

Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers' Dispositions Towards Democratic Values and Political Involvement in Osun State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Democratic values among pre-service teachers play a key role in the future of democratic societies. The research thus examined the connection between the dispositions of pre-service Social Studies teachers and democratic values and the extent of their political involvement in Osun State, Nigeria. The research followed a correlational type of descriptive design. The study population was all the pre-service teachers of Social Studies in Osun State, Nigeria. The study sample was 400 pre-service teachers of Social Studies at four higher institutions in Osun State. A multistage sampling procedure was used for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 4 government-owned tertiary institutions in Osun State. Two hundred level students were selected by means of a purposive sampling technique. This study employed a simple random sampling method in the selection of 100 pre-service teachers in each of the four schools selected, thereby making 400 pre-service teachers in total. The study used one researcher-created and expert-validated scale, which was referred to as the Pre-service Social Studies Teachers Dispositions to Democratic Values and Political Involvement Scale (PSSTDDVPIS). The collected data were analysed using frequency, percentage, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation at the 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that the disposition towards democratic principles and political involvement of preservice Social Studies teachers scored well at 60.0%. The relationship between pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition and democratic value and political involvement in the area of study was significantly related ($r = 0.804$; $p < 0.05$). It was suggested, based on the findings, that among others, teaching Social Studies should be further instrumental in fostering positive dispositions to democratic ideals and political involvement among pre-service Social Studies teachers in Osun State, Nigeria.

Keywords: Democratic values, Social Studies pre-service teachers, Teachers' disposition, Political involvement

INTRODUCTION

Observations show that democracy is facing challenges in recent times; there are increasing reports of democratic recession and backsliding across advanced and developing countries [1,2]. In Nigeria, although democracy has not been well practiced since its adoption, it has receded to the barest minimum, with Nigeria described as a mixed regime with a score of 4.11 and rank of 107 in the 2021 Democracy Index [3]. Nigeria's democracy suffers from many issues, such as poor attitude to work, violations of human rights, corruption, extortion and bribery, and varying conflicts [4], and abuse of the separation of powers with rife electoral violence and malpractices. The seeming silence of the citizens on these democratic issues that hamper the enjoyment of the advantages of democracy (that is, economic development, human development, peace, and security) is more troubling [5].

Democratic values are the principles and ideals that underpin a democratic society, such as equality, liberty, justice, and self-governance. These values are often reflected in the laws, institutions, and practices of a democratic society. Democratic value is a factor of freedom, which encompasses both political and personal freedoms. Political freedom

allows individuals to articulate their views freely, take part in decision-making practices, and hold their leaders accountable [20]. Personal freedom ensures that individuals have autonomy over their own lives, allowing them to make choices without interference or coercion from others. These freedoms are essential for fostering a vibrant civil society where diverse perspectives can be expressed and debated.

Democratic values serve as a foundation for promoting social progress, fostering dialogue and compromise, and ensuring that power is distributed among different branches of government to prevent authoritarianism [6]. These issues could be connected to the poor implementation of democratic content and the dominance of rote learning in the Nigerian educational system. To impact citizens' democratic behaviours and effectively solve Nigeria's democratic issues through the teaching of democratic values in schools, the attitudes of citizens toward democratic values need to be ascertained [5].

Political involvement is a range of activities and behaviours that contribute to the political process, such as voting, campaigning, protesting, and running for office. These activities help to shape the policies and practices of the government. The term 'political involvement' refers to the voluntary acts taken by members of the public to either directly or indirectly affects public policy, including the selection of politicians. A few of these activities include voting in elections, endorsing political campaigns, contributing money to politicians or causes, interacting with decision-makers, protesting, lobbying, and collaborating with others regarding matters [21].

Political involvement is crucial in democracies because it gives citizens the ability to hold their elected officials accountable and shape national policy. Traditionally, people have participated in politics by joining political parties, casting ballots, going to political events, and corresponding with elected officials [7]. These forms of political involvement are believed to be necessary to the operation of democratic societies because they guarantee that citizens participate in crucial decision-making [8]. This offers a thorough examination of the variables influencing political involvement, together with insightful suggestions for resolving current issues. For academics, decision-makers, and activists interested in advancing inclusive and dynamic democratic processes in Nigeria, this is a valuable resource [9].

Nigeria's national development objectives, including poverty alleviation, economic expansion, and sustainable development, can be greatly aided by social studies. The curriculum needs to be in line with these objectives and concentrate on getting pupils ready for the future. Educating pupils on the value of responsible citizenship, civic involvement, and sustainable development is part of this [10]. The expertise, attitude, and abilities of Social Studies instructor determine the caliber of Social Studies instruction [11]. To ensure that educators in Nigeria acquire the pedagogical skills and subject-matter knowledge required to teach Social Studies, the importance of teacher preparation must be increased. This includes the application of creative teaching strategies and the capacity to encourage students' democratic principles and critical thinking [12].

The field of Social Studies in Nigeria continues to face several obstacles in spite of the efforts made to improve it. These difficulties include a lack of resources for instruction, a paucity of trained teachers, a lack of money, and few chances for professional growth. The quality of social studies instruction, as well as students' capacity to learn about democratic values and political involvement, may suffer as a result of these difficulties.

The future of democracy and sound governance in Nigeria is significantly impacted by the difficulties facing social studies. Students may lack the abilities and information necessary to effectively engage in the democratic process if they do not receive a high-quality education in these areas. This could lead to apathy, cynicism, and disengagement from civic life, which could have a severe impact on the country's future. While there are numerous issues affecting Social Studies in Nigeria, there are also several potential answers. Increasing educational financing, enhancing professional development and training for teachers, using creative teaching strategies, and providing sufficient teaching materials are some of these options. If these solutions are implemented, it is possible to advance the quality of Social Studies and ensure that students are prepared to participate in a democratic society.

Critical thinking is understood as an interdisciplinary method of thinking that cannot be confined to a single discipline and necessitates both cognitive and emotive qualities in itself. In actuality, critical thinking encompasses not only cognitive processes like sorting, analysis, classification, evaluation, problem solving, and decision making, but also affective traits like doubting, looking for evidence, being open-minded, and displaying patience [13,14]. Epistemological belief is a key idea that relates to people's tendencies toward critical thinking as well as how they view information and education.

Individual inclinations to act in a particular way are known as dispositions, which are predictable patterns of behaviour. Student learning, motivation, and development can be significantly impacted by the dispositions of teachers [15]. Students' experiences in the classroom are shaped by the values, attitudes, and beliefs of their instructors, and educators who genuinely care about the success and accomplishments of their students will go above and beyond to make their classrooms conducive to learning. Teachers with dispositions that are most conducive to learning for students exhibit traits like empathy, a positive self-perception, an optimistic perspective of others, authenticity, and a meaningful purpose and vision [15].

Disposition is the inherent mental and character traits of an individual. It is the unique combination of traits, attitudes, and behaviours that shape an individual's overall personality. Disposition plays a significant role in determining how someone perceives and interacts with the world around them, influencing their thoughts,

emotions, and actions. The role of pre-service educators in moulding the next generation of democratic citizens is vital. Their dispositions towards democratic values and political involvement are therefore of great importance [22,23].

Pre-service Social Studies teachers are individuals who are currently pursuing a degree in Social Studies and are not yet certified or licensed teachers. They are still in the process of training to become teachers. Pre-service teachers' dispositions towards democratic values and political involvement have significant implications for the future of democracy. [23] stated that despite the importance of pre-service teachers' dispositions towards political involvement, the literature also highlights some challenges and gaps in research. Limited studies have specifically focused on the dispositions of pre-service teachers from underrepresented communities. Additionally, there is a need for more longitudinal research to understand how these dispositions evolve over time and whether they translate into actual political engagement during their teaching careers. Bridging these gaps will give a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape pre-service educators' attitudes towards democratic values and political involvement. This is because no empirical studies have examined how pre-service Social Studies teachers' dispositions predict democratic values and political involvement in Osun State, Nigeria.

Teachers' interactions with pupils and their fellow educators are influenced by their moral character traits or dispositions. While interest has recently increased in "measuring to improve" teaching and teacher education, the majority of measures lack validating data for their practical applicability. Teachers' disposition has a vital role in forming the learning environment and learner outcomes. Students' enthusiasm, commitment, and sense of belonging can all be bolstered by a positive and encouraging attitude [16]. Furthermore, a teacher's personality can affect how well they are able to interact with pupils and establish trust, both of which can improve academic achievement and general well-being. The attitudes, convictions, and values of pre-service teachers that influence how they approach teaching and learning are referred to as their disposition. It includes their capacity to create a supportive learning environment in the classroom, their readiness to change and develop, and their dedication to the success of their pupils. For pre-service teachers, cultivating a positive outlook is essential because it affects how they connect with parents, coworkers, and students, which in turn affects how effective their teaching is overall.

Research demonstrates that people with strong political beliefs are more likely to participate in various forms of political activities, such as attending rallies, voting, or joining advocacy groups. Equally, studies suggest that educators who identify with a particular political ideology are more likely to incorporate their beliefs into their teaching practices, and could influence students' understanding of political engagement. Recently, there has been an increase in interest in understanding the relationship between Social Studies pre-service teachers' attitude and their political involvement, with few empirical reports.

[17] examined how service-learning shapes the political perspectives of pre-service teachers in the field of physical education? The results highlight the significance of political beliefs and ideologies, teacher education programmes, and contextual factors in shaping pre-service teachers' engagement in political activities. It has been observed that a lack of awareness is rampant among pre-service educators about how to teach democratic values and political involvement in a manner that is culturally pertinent to students in Nigeria. Misunderstanding prevails among pre-service teachers about the importance of teaching about democratic values and political involvement in a manner that is engaging and pertinent to students' lives. Hence, this study investigated the dispositions of pre-service Social Studies educators towards democratic values and political involvement, with the ultimate goal of improving their ability to promote these values in the classroom. This study aims to examine pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition to democratic values and political involvement in Osun State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive design of the correlational type. As a cross-sectional study, the study collected data from many individuals at a single point in time to establish the connection between the independent variable (pre-service teachers' disposition) and the dependent variable (democratic values and political involvement).

The target population consisted of the entire population of Social Studies pre-service teachers in Osun State, Nigeria. The reason why pre-service teachers of Social Studies were included is that they would be teaching Social Studies at a later stage or be involved in political affairs upon graduation. The research is limited to pre-service Social Studies teachers in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun College of Education, Ila-Orangun, Osun College of Education, Ilesa and Federal College of Education Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria.

The study sample was 400 pre-service teachers of Social Studies in four tertiary institutions of Osun State, Nigeria.

This was derived using using Cochran sample size formula ($n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$). A multistage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. At the first stage, four government-owned tertiary institutions in Osun State were selected through a purposive sampling technique. This is to make sure that it takes into account only the government-owned tertiary institutions that offer Social Studies programmes. At the second stage, students of 200-level were selected using a purposive sampling technique due to their exposure to certain democratic values and concepts of political involvement in the Social Studies curriculum. At the third stage, a simple random sampling method was

employed to select 100 pre-service teachers in the four schools that were selected. This study was carried out on 400 pre-service teachers.

The instrument that the researcher used to gather data in the study was the Pre-service Social Studies Teachers Dispositions to Democratic Values and Political Involvement Scale (PSSTDDVPIS). The PSSTDDVPIS consists of two parts, i.e., Section A and Section B. Section A had to elicit the demographic details of the respondents, and Section B had 14 structured projective rating scale items that were employed to assess pre-service Social Studies teachers' dispositions toward democratic values and political involvement. In specific terms, seven of the items in section B measured dispositions, while seven equally measured democratic values and political involvement. Social Studies experts have validated the instrument, and a value of 0.73 was achieved as the coefficient of reliability. Statistical Package for Social Science (IBM SPSS Version 27) was the software used to analyse the data. Based on the data obtained, the research question was analysed on the basis of frequency and percentages, and the hypothesis was tested on the basis of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) at the 0.05 level of significance after checking the normality assumptions.

Ethical consent: The participation of pre-service Social Studies teachers was voluntary as informed consent was obtained, and anonymity/confidentiality of their responses was assured.

RESULTS

Research Question: What is the pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition to democratic values and political involvement in Osun State?

To answer this research question, data collected on the 14 items on the pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition to democratic values and political involvement of Section C of the instrument were scored such that "Always" (A) response was allotted 3; "Sometimes" (S) response was allotted 2; and "Never" (N) response was allotted 1. The instrument has 14 items that were used to measure the pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition to democratic values and political involvement in the study area. Responses from individuals to each item were computed, and the minimum and maximum scores obtained in this scale were 14 and 42, respectively. Responses of the respondents considering the pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition to democratic values and political involvement on the scale 14-20 were adjudged as having "Poor Disposition". Responses of the respondents considering the pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition to democratic values and political involvement on the scale 21-29 were adjudged as having "Moderate Disposition". Responses of the respondents considering the pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition to democratic values and political involvement on the scale 30-42 were adjudged as having "Good Disposition". The summary of the results is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition to democratic values and political involvement

S/N	Disposition	Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Poor	14-20	33	8.3
2.	Moderate	21-29	127	31.7
3.	Good	30-42	240	60.0
Total			400	100.0

N = 400

Results in Table 1 show the descriptive analysis of the pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition to democratic values and political involvement in Osun State. It can be deduced from the Table that the pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition to democratic values and political involvement was good at 60.0% in Osun State.

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition and democratic values and political involvement in the study area.

In order to test this hypothesis, data collected on the pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition and democratic values and political involvement were subjected to the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistical tool. The result is presented in Table 2

Table 2: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) of the relationship between pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition and democratic values and political involvement in the study area

Groups	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Disposition	400	29.38	4.74			
DVPI	400	18.32	3.29		0.804	.001 Significant

(r = 0.804; p < 0.05)

Note: DVPI implies Democratic Values and Political Involvement

Results in Table 2 show that there was a significant relationship between pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition and democratic values and political involvement in the study area ($r = 0.804$; $p < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition and democratic values and political involvement in the study area is hereby rejected. The result implies that pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition predicts their democratic values and political involvement in the study area.

DISCUSSIONS

Results on the first objective showed that the pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition to democratic values and political involvement was good in Osun State. The result implies that Social Studies pre-service teachers have a good mindset towards democratic values and political involvement. It may be that they believe strongly that democratic values help in shaping values democratically and, as such, increase the level of participation. The outcome supports the conclusions reached by [14] when they looked at the degree to which pre-service teachers were instilled with democratic attitudes and ideals. According to their findings, pre-service teachers prioritized students' rights to an education above all else (that is, meeting students' needs at school, giving them the opportunities they need, and so on). This was then succeeded by the democratic principle of solidarity in student interaction (that is, students collaborating, instilling cooperation and communication between teacher and students, etc.). The liberty of the students (i.e., sitting on any desk that they desire, doing an examination when they prefer, and so on) was of least interest to pre-service teachers. This finding might be due to the feeling that allowing such a degree of student control would interfere with the overall structure of the classroom. There was an above-average level of the overall democratic ideals of pre-service teachers. This study has findings that are in line with other studies on the democratic values of pre-service teachers [18,19].

The results of the study on the second objective also indicated that pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition and democratic principles, and political involvement in the study area, showed a significant correlation. The outcome suggests that the disposition of the pre-service teachers of Social Studies is a great predictor of their democratic values and participation in politics. This indicates that the teachers are well enlightened, at least about democratic values and political involvement, which can be linked to the fact that they are convinced that democratic values are important in society, especially those who actually practice true federalism and democrats, and as such, motivate them to join politics. There are indeed reasons why political activity in Nigeria is a disadvantage, but it is the perception of these teachers that they will be able to accomplish the desired thing. The results confirm the findings of [14] in their study of the relationship between the democratic beliefs and critical thinking dispositions of pre-service teachers. They therefore explored the fact that critical thinking tendencies of pre-service teachers predicted the occurrence of democratic principles. The critical mindset, on the assumption that critical thinkers have a greater probability of sustaining democratic ideals, drew attention to critical consciousness as it was applied to developing a conception of democracy as it is applied to personal educational experience. Their study found that there exist high levels of association between democratic principles and critical thinking dispositions in pre-service teachers. In addition, the critical attitudes of pre-service teachers were predictors of democratic beliefs. Therefore, pre-service teachers might be helped by engaging in activities that increase their knowledge of critical thinking and democratic values.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings, the study concluded that pre-service Social Studies teachers' disposition to democratic values and political involvement was good. The pre-service Social Studies teachers have a good mindset towards democratic values and political involvement. It also revealed that teachers' disposition significantly predicts their democratic values and political involvement. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Social Studies Education Curriculum content of junior secondary school should give more emphasis on issues of democratic values and political involvement to boost students' morale on politics. By creating a curriculum that underlines how essential democratic principles are in schools.
- ii. Let pre-service teachers take part in community service programmes aimed at showing the significance of active citizenship.

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