

APPRAISING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IN REDUCING SOCIAL VICES AMONG COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDENTS IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study assessed the effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum in reducing social vices among Colleges of Education students in North-Central Nigeria. Three research questions and hypotheses guided the study. The research design employed was descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 6,836 Social Studies students. The Modified Research Advisors (2010) was used to determine the sample size of 400 used for this study. The instrument used for data collection was Social Studies Curriculum in Reducing Social Vices Questionnaire (SSCRSVQ). The instrument was validated and subjected to reliability test using Cronbach Alpha and internal consistency of 0.85 was found. Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions while one sample t-test was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that Social Studies curriculum content has positive impact in reducing social vices, Social Studies evaluation strategies have positive effect in mitigating the problem of lack of empathy among students and Social Studies lecturers' competency has positive impact on students' conflict resolution skills in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that Social Studies curriculum should be enriched with topics and activities that promote emotional intelligence and anti-social vices; assessment methods should include reflective and interactive approaches that foster empathy and emotional understanding and continuous professional development should be provided to enhance lecturers' skills in teaching and modeling conflict resolution.

Keywords: Social Studies Curriculum, Social Vices, Colleges of Education

Introduction

Education is the backbone of a thriving society, playing a vital role in shaping individuals and communities. It is through education that we acquire knowledge, skills and values that enable us to interact and contribute to the world around us. This is supported by the view of Wahab and Bello (2020) that education, not merely as receiving content, but as the delivery of the designed curriculum in a way that aligns with goals such as skills, understanding and performance. There are quite unacceptable social vices in the society today. Since the return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999, the country has been facing national security challenges across the six geo-political zones. Instances of bomb blasts, oil pipeline vandalism, kidnappings, armed robbery and political assassinations continue to intensify Nigeria's security challenges, stretching the nation to its limits and, at times, threatening its very existence (Obayori et al., 2025).

Social vices such as examination malpractice, cultism, drug abuse, truancy, bullying and general indiscipline are major impediments to teaching and learning in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. These behaviours not only degrade educational quality, but also erode moral values, undermine student achievement and compromise the professional development of future teachers. For instance, indiscipline has been shown to negatively affect students' academic performance and impose extra burdens on school management in public schools in Ekiti State (Nwogu et al., 2025). Ezeoba (2019) identified strategies such as incorporating cultural similarities, human rights and conflict resolution topics, which are instrumental in reducing social vices among students. Similarly, Wilson and Lipsey (2017) synthesized research on the effectiveness of school-based programmes for preventing or reducing social vices and revealed significant reductions in social vices among intervention groups, especially when programmes were well-implemented and targeted high-risk youth.

The Social Studies curriculum is designed to foster civic awareness, ethical reasoning, social values, and responsible behaviour. Its content often includes topics like citizenship, morals and ethics, community participation and social cohesion. Empirical studies suggest that when Social Studies is properly implemented, content taught fully, teachers well-trained, pedagogical methods active and value-based, it has strong potential to reduce social vices among students. For example, in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State, Social Studies curriculum instruction was effective in addressing risky sexual behaviour among junior secondary students (Akpama, et al., 2024). Also, in Plateau State, content of the Social Studies curriculum was found to foster positive value disposition among junior secondary students when fully delivered (Daboer & Umaru, 2021).

However, there are concerns about the gap between curriculum theory and practice. Multiple studies report that although the Social Studies curriculum includes relevant themes for moral and

civic values, implementation is weakened by factors such as inadequate teacher preparation, lack of instructional materials, weak infrastructure, and the predominance of teacher-centred instructional methods. For instance, research in Nigeria's tertiary institutions notes that curriculum implementation is impeded by insufficient resources, inadequate staffing and other logistic challenges (Edinoh & Wali-Essien, 2024). Similarly, in a study titled curbing social vices through social studies curriculum in Nigeria, while the curriculum was found to contain relevant topics, its impact was limited by insufficient emphasis on practical application, lack of resources, and less effective teacher training (Bakare, 2024).

The significant role of Social Studies in the evaluation strategies in fostering empathy among students cannot be overemphasized. These strategies, encompassing various instructional methods and assessment tools, aim to enhance students' ability to understand and appreciate diverse perspectives, thereby mitigating issues related to a lack of empathy. Debate and role-playing are practical evaluation strategies that promote historical empathy. Jensen (2020) conducted an action research study where fifth-grade students participated in historical debates, taking on the perspectives of people from the past. The study found that these activities enhanced students' understanding of historical contexts and multiple viewpoints, key components of empathy. Similarly, role-playing allows students to immerse themselves in historical scenarios, fostering empathy and a deeper understanding of historical perspectives (Your Smart Class, 2023). Schrier et al. (2021) piloted a game jam in Nigeria aimed at enhancing perspective-taking and empathy among students aged 12 to 20. Participants engaged in creating games that explored identity and diverse perspectives, resulting in increased empathy and compassion. This method demonstrates the potential of interactive and creative activities in promoting empathetic understanding in Social Studies education.

The role of Social Studies lecturers extends beyond imparting knowledge; it encompasses fostering essential life skills such as conflict resolution. Lecturers' competencies, including emotional intelligence, pedagogical strategies, and conflict management skills, significantly influence students' ability to navigate interpersonal conflicts constructively. According to Endacott and Brooks (2022), effective teaching in Social Studies requires educators to be not only content experts but also facilitators of critical thinking and dialogue. Burić and Moè (2020) suggested that teachers with high emotional intelligence are more likely to manage classroom conflicts effectively and serve as role models for emotional regulation. Thorsborne and Blood (2021) emphasize that when Social Studies lecturers implement restorative circles and mediation practices, students learn to voice their grievances respectfully and work collaboratively towards resolutions. Teacher self-efficacy, or belief in one's ability to influence student outcomes, also plays a role. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2019) found that teachers with higher self-efficacy are more proactive in addressing conflicts and more likely to engage students in constructive dialogue.

In the Colleges of Education, where teachers are trained, the implications are especially significant. The affective and behavioural dispositions of pre-service teachers are shaped by what and how they are taught. If Social Studies curricula in Colleges of Education are not sufficiently

value-oriented or fail to engage students actively, graduates may be ill-prepared to transmit pro-social values in primary and junior secondary schools. Though most studies so far have focused on secondary and junior secondary levels, there is a paucity of research specifically assessing effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum in reducing social vices among students in Colleges of Education in the North-Central zone of Nigeria.

Therefore, this study aims to appraise how effective the Social Studies curriculum is at reducing social vices among College of Education students in North-Central Nigeria. It will examine impact of Social Studies curriculum contents in reducing social vices among students in Colleges of Education, the impact of Social Studies evaluation strategies in addressing the problem of lack of empathy among Students and the impact of Social Studies lecturer competency on students' conflict resolution skills in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions are generated:

- i. How does the Social Studies curriculum content impact the reduction of social vices among students in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent do Social Studies evaluation strategies help in mitigating the problem of lack of empathy among students in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria?
- iii. How does Social Studies lecturer competency influence students' conflict resolution skills in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated:

H₀₁: The Social Studies curriculum content has no significant impact on reducing social vices among students in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria.

H₀₄: Social Studies evaluation strategies have no significant effect on mitigating the problem of lack of empathy among students in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria.

H₀₅: Social Studies lecturers' competency has no significant impact on students' conflict resolution skills in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria.

Methodology

The study employed survey research method. Here the researcher surveyed the views of students on the effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum in reducing social vices among College of Education students in North Central, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised six thousand eight hundred and thirty six (6,836) Social Studies students in Colleges of Education in North-Central Nigeria. The Modified Research Advisors (2010) was used to determine the sample size

from the students' population. The sample size of the study was 400. This sample size of the study was determined by proportionate sampling technique to select from the targeted population because the population of the schools varies from one another. While purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the colleges of education used for the research work. The study used 12 conventional Colleges of Education in North Central, Nigeria that offer Social Studies as a course of study, the other colleges of education that were not selected was due to the fact that they do not offer Social Studies as NCE programme.

The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire titled "Social Studies Curriculum in Reducing Social Vices Questionnaire (SSCRSVQ)" which was developed by the researcher. The instrument was validated by two experts and a pilot test was carried out in one College of Education that was not part of the sampled institutions selected for this study. The reliability of SSCRSVQ was determined using Cronbach Alpha and the internal consistency was found to be 0.85.

Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions. The criterion mean of 2.5 was used to analyse each item. One sample t-test was used in testing of hypotheses at $P \leq 0.05$ level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: How does the Social Studies curriculum content impact the reduction of social vices among students in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria?

Table 1: Respondents' Responses on Social Studies Curriculum Content Impact in the Reduction of Social Vices among Students

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	The Social Studies curriculum content adequately addresses the causes of social vices among students	87	259	31	23	3.03	.684	Agreed
2	The topics in the Social Studies curriculum help students develop positive conflict resolution skills	90	244	45	21	3.01	.749	Agreed
3	The curriculum teaches students the importance of tolerance and respect in interpersonal relationships	101	236	39	24	3.04	.699	Agreed
4	Social Studies lessons provide practical strategies for students to control social vices	99	264	28	9	3.13	.758	Agreed

5	The curriculum encourages students to engage in peaceful dialogue instead of resorting to social vices	112	257	26	5	3.19	.637	Agreed
6	Social Studies content promotes emotional intelligence and self-awareness, which help reduce social vices	89	295	12	4	3.17	.792	Agreed
7	The moral and ethical values emphasized in Social Studies help students manage anger effectively	96	255	33	16	3.08	.683	Agreed
8	Classroom discussions in Social Studies help students understand the negative effects of social vices	98	266	29	7	3.14	.769	Agreed
9	The Social Studies curriculum includes real-life case studies that demonstrate the consequences of social vices	102	248	38	12	3.10	.781	Agreed
10	The content of Social Studies has contributed to a noticeable reduction in social vices among students	99	269	24	8	3.15	.658	Agreed
Aggregate Mean						3.10		Accepted

Source: Field Survey (2025)

(N = 400)

Table 1 shows the responses of the respondents on Social Studies curriculum content impact in the reduction of social vices among NCE students in the North-Central. From table 1, all items were agreed upon by the respondents. The aggregate mean score of 3.10 indicates that Social Studies curriculum content impacted the reduction of social vices among students in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria.

Research Question 2: To what extent do Social Studies evaluation strategies help in mitigating the problem of lack of empathy among students in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria?

Table 2: Respondents' Responses on Social Studies Evaluation Strategies help in Mitigating the Problem of Lack of Empathy among Students

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.	Decision
11	Social Studies evaluation strategies encourage students to understand different perspectives and foster empathy	77	231	47	45	2.85	.684	Agreed
12	Case study assessments in Social Studies help students relate better to real-life social issues and emotions	102	239	37	22	3.05	.743	Agreed

13	Role-playing exercises in Social Studies evaluations improve students' ability to empathize with others	104	243	32	21	3.08	.723	Agreed
14	Group-based assessments promote teamwork and appreciation of diverse viewpoints	108	274	14	4	3.22	.786	Agreed
15	Reflection-based evaluation methods (e.g., journaling, essays) enhance students' emotional intelligence and empathy	101	270	19	10	3.15	.692	Agreed
16	Peer evaluation techniques in Social Studies encourage students to recognize and respect others' emotions	90	289	13	8	3.15	.684	Agreed
17	Debates and discussions as evaluation tools help students develop compassion for differing opinions	94	257	36	13	3.08	.699	Agreed
18	Social Studies assessments that focus on ethical dilemmas strengthen students' moral reasoning and empathy	95	265	29	11	3.11	.715	Agreed
19	Community engagement projects as part of Social Studies evaluations enhance students' ability to empathize with societal challenges	99	259	30	12	3.11	.706	Agreed
20	Overall, Social Studies evaluation strategies contribute significantly to reducing students' lack of empathy	101	271	21	7	3.17	.659	Agreed
Aggregate Mean						3.10		Accepted

Source: Field Survey (2025)

(N = 400)

Table 2 shows the responses of the respondents on Social Studies evaluation strategies help in mitigating the problem of lack of empathy among students in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria. From table 2, all items were agreed upon by the respondents. The aggregate mean score of 3.10 indicates that Social Studies evaluation strategies helped in mitigating the problem of lack of empathy among students in Colleges of Education in the North-Central Nigeria.

Research Question 3: How does Social Studies lecturers' competency influence students' conflict resolution skills in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria?

Table 3: Respondents' Responses on Social Studies Lecturers' Competency Influence on Conflict Resolution Skills

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.	Decision
21	Social Studies lecturers with strong communication skills help students develop effective conflict resolution strategies	98	257	26	19	3.09	.697	Agreed
22	Lecturers' ability to facilitate open discussions about social issues improves students' problem-solving skills in conflicts	112	245	31	12	3.14	.687	Agreed
23	Well-trained Social Studies lecturers use classroom activities to teach students how to resolve disagreements peacefully	119	250	25	6	3.21	.743	Agreed
24	A competent Social Studies lecturer encourages students to respect diverse opinions, reducing conflicts	110	279	9	2	3.24	.775	Agreed
25	Lecturers with expertise in mediation techniques positively influence students' ability to manage conflicts constructively	116	280	9	5	3.32	.728	Agreed
26	Social Studies lecturers who model empathy in their teaching approach help students become more understanding in resolving conflicts	100	279	14	7	3.18	.694	Agreed
27	The use of real-life case studies by lecturers enhances students' ability to analyze and address conflicts effectively	98	268	25	9	3.14	.709	Agreed
28	Lecturers who encourage cooperative learning and teamwork contribute to students' ability to negotiate and resolve disputes	97	272	21	10	3.14	.710	Agreed
29	Competent Social Studies lecturers integrate conflict resolution skills into classroom discussions and assessments	107	269	20	4	3.20	.741	Agreed

30 Overall, the competency of Social Studies lecturers99 277 19 5 3.18 .698 Agreed
plays a significant role in shaping students' ability to
handle conflicts constructively

Aggregate Mean

3.18

Accepted

Source: Field Survey (2025)

(N = 400)

Table 3 shows the responses of the respondents on Social Studies lecturers' competency influence students' conflict resolution skills in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria. From table 3, all items were agreed upon by the respondents. The aggregate mean score of 3.18 indicates that Social Studies lecturers' competency influenced students' conflict resolution skills in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: The Social Studies curriculum content has no significant impact in reducing social vices among students in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria.

Table 4: Summary of One Sample T-test on Social Studies Curriculum Content as an instrument in Reducing Social Vices

Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.	t	df	P
Curriculum Content and Social Vices among400 Students Scores	400	29.574	7.109	109.327	399	.000

Table 4 shows the opinion of Colleges of Education students towards the impact of Social Studies curriculum content as an instrument in reducing social vices among students. From the result, calculated t-statistic, t(109.327) is large in magnitude suggesting a meaningful difference. The p-value (.000) is less than 0.05, meaning that the result is statistically significant. The null hypothesis which stated no significant impact was rejected. Therefore, Social Studies curriculum content has significant impact in reducing social vices among students in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria.

H₀₂: Social Studies evaluation strategies have no significant effect on mitigating the problem of lack of empathy among students in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria.

Table 5: Summary of One Sample T-test on Social Studies Evaluation Strategies as an instrument in Addressing Problem of Lack of Empathy among Students

Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.	t	df	P
Evaluation Strategies and Lack of Empathy among Students Scores	400	26.493	8.725	104.581	399	.000

Table 5 shows the opinion of Colleges of Education students towards the effect of Social Studies evaluation strategies as an instrument to problem of lack of empathy among students. From the result, calculated t-statistic, $t(104.581)$ is large in magnitude suggesting a meaningful difference. The p-value (.000) is less than 0.05, meaning that the result is statistically significant. The null hypothesis which stated no significant effect was rejected. Therefore, Social Studies evaluation strategies have significant effect in mitigating the problem of lack of empathy among students in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria.

H₀₃: Social Studies lecturers' competency has no significant impact on students' conflict resolution skills in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria.

Table 6: Summary of One Sample T-test on Social Studies Lecturers' Competency as an instrument in Addressing Conflict Resolution Skills among Students

Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.	t	df	P
Social Studies Lecturers' Competence and Students Conflict Resolution Skills Scores	400	29.884	9.959	117.285	399	.000

Table 6 shows the opinion of Colleges of Education students towards the impact of Social Studies lecturers' competency as an instrument to conflict resolution skills among students. From the result, calculated t-statistic, $t(117.285)$ is large in magnitude suggesting a meaningful difference. The p-value (.000) is less than 0.05, meaning that the result is statistically significant. The null hypothesis which stated no significant impact was rejected. Therefore, Social Studies lecturers' competency has significant impact on students' conflict resolution skills in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The finding from hypothesis one that Social Studies curriculum content has a significant impact on reducing social vices among students in Colleges of Education in North-Central Nigeria suggests that the subject plays a vital role in promoting positive behavioural change. This result underscores the effectiveness of curriculum components such as civic education, conflict resolution, human rights, and moral instruction in shaping students' attitudes and responses to interpersonal challenges. By engaging with content that emphasizes empathy, tolerance, social responsibility, and non-violent communication, students are more likely to adopt constructive behaviours and reject aggression. The implication is that a well-structured Social Studies curriculum can serve not only academic purposes but also as a strategic tool for behavioural reformation and social cohesion in higher education institutions. The result aligns with the findings of Ezeoba (2019) who found that strategies such as incorporating cultural similarities, human rights, and conflict resolution topics, which are instrumental in promoting peaceful behaviours among students. Additionally, content of the Social Studies curriculum was found to foster positive value disposition among junior secondary students when fully delivered (Daboer & Umaru, 2021).

In the analysis of hypothesis four, it was found that Social Studies evaluation strategies have significant effect in mitigating the problem of lack of empathy among students in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria. This highlights the importance of assessment techniques in shaping students' social and emotional learning. When evaluation methods go beyond traditional testing and include reflective journals, group projects, peer assessments, role-plays, and scenario-based questions, they encourage students to put themselves in others' shoes and consider diverse perspectives. Such strategies not only assess academic understanding but also promote critical thinking, emotional awareness, and interpersonal sensitivity – key components of empathy. This result suggests that thoughtful and inclusive evaluation approaches in Social Studies can reinforce values of compassion, tolerance, and mutual respect, ultimately fostering more emotionally intelligent and socially responsible students. This is in line with Endacott and Brooks (2022) emphasize that evaluation strategies require both cognitive and affective engagement, enabling students to connect emotionally and intellectually with historical figures and events. Such engagement fosters a deeper understanding of different perspectives and cultivates empathetic attitudes. Jensen (2020) found that debate and role-playing are practical evaluation strategies that enhanced students' understanding of historical contexts and multiple viewpoints, key components of empathy.

The analysis of hypothesis five reveals that Social Studies lecturers' competency has significant impact on students' conflict resolution skills in Colleges of Education, North-Central Nigeria. This underscores the pivotal role of teacher effectiveness in shaping students' interpersonal abilities. Competent lecturers – those with strong subject mastery, emotional intelligence, communication skills, and the ability to model constructive behaviours – are better equipped to teach and demonstrate peaceful conflict resolution strategies. Through interactive teaching

methods, real-life case studies, and classroom mediation practices, skilled lecturers create environments where students learn to manage disagreements respectfully, negotiate differences, and value dialogue over confrontation. This result highlights the need for continuous professional development and capacity-building programmes for Social Studies lecturers to ensure they possess not only pedagogical expertise but also the interpersonal skills necessary to instill effective conflict resolution abilities in their students. Burić and Moè (2020) suggested that teachers with high emotional intelligence are more likely to manage classroom conflicts effectively and serve as role models for emotional regulation. Similarly, Thorsborne and Blood (2021) emphasized that when Social Studies lecturers implement restorative circles and mediation practices, students learn to voice their grievances respectfully and work collaboratively towards resolutions. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2019) found that teachers with higher self-efficacy are more proactive in addressing conflicts and more likely to engage students in constructive dialogue.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings collectively affirm that Social Studies plays a transformative role in shaping students' behaviour and social competencies in Colleges of Education in North-Central Nigeria. The curriculum content effectively reduces social vices, while well-designed evaluation strategies foster empathy among students. Most importantly, the competency of Social Studies lecturers significantly enhances students' conflict resolution skills. These results underscore the need for continuous curriculum enrichment, adoption of student-centred pedagogies, investment in quality teaching resources, strategic evaluation practices and professional development for lecturers to maximize the behavioural and civic outcomes of Social Studies education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following are recommended:

- i. The Social Studies curriculum should be enriched with topics and activities that promote emotional intelligence and anti-social vices.
- ii. Assessment methods should include reflective and interactive approaches that foster empathy and emotional understanding.
- iii. Continuous professional development should be provided to enhance lecturers' skills in teaching and modeling conflict resolution.

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