M = 48.92, SD = 5.69) and those from polygamous families (M = 49.06, SD =

5.57) have nearly identical mean scores. The calculated t-value (t = 0.295, df = 1105) and the p-value (p = 0.768) suggest no statistically significant difference between the two groups, as the p-value is greater than the 0.05 significance level. This implies that family structure does not significantly influence students' attitudes towards Social Studies.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the attitude of students towards Social Studies based on their family structure.

Table 3: t-test Analysis for difference in attitude towards Social Studies between students from two-parent and single-parent

Variations	N	Mean	SD	Df	t_{cal}	P
Two-Parent	852	48.92	5.74	1105	0.257	0.798
Single-Parent	255	49.03	5.42			

P>0.05

The t-test analysis in Table 3 examines the difference in attitude towards Social Studies between students from two-parent and single-parent households. The results show that students from two-parent households (Mean = 48.92, SD = 5.74) and single-parent households (Mean = 49.03, SD = 5.42) have very similar mean scores. The calculated t-value (t = 0.257) with a p-value of 0.798 exceeds the 0.05 significance level, indicating no statistically significant difference in attitude between the two groups. This suggests that family structure does not significantly influence students' attitudes towards Social Studies.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the attitude of students towards Social Studies based on their family size.

Table 4: Difference in attitude of students towards Social Studies based on their family size

281.268	2	140.634	4.412*	.012
35189.693	1104	31.875		
35470.961	1106			

* P < 0.05

The analysis in Table 4 examines the difference in students' attitudes towards Social Studies based on family size. The ANOVA results indicate a statistically significant difference among the groups, as the F-value (4.412) is significant at p < 0.05. This suggests that students' attitudes towards Social Studies vary depending on their family size. The between-group variance (Sum of Squares = 281.268, df = 2) compared to the within-group variance (Sum of Squares = 35,189.693, df = 1104) indicates that family size has a measurable influence on students' attitudes, warranting further post-hoc analysis to determine specific group differences.

Table 5: Scheffe Post – hoc Test and Mean for observed differences in attitude of students towards Social Studies based on their family size.

Groups	N	Mean	2 – 4	5 – 7	Above 8
			49.83	48.78	48.30
2 – 4	250	49.83			
5 – 7	703	48.78	*		
Above 8	154	48.30	*		

* P < 0.05

In Table 5, significant differences were found in attitude towards Social Studies between students from family size of 2 – 4 and 5 – 7, and also between students from family size of 2 – 4 and above 8. However, there was no significant difference in attitude towards Social Studies between students from family size of 5 – 7 and above 8.

Discussion

The study's findings indicated no substantial variation in students' attitudes towards Social Studies based on family type. These findings opposed those of Kessler (2013) and Strife (2012), who determined that family type impacted students' attitudes towards learning. They determined that children from polygamous households frequently experience depression and typically respond with behaviours of unrest, which adversely impact their attitudes towards learning. Akomolafe and Olorunfemi-Olabisi (2011) concluded that family structure strongly impacted the academic achievement of secondary school students. The survey further indicated that there was no substantial disparity in students' attitudes towards learning Social Studies based on their family structure. This indicates that kids from both two-parent and single-parent families exhibited comparable attitudes towards learning Social Studies. The result aligns with Ushie et al. (2012), who discovered no significant difference in the attitudes of students from single-parent homes compared to those from two-parent families (p>0.05). The findings of this study align with those of Peter (2016) but contradict the results of Ella, Odok, and Ella (2016) on family structure and student learning outcomes. It also refuted Uwaifo's (2018) study, which identified a substantial disparity in the academic performance of students from single-parent families compared to those from two-parent family structures.

The study's findings indicated a considerable variation in students' attitudes towards Social Studies based on family size. The research conducted by Odok (2013) and Eamon (2005) demonstrated that smaller family sizes are associated with greater educational achievement. Odok (2013) determined that children from smaller households outperformed those from larger families on the same exam. The findings, however, contradicted the assertions of Powell and Stellman (2010) and Van-Ejick and DeGraaf (2012), who identified no correlation between family size and students' academic performance. They determined that children's academic achievement is contingent upon the investment of time and financial resources from their parents, rather than the family's size. It also disputed the conclusions of Tenibiaje (2009), who determined that

family size did not affect students' academic performance.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that a majority of students hold a negative attitude towards learning Social Studies, suggesting a potential lack of interest or engagement with the subject. Additionally, family type and family structure were found to have no significant impact on students' attitudes, as there were no notable differences between students from monogamous and polygamous families or between those from two-parent and single-parent households. However, family size was found to significantly influence students' attitudes, with those from smaller families (2–4 members) exhibiting a more positive attitude compared to those from larger families (5–7 members and above 8). This suggests that students from smaller families may receive more academic support or attention, positively influencing their perception of the subject. These findings highlight the need for strategies to enhance students' attitudes toward Social Studies, particularly for those from larger family sizes, to improve overall engagement and learning outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Given the high percentage of students with negative attitudes towards Social Studies, teachers should adopt more engaging and student-centred teaching methods, such as interactive discussions, project-based learning, and technology integration, to stimulate interest and participation in the subject.
2. Since family size was found to significantly influence students' attitudes, parents, especially those from larger families, should be encouraged to provide more academic support and resources to their children. Schools and community organisations can organise parental engagement programmes to educate parents on ways to foster a positive learning environment at home.
3. The curriculum should be reviewed to ensure that Social Studies content is practical, relatable, and aligned with students' real-life experiences and aspirations. Incorporating contemporary issues and real-world applications can make the subject more appealing and relevant to students.
4. Special intervention programmes should be developed for students from larger families who may have limited access to educational support. Schools can implement mentoring schemes, peer tutoring, and after-school study groups to provide additional learning assistance and improve students' attitudes towards the subject.

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