



SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION AND STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF THEIR FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS, KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined social studies curriculum implementation and students' awareness of their fundamental human rights in upper basic schools, Kogi State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised Upper Basic School students in Kogi State, from which 400 respondents were selected using a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Social Studies Curriculum and Human Rights Awareness Questionnaire (SSCHRAQ). The instrument was validated by experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.83. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson Product-Moment Correlation) at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that the Social Studies curriculum significantly enhances students' awareness of their human rights, including rights to education, equality, dignity, and participation. A significant positive relationship was also established between curriculum implementation and human rights awareness. The study concludes that Social Studies is an effective tool for promoting human rights education, although its effectiveness depends on teacher competence, pedagogical approach, and availability of instructional resources. Based on this fact, the study recommends improved teacher training, integration of participatory pedagogies, and strengthened curriculum implementation to enhance human rights awareness among students.

Keywords: Social Studies Curriculum; Human Rights Education; Students' Awareness

1.1 Background of the Study

Human rights education is a key component of global citizenship education aimed at promoting dignity, equality, justice, and respect for fundamental freedoms among learners (UNESCO, 2023; United Nations, 2022). It is based on the understanding that human rights are inherent entitlements of all individuals and that education systems should equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to recognise and defend these rights (Chimezie, 2023). In Nigeria,



human rights education is embedded within Social Studies and Civic Education curricula to promote democratic values, civic responsibility, and national consciousness among learners (NERDC, 2019; Federal Ministry of Education, 2022).

Despite these curriculum provisions, evidence suggests that students' awareness of human rights remains limited and often superficial. Studies indicate that although learners may have basic knowledge of rights, they frequently lack the depth of understanding required to apply or assert these rights in real-life situations (Mbata & MacAlex-Achinulo, 2023). This raises concerns about the effectiveness of curriculum implementation and the extent to which classroom teaching translates into meaningful human rights awareness.

In many Nigerian schools, the effectiveness of human rights education is constrained by inadequate instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, and teacher-centred teaching methods, which limit student engagement and participation (Ofoegbu, 2019; Yusuf & Salako, 2022). These challenges reduce the opportunity for learners to internalise human rights values effectively, resulting in a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical understanding.

Furthermore, issues such as child rights violations, discrimination, and weak civic engagement among young people suggest insufficient internalisation of human rights values in society (Obiagu & Nwaubani, 2020). In Kogi State, there is limited empirical evidence on how effectively the Social Studies curriculum enhances students' awareness of their human rights. This study therefore investigates the effectiveness of the Social Studies curriculum in promoting human rights awareness among Upper Basic School students in the state.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Although human rights education is integrated into the Social Studies curriculum in Nigeria, there remains a persistent gap between curricular objectives and students' actual awareness of their fundamental human rights. The curriculum is intended to develop learners' understanding of rights such as dignity, equality, freedom of expression, protection from abuse, and access to education. However, empirical evidence shows that many students still lack adequate understanding of these rights, suggesting that curriculum goals are not being fully achieved in practice (Nwatu et al., 2020; Mbada et al., 2025).

In addition, observable social realities indicate weak internalisation of human rights values among students, as reflected in cases of bullying, discrimination, poor civic engagement, and other forms of rights violations within school environments. These issues suggest that students may possess theoretical knowledge of human rights but cannot apply them in real-life situations, raising concerns about the effectiveness of teaching methods and curriculum implementation (Obiagu & Nwaubani, 2020).

The situation is further worsened by instructional challenges such as teacher-centred approaches, inadequate teaching resources, and overcrowded classrooms, which limit effective engagement with human rights concepts (Ofoegbu, 2019; Yusuf & Salako, 2022). Despite the importance of human rights education in promoting responsible citizenship, there is limited empirical evidence on its effectiveness in Upper Basic Schools in Kogi State. This study, therefore, investigates this gap.

1.3 Aim and Objectives



The aim of the study is to examine the effectiveness of social studies curriculum implementation on the students' awareness of their fundamental human rights in Upper Basic Schools in Kogi State. The study seeks to:

1. Examine the extent to which the Social Studies curriculum enhances students' awareness of their human rights.
2. Determine students' understanding of key human rights concepts.
3. Assess the relationship between curriculum implementation and human rights awareness.
4. Identify factors influencing the effectiveness of human rights education in Social Studies.

1.4 Research Questions

1. To what extent does the Social Studies curriculum enhance students' awareness of human rights?
2. What is the level of students' understanding of their fundamental human rights?
3. What is the relationship between curriculum implementation and human rights awareness?
4. What factors influence the effectiveness of human rights education in schools?

1.5 Research Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant relationship between Social Studies curriculum implementation and students' awareness of their human rights in Upper Basic Schools in Kogi State.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focused on the effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum implementation in enhancing students' awareness of their fundamental human rights among Upper Basic School students in selected public secondary schools in Kogi State, Nigeria. The study specifically examined students' awareness and understanding of human rights, the relationship between curriculum implementation and human rights awareness, and the factors influencing the effective delivery of human rights education.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum implementation in promoting students' awareness of their fundamental human rights in Kogi State. The findings will assist curriculum developers, educational policymakers, teachers, and school administrators in strengthening curriculum implementation, improving instructional practices, and enhancing human rights education, while also serving as a useful reference for future researchers in Social Studies and citizenship education.

2.1 The Students' Human Rights Awareness in Nigeria

Human rights awareness refers to the extent to which individuals understand, recognise, and are able to assert their fundamental rights. In Nigeria, human rights education has been linked to Social Studies instruction as a tool for developing reflective and responsible citizens (Chimezie, 2023; Mbata & MacAlex-Achinulo, 2023). Mbata and MacAlex-Achinulo (2023) argue that Social Studies provides a platform for teaching learners about dignity, equality, and legal protections, although implementation remains inconsistent across schools. Similarly, Obiagu and Nwaubani



(2020) found that while teachers possess some awareness of human rights content, pedagogical limitations hinder effective delivery.

Studies on secondary school students reveal varying levels of human rights awareness. Nwatu et al. (2020) found that students in Enugu State demonstrated moderate awareness of child rights provisions, though many lacked a deep understanding of enforcement mechanisms. Mbada et al. (2025) further reported that Nigerian undergraduates showed awareness of human rights concepts but struggled with practical assertion of rights due to socio-cultural constraints. The literature also highlights the role of Social Studies in promoting human rights awareness. Okunloye (2007) emphasised that the Social Studies curriculum integrates human rights concepts as part of citizenship education. However, Obiagu et al. (2020) and Ofoegbu (2019) noted that inadequate resources and teacher-centred methods reduce the effectiveness of human rights education.

Overall, the literature suggests that while human rights education is present in the Nigerian curriculum, its effectiveness in fostering deep awareness remains limited due to implementation challenges, socio-cultural influences, and inadequate instructional strategies.

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enables the collection of data from a representative sample of respondents to describe and interpret existing conditions without manipulating variables. It is particularly suitable for investigating perceptions, attitudes, and behavioural tendencies relating to the impact of the Social Studies curriculum on students' awareness of citizenship educational values in Upper Basic Schools in Kogi State, Nigeria (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.2 Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Kogi State, Nigeria, located in the North-Central geopolitical zone. The state is characterised by ethnic diversity, mixed socio-cultural practices, and a developing educational system. These features make it appropriate for examining citizenship education and civic awareness among Upper Basic School students.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population comprised all Upper Basic (Junior Secondary School) students in public secondary schools in Kogi State. These students are the target group for Social Studies curriculum implementation under the Nigerian Basic Education Curriculum framework (NERDC, 2019). The population is estimated to be large, distributed across the three senatorial districts of the state.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A total of 400 students were selected as the sample size for the study. The sample was considered adequate for generalisation based on statistical sampling adequacy for descriptive survey studies. A multistage sampling technique was employed as follows: the stratification of Kogi State into the three senatorial districts (Kogi East, Kogi Central, and Kogi West); the schools were randomly selected from each senatorial district; the proportionate sampling was used to ensure fair representation of students across selected schools, and the use of a simple random sampling technique in selecting individual respondents.

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection



Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled “Social Studies Curriculum and Citizenship Values Awareness Questionnaire (SSCCVAQ)”. The used instrument was divided into sections, which include Section A for demographic information of respondents, Section B for civic responsibility awareness, Section C for patriotism and national identity, Section D for curriculum implementation and effectiveness, and Section E representing Factors influencing learning outcomes. The questionnaire items were structured on a four-point Likert scale with Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree representing (1)

3.6 Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in Social Studies Education and Educational Measurement and Evaluation. Their observations and corrections were incorporated to ensure clarity, relevance, and adequacy of the items in measuring the intended variables.

3.7 Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's Alpha method. A pilot test was conducted on respondents outside the study area. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.83, indicating that the instrument was highly reliable for data collection.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire was administered directly to respondents with the assistance of trained research assistants. This ensured proper distribution, clarification of items where necessary, and a high return rate of completed instruments.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. In the use of descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions, and a benchmark mean of 2.50 was used for decision-making. While in Inferential statistics, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance, with the Decision rule of rejecting H_0 if $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ and accepting H_0 if $p\text{-value} \geq 0.05$

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The data collected were used strictly for academic purposes.

Results and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 400 Upper Basic School students participated in the study. The respondents comprised 210 males (52.5%) and 190 females (47.5%), indicating a fairly balanced gender distribution. With respect to class level, 120 students (30.0%) were in JSS1, 135 (33.8%) were in JSS2, and 145 (36.2%) were in JSS3, demonstrating adequate representation of students across the three Upper Basic levels and enhancing the reliability and generalisability of the study findings.

4.2 The Results of the Research Questions



4.2.1 Research Question one: To what extent does the Social Studies curriculum create awareness of students' human rights?

In Table 4.2.1, the study shows that social studies students are aware of their fundamental Human Rights inclusion in the Social Studies Curriculum with an average cluster mean of 3.37, indicating a high level of awareness of the students of the subject matter. However, students also agreed that Social Studies significantly contributes to their understanding of their fundamental rights such as education, dignity, expression, and protection from abuse in society.

Table 4.2.1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Students' Awareness of Human Rights through Social Studies Curriculum

Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Social Studies teaches me my right to education	400	3.52	0.61	Agreed
It explains my right to dignity and respect	400	3.41	0.66	Agreed
It teaches freedom of expression	400	3.18	0.74	Agreed
It teaches protection against abuse	400	3.36	0.68	Agreed
Average Cluster Mean = 3.37				

Source: Field Survey, 2026

4.2.2 Research Question 2: What is the level of students' understanding of human rights concepts?

The findings in Table 4.2.2 indicate that the students have a moderate understanding of their fundamental human rights in society, with a mean score of 3.02, which is slightly above the 2.50 benchmark. However, while students understand the basic concepts of the existence of their human rights in the social studies curriculum, their knowledge of institutions responsible for enforcing them is relatively weak.

Table 4.2.2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Students' Understanding of their Human Rights enshrined in the social studies curriculum

Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
I understand the meaning of human rights	400	3.25	0.7	Agreed
I know human rights are protected by law	400	3.1	0.75	Agreed
I can identify when my rights are violated	400	2.98	0.81	Agreed
I know institutions that protect human rights	400	2.76	0.84	Agreed
Average Cluster Mean = 3.02				

Source: Field Survey, 2026

4.2.3 Research Question 3: What factors influence the effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum?

In Table 4.2.3, the results show that the Factors Affecting Curriculum Effectiveness in class are positive, with the average mean score of 3.49, which is above the 2.50 benchmark, indicating that every factor that guarantees student understanding of their human rights was fully employed and discharged. However, all the factors show cluster mean values above the 2.50 benchmark, indicating that these factors enhance students' understanding of their fundamental human rights in the social studies curriculum.

Table 4.2.3: Factors Affecting Curriculum Effectiveness



Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Teacher effectiveness in discharging learning	400	3.62	0.59	Agreed
The availability and use of Instructional materials	400	3.49	0.64	Agreed
Large class size affects learning negatively	400	3.31	0.72	Agreed
Use of discussion and role play improves learning	400	3.54	0.63	Agreed
Total Average Cluster Mean = 3.49				

Source: Field Survey, 2026

4.3 Test of Hypothesis

4.3.1 Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between Social Studies curriculum implementation and students' awareness of human rights.

The findings demonstrate a substantial relationship between Social Studies curriculum implementation and students' awareness of their fundamental human rights. The study results in Table 4.3.1 show a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 benchmark. However, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted, indicating that there is a strong positive relationship between Social Studies curriculum implementation and students' awareness of human rights. These results also indicate that improved curriculum delivery leads to higher students' awareness of their fundamental human rights in the area.

Table 4.3.1: Pearson Correlation Analysis to show the relationship between Social Studies curriculum implementation and students' awareness of their human rights

Variables	N	r-value	p-value	Decision
Curriculum Implementation vs Human Rights Awareness	400	0.68	0.000	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2026

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that the Social Studies curriculum is effective in promoting awareness of human rights among Upper Basic School students in Kogi State. The high mean scores indicate that students are exposed to key human rights concepts such as the right to education, dignity, freedom of expression, and protection from abuse. This finding aligns with UNESCO (2023), which emphasises education as a major tool for promoting human rights awareness globally. The study further revealed that students possess a moderate understanding of human rights concepts, particularly in identifying violations and understanding enforcement institutions. This agrees with Nwatu et al. (2020), who found that students often have surface-level knowledge of human rights but lack a deeper institutional understanding. It also supports Mbada et al. (2025), who noted that awareness does not always translate into practical application.

The significant positive relationship between curriculum implementation and human rights awareness confirms that effective teaching of Social Studies enhances students' understanding of their rights. This supports Mbata and MacAlex-Achinulo (2023), who argued that curriculum effectiveness depends largely on implementation quality rather than content alone. Furthermore, the study established that teacher effectiveness, availability of instructional materials, and participatory teaching strategies significantly influence students' learning outcomes. This finding is consistent with Ofoegbu (2019) and Yusuf and Salako (2022), who identified poor teaching methods and inadequate resources as major barriers to effective curriculum delivery in Nigerian schools. Overall,



the study confirms that while the Social Studies curriculum is effective in creating awareness of human rights, its success is largely dependent on how it is implemented in the classroom environment.

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of the Study

The study found that the Social Studies curriculum significantly enhanced students' awareness of their fundamental human rights (Mean = 3.37), while students demonstrated a moderate understanding of human rights concepts (Cluster Mean = 3.02). The findings further revealed a strong positive relationship between Social Studies curriculum implementation and students' human rights awareness ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$). In addition, teacher effectiveness (Mean = 3.62), availability of instructional materials (Mean = 3.49), and the use of participatory teaching methods (Mean = 3.54) were identified as significant factors that enhanced students' understanding of their human rights, whereas large class size (Mean = 3.31) was found to constrain effective curriculum implementation.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the Social Studies curriculum is an effective instrument for enhancing students' awareness of their human rights in Upper Basic Schools in Kogi State, Nigeria. The curriculum provides learners with foundational knowledge of essential human rights and contributes positively to their understanding of dignity, equality, and civic responsibilities.

However, the effectiveness of the curriculum is largely dependent on the quality of its implementation. Where teaching is learner-centred, interactive, and supported with adequate instructional materials, students demonstrate higher levels of human rights awareness. Conversely, inadequate teaching resources, teacher-centred instructional methods, and overcrowded classrooms limit the extent to which students fully internalise human rights concepts. Therefore, while the curriculum is sound in design, its impact is constrained by implementation challenges within the school system.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government and educational authorities should organise regular training, workshops, and seminars for Social Studies teachers to enhance their competence in teaching human rights education using learner-centred approaches.
2. Schools should be equipped with relevant instructional resources such as textbooks, audio-visual materials, posters, and digital learning tools to facilitate effective teaching and understanding of human rights concepts.
3. Social Studies teachers should adopt interactive teaching strategies such as debates, role-play, simulations, and group discussions to encourage active student engagement with human rights issues.
4. The government should address overcrowding in classrooms by ensuring adequate recruitment of teachers and provision of more classrooms to improve teaching effectiveness.



5. Curriculum developers should strengthen the Social Studies curriculum by integrating practical human rights activities such as school-based civic projects and community engagement programmes.
6. Education authorities should intensify monitoring and supervision of Social Studies instruction to ensure proper implementation of human rights education objectives across schools.

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Authors' contributions

All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Data availability

No datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

Declarations

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Not applicable. This study did not involve human or animal subjects.

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