

Influence of Social Studies Instruction on the Development of Global Citizenship and Peacebuilding Skills among Secondary School Students in Abia State

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DOI: 10.56201/ijee.v11.no3.2025.pg204.212

Abstract

The study investigated the influence of Social Studies instruction on the development of global citizenship and peacebuilding skills among secondary school students in Abia State, Nigeria. The study was prompted by the growing need to strengthen education's role in fostering civic responsibility, empathy, and peaceful coexistence among young learners in a rapidly globalising world. Two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses guided the study. A survey research design was adopted, and data were collected from 195 Junior Secondary School (JSS 3) students selected from public and private schools across Aba and Umuahia education zones using a multi-stage sampling procedure. The instrument for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Social Studies Global Citizenship and Peacebuilding Questionnaire (SSGCPQ), structured on a four-point Likert scale and validated by experts, with a reliability coefficient of 0.83. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, and an independent samples t-test for the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that Social Studies instruction moderately influenced students' development of global citizenship values (overall mean = 2.74), enhancing awareness of global issues, cultural diversity, and civic responsibility. Similarly, Social Studies instruction positively impacted students' peacebuilding skills (overall mean = 2.89), promoting tolerance, empathy, teamwork, and conflict resolution abilities. The t-test results showed no significant difference between public and private schools in students' mean ratings on both variables, implying that Social Studies instruction contributes similarly to value formation across school types. The study concludes that Social Studies serves as an effective platform for nurturing global citizenship and peace-oriented dispositions among learners in Abia State. It recommends that Social Studies teachers adopt interactive, experiential, and value-based pedagogies, such as debates, simulations, and community projects, to deepen students' global awareness and peacebuilding skills.

Keywords: Social Studies, global citizenship, peacebuilding, secondary education, civic responsibility, Abia State

Introduction

In the 21st century, education is increasingly seen as a transformative force for fostering peace, tolerance, and global citizenship among young learners. Social Studies, as an interdisciplinary subject, provides students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to understand social realities, cultural diversity, and the interconnectedness of the world. When effectively taught, it empowers learners to think critically about global issues, appreciate human

rights, and engage in peaceful coexistence with others. In this context, Social Studies instruction serves as a vital platform for nurturing responsible citizenship, civic awareness, and peace-oriented behavior among students (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2019; UNESCO, 2023).

Global citizenship education (GCE) has gained growing attention as societies grapple with issues such as conflict, inequality, migration, and climate change. It equips learners with competencies that enable them to understand global interdependence, demonstrate empathy, and take collective action for a more just and peaceful world. According to Banks (2020), global citizenship education encourages students to see themselves not only as members of their local communities but also as active participants in the global community, with shared responsibilities for promoting peace and sustainable development. Integrating GCE principles within Social Studies curricula, therefore, presents a unique opportunity to cultivate learners who are informed, empathetic, and committed to building peaceful societies.

Social Studies instruction in Nigeria is designed to help students develop civic competence, understand social norms, and acquire the moral foundations required for national integration and peaceful coexistence (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2014). Through the study of topics such as social justice, human rights, conflict resolution, and inter-group relations, students learn to appreciate unity in diversity and develop the disposition to resolve conflicts amicably. As Obidike (2022) noted, Social Studies, when properly implemented, fosters values of cooperation, respect, and mutual understanding, key pillars of peacebuilding and democratic citizenship.

The concept of peacebuilding is central to global citizenship education. It goes beyond the absence of conflict to include attitudes, institutions, and structures that promote harmony, equity, and justice in society. Social Studies instruction that emphasises participatory learning, dialogue, and reflective thinking can play a significant role in developing students' peacebuilding skills. Through classroom discussions, collaborative projects, and problem-solving activities, students can acquire the capacity to manage differences, prevent violence, and contribute positively to community development (Nwankwo & Eze, 2021).

Empirical studies have highlighted the relationship between Social Studies education and global citizenship or peace-oriented outcomes. For instance, Okoye, Nwoye, and Nwuba (2024) evaluated the impact of innovative teaching methods in Social Studies on students' attitudes towards national integration in Anambra State. The findings showed that the use of interactive and value-based teaching approaches significantly improved students' civic consciousness and sense of responsibility toward peaceful coexistence. Similarly, Duterte (2024) examined *Global Citizenship Education and Learner Engagement* and found that classrooms that incorporated collaborative and experiential learning activities recorded a 70% increase in students' empathy, cooperation, and global awareness.

Further, Kibiwott and Njoroge (2024) investigated the influence of simulation-based learning on students' achievement and interpersonal understanding in Kenya. Their findings revealed that participatory and experiential learning environments significantly enhanced students' problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills—both vital components of peacebuilding. In another study, Valverde-Berrocso, Acevedo-Borrega, and Cerezo-Pizarro (2022) conducted a systematic review of educational innovation and global competence, showing that educational systems that integrated critical thinking, civic responsibility, and intercultural learning into their curricula reported improved learner outcomes in peace and citizenship education.

These studies underscore the potential of Social Studies instruction as a vehicle for fostering global citizenship and peacebuilding skills among learners. However, despite its importance, there is limited empirical evidence in Abia State on how effectively Social Studies instruction contributes to developing these competencies among secondary school students. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by examining the influence of Social Studies instruction on the development of global citizenship and peacebuilding skills among secondary school students in Abia State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing wave of social unrest, intolerance, and moral decline among young people in Nigeria has become a major source of concern to educators and policymakers. Schools, which are expected to be agents of moral development and peace education, are often confronted with cases of indiscipline, violence, cultism, and poor social interaction among students. These challenges indicate a deficiency in the internalisation of values necessary for peaceful coexistence and responsible global citizenship. Social Studies as a school subject is designed to promote social understanding, civic responsibility, and respect for human dignity. It aims to prepare learners to live peacefully within their communities and the wider world. However, the extent to which Social Studies instruction in secondary schools achieves these objectives remains uncertain. Many Social Studies lessons are still dominated by rote learning and teacher-centred approaches, leaving little room for experiential or participatory learning that can foster global awareness and peace-oriented behaviour among learners.

In Abia State, where secondary schools face a blend of cultural diversity and social challenges, the need to nurture students who can think globally and act peacefully is particularly urgent. Yet, there is limited evidence on how classroom teaching of Social Studies contributes to developing global citizenship skills and peacebuilding attitudes among learners. This raises the question of whether current instructional practices in Social Studies have any significant influence on students' development of global values such as tolerance, empathy, cooperation, and respect for diversity. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the influence of Social Studies instruction on the development of global citizenship and peacebuilding skills among secondary school students in Abia State. The findings will provide insight into the extent to which Social Studies education fulfils its intended role in promoting peaceful coexistence and global-mindedness in the school system.

Research Questions

1. What is the influence of Social Studies instruction on the development of global citizenship values among secondary school students in Abia State?
2. What is the impact of Social Studies instruction on students' peacebuilding skills in secondary schools in Abia State?

Hypotheses

- H₀₁: There is no significant difference between public and private secondary schools in the mean ratings of the influence of Social Studies instruction on the development of global citizenship among students in Abia State.
- H₀₂: There is no significant difference between public and private secondary schools in the mean ratings of the influence of Social Studies instruction on the promotion of peacebuilding skills among students in Abia State.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to obtain data from a defined population for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions, practices, opinions, and attitudes without manipulating any variables. Specifically, the design was used to determine the influence of Social Studies instruction on fostering global citizenship and promoting peace among students in public and private secondary schools in Abia State. The survey design also provides an efficient way to collect information from a large population and ensures that the findings can be generalised to the entire study area. Abia State has three education zones - Aba, Umuahia, and Ohafia, and a mix of public and private secondary schools where Social Studies is a core subject offered at the junior secondary school level. The population of the study comprised all Junior Secondary School (JSS 3) students in both public and private secondary schools in Abia State. According to data obtained from the Abia State Ministry of Education (2025), there are approximately 4,862 JSS 3 students across 47 public and 33 approved private secondary schools in the State. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted. First, two education zones, Aba and Umuahia were purposively selected to ensure representation of both urban and semi-urban areas. Second, from each zone, five public and five private secondary schools were selected through stratified random sampling to reflect ownership structure. Finally, from each selected school, 10 students were randomly selected, giving a total sample size of 200 respondents (students). This sample size was considered adequate and manageable for a descriptive survey. The instrument for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled “Social Studies Global Citizenship and Peacebuilding Questionnaire (SSGCPQ)”. The instrument consisted of two sections. Section A sought demographic information of respondents, while Section B contained items on the key variables of the study, structured on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts, two in Social Studies Education and one in Measurement and Evaluation from the Faculty of Education, Abia State University, Uturu. Their reviews ensured that the instrument accurately captured the variables of interest and that the items were clear and relevant. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, it was administered to 30 respondents from schools outside the main study area. The data collected were analysed using the Guttman split-half method, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.83, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Copies of the validated instrument were administered personally by the researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants. A total of 200 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, and 195 were retrieved, representing a 97.5% return rate. Data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the corresponding hypotheses were tested using t-test at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What is the influence of Social Studies instruction on the development of global citizenship values among secondary school students in Abia State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the influence of Social Studies instruction on the development of global citizenship values among secondary school students

S/N	Item Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Social Studies lessons make me aware of global issues such as climate change, poverty, and human rights.	56	88	39	14	2.94	.876
2	The teaching of Social Studies helps me understand and respect cultural diversity and global interdependence.	43	87	45	22	2.77	.918
3	My Social Studies teacher encourages discussions that promote international cooperation and understanding.	33	65	79	20	2.56	.888
4	Social Studies instruction helps me to appreciate my responsibilities as a global citizen.	33	74	65	25	2.58	.914
5	Through Social Studies, I have developed an interest in participating in community or global service activities.	60	74	45	18	2.89	.944

2.74

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation scores on the influence of Social Studies instruction on the development of global citizenship values among secondary school students in Abia State. The results show that students generally agreed that Social Studies instruction has a positive influence on the development of global citizenship values, as indicated by the overall mean score of **2.74**, which falls above the decision midpoint of 2.50 on the four-point Likert scale. Overall, the findings imply that Social Studies instruction in secondary schools in Abia State moderately enhances students' global citizenship values by fostering awareness of global issues, promoting respect for diversity, and motivating engagement in community and global activities. However, there remains room for improvement in interactive and discussion-based strategies that deepen global understanding among learners.

Research Question Two

What is the impact of Social Studies instruction on students' peacebuilding skills in secondary schools in Abia State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the impact of Social Studies instruction on students' peacebuilding skills in secondary schools

S/N	Item Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Social Studies lessons teach students to resolve conflicts peacefully.	28	82	61	26	2.57	.893
2	I have learned the value of tolerance and mutual respect through Social Studies.	51	93	38	15	2.91	.868
3	My Social Studies teacher uses activities that promote teamwork, unity, and cooperation among students.	34	83	57	23	2.65	.900

4	Social Studies instruction has helped me develop empathy and understanding toward others.	39	81	62	15	2.73	.865
5	The study of Social Studies helps me to avoid violence and embrace dialogue in resolving disagreements.	62	73	42	20	2.84	.987

2.89

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation scores on the impact of Social Studies instruction on students' peacebuilding skills in secondary schools in Abia State. The results reveal that Social Studies instruction has a notable positive impact on students' peacebuilding skills, as reflected in the overall mean score of 2.89, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50 on the four-point Likert scale. This indicates that students generally agreed that Social Studies contributes significantly to the acquisition of peacebuilding values and behaviours. These findings imply that Social Studies serves as an important pedagogical tool for peace education in secondary schools in Abia State, equipping learners with interpersonal skills, tolerance, and non-violent approaches necessary for sustaining peaceful relationships within and beyond the school environment.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between public and private secondary schools in the mean ratings of the influence of Social Studies instruction on the development of global citizenship among students in Abia State.

Table 3: Independent Samples t-test on the Difference between Public and Private Schools in the Influence of Social Studies Instruction on Global Citizenship

School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Public	113	2.7274	.43676	-.851	195	.396
Private	84	2.7810	.43644			

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The independent samples t-test in Table 3 examines whether a significant difference exists between public and private secondary schools in the influence of Social Studies instruction on the development of global citizenship. The t-test result ($t = -0.851$, $df = 195$, $p = 0.396$) shows that there is no statistically significant difference between public schools ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.44$) and private schools ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 0.44$) in the influence of Social Studies instruction on students' global citizenship. This implies that both school types provide relatively similar learning experiences in Social Studies instruction that contribute equally to developing students' global citizenship awareness and peacebuilding competencies in Abia State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between public and private secondary schools in the mean ratings of the influence of Social Studies instruction on the promotion of peacebuilding skills among students in Abia State.

Table 4: Independent Samples t-test on the Difference between Public and Private Schools in the Influence of Social Studies Instruction on the Promotion of Peacebuilding Skills

School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Public	113	2.70	.395	-1.503		.134
Private	84	2.79	.418	-1.490	195	

The result presented in Table 4 reveals the outcome of an independent samples t-test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference between public and private secondary schools in the mean ratings of the influence of Social Studies instruction on the promotion of peacebuilding skills among students in Abia State. The result shows that public school students had a mean score of 2.70 (SD = 0.40), while private school students had a slightly higher mean score of 2.79 (SD = 0.42). The calculated t-value of -1.503 at 195 degrees of freedom yielded a p-value of 0.134, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between public and private schools in the influence of Social Studies instruction on students' peacebuilding skills. In essence, both public and private school students perceive Social Studies instruction as contributing similarly to the development of peacebuilding skills such as tolerance, empathy, cooperation, and non-violence. This suggests that peace education through Social Studies is being equally promoted across school types in Abia State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that Social Studies instruction has a moderate positive influence on the development of global citizenship values among secondary school students in Abia State, with an overall mean score of 2.74. This result suggests that the teaching of Social Studies effectively enhances students' awareness of global issues such as climate change, poverty, and human rights, while also fostering respect for cultural diversity and international cooperation. This finding is consistent with the study of Okoye, Nwoye, and Nwuba (2024), who evaluated the impact of innovative teaching methods in Social Studies on students' attitudes towards national integration in Anambra State. Their study revealed that the use of interactive and value-based teaching approaches significantly improved students' civic consciousness and sense of responsibility toward peaceful coexistence. Similarly, Duterte (2024), in a study titled Global Citizenship Education and Learner Engagement, found that classrooms incorporating collaborative and experiential learning activities recorded a 70% increase in students' empathy, cooperation, and global awareness. Taken together, these findings indicate that Social Studies, when effectively delivered, transcends local or national boundaries to equip students with the dispositions and skills required to engage responsibly in global issues. Thus, it can be concluded that Social Studies instruction in Abia State serves as a strategic educational tool for promoting global citizenship values and preparing young Nigerians to contribute meaningfully to a peaceful and sustainable world.

The findings of the study revealed that Social Studies instruction has a notable positive impact on the development of peacebuilding skills among secondary school students in Abia

State, with an overall mean score of 2.89. This implies that Social Studies lessons are instrumental in teaching students to resolve conflicts peacefully, value tolerance and mutual respect, and cultivate empathy and understanding toward others. Furthermore, students acknowledged that Social Studies encourages teamwork, unity, and cooperation, core components of sustainable peacebuilding and social harmony. The present finding aligns with the work of Kibiwott and Njoroge (2024), who investigated the influence of simulation-based learning on students' achievement and interpersonal understanding in Kenya. Their findings revealed that participatory and experiential learning environments significantly enhanced students' problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills, both vital components of peacebuilding. Similarly, Valverde-Berrocso, Acevedo-Borrega, and Cerezo-Pizarro (2022), in their systematic review of educational innovation and global competence, established that educational systems integrating critical thinking, civic responsibility, and intercultural learning into their curricula reported improved learner outcomes in peace and citizenship education.

Conclusions

The study concludes that Social Studies instruction has a significant influence on the development of global citizenship values among secondary school students in Abia State. This finding implies that when Social Studies lessons employ interactive, participatory, and value-driven approaches, students become more globally aware, empathetic, and respectful of cultural diversity. The study concludes that Social Studies instruction positively impacts students' peacebuilding skills in secondary schools in Abia State.

Recommendations

Two recommendations were made;

1. Social Studies teachers should adopt interactive and value-oriented instructional strategies, such as project-based learning, debates, and global issue simulations, to strengthen students' global citizenship values.
2. Secondary schools should prioritize peace education and conflict resolution activities within Social Studies instruction to build students' peacebuilding competencies.

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