



COMPARATIVE EFFECTS OF ROLE-PLAY AND SERVICE-LEARNING STRATEGIES ON STUDENTS' ATTITUDE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SOCIAL STUDIES IN MAKURDI EDUCATION ZONE

Timothy Gbindé

Augustine Tyohule Shamija

Felicia Ngoundu Garba

Department of Arts and Social Science Education

Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi

gbindetimothy5@gmail.com

shamijaa6@gmail.com

feliciagaruba7@gmail.com

Abstract

The study investigated the comparative effects of role-play and service-learning strategies on students' attitude and academic performance in Social Studies in Makurdi Education Zone. Two research questions guided the study while two null hypotheses were formulated and tested. The study employed quasi-experimental randomized design. The population was 3714 Upper Basic 2 students. The sample consisted of 186 (97 male and 89 female) upper basic 2 students. The instruments for data collection were Social Studies Attitude Scale (SSAS) and Social Studies Performance Test (SSPT). The instruments were validated by three experts while the reliability was carried out for SSPT and SSAS using Kuder-Richardson-20 and Cronbach Alpha. The reliability co-efficient of the two instruments yielded 0.89 and 0.978 respectively. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed there was a significant difference in student attitude ratings between the role-play and service-learning groups ($0.05 > p=0.000$) as well as there was no statistically significant difference in academic performance between the two teaching methods ($p=0.215 > 0.05$). The study recommended that teachers should incorporate the teaching method that showed a greater positive impact on attitudes, such as role-play or service-learning, depending on the Social Studies topic(s) and also teachers should consider integrating a combination of role-play and service-learning strategies to balance attitude development with academic performance, thereby maximizing overall student engagement and learning outcomes.

Keywords: Role-play, service strategy, attitude, academic performance, and Social Studies.

Introduction

Education serves as a fundamental pillar for the development of individuals and society at large. It is broadly defined as the process of facilitating learning, acquiring knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits through various formal and informal methods (UNESCO, 2021). Education equips individuals with the tools necessary to navigate the complexities of life, contribute meaningfully to their communities, and drive societal progress. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023), education is a multifaceted concept, encompassing its importance for individual development, economic growth, and social cohesion.

Social Studies is one of the subjects taught in Nigeria schools aim at developing informed, responsible, and active citizens. Social Studies is an interdisciplinary field that draws from subjects like History, Geography, Government, and Economics to help students understand societal structures, cultural diversity, and civic responsibilities. Adeyemi and Uzoma (2021) observe that Social Studies education significantly contributes to the character development of citizens. They further assert that the subject helps students develop competencies to solve and manage socio-economic and physical challenges effectively. The philosophy of Social Studies emphasizes fostering well-informed, responsible citizens who can critically analyze social issues and contribute positively to their communities (Garcia & Nguyen, 2022). Baker and Smith (2021) emphasize how effective Social Studies education can change individuals' attitudes in society. They observe that the current generation is not only intellectually capable but also practically oriented, enabling them to shift from negative attitudes to positive ones. On the other hand, many students have negative attitudes toward the teaching of Social Studies because they feel that the subject is only for those intending to become teachers. Others believe that the subject is only suitable for weak students, which further discourages engagement and create various kind of attitude.

Attitude toward Social Studies significantly impacts students' participation and academic performance. According to Ajayi (2019), a positive attitude fosters curiosity and a

willingness to explore social issues, whereas a negative attitude results in lack of interest and poor performance. Oladele (2020) notes that students' perceptions are shaped by instructional methods, classroom environment, and the relevance of Social Studies to their lives. Nwoke (2021) highlights that fostering a positive attitude requires deliberate efforts from teachers to create engaging and meaningful learning experiences that connect social concepts to students' everyday experiences. Students expect Social Studies teachers to use appropriate instructional strategies that would arouse their positive attitudes and increase their academic performances, especially when methods like role-play and service learning are employed. Supporting this, Eze (2020) and Chukwu (2018) found significant improvements in students' attitude ratings when role-play and service learning were incorporated into Social Studies lessons. When teachers fail to use appropriate instructional strategies, students' academic performance tends to stagnate or decline. Academic performance increases when students' involvement in learning activities captures their interest and motivates them to learn.

Academic performance refers to the total scores a student gains from participating in Social Studies, representing the measurable outcomes of educational activities that reflect how well students learn and apply their knowledge, skills, and competencies. According to Nworgu (2018), academic performance is the level of achievement attained by students in their academic endeavors, often evaluated through assessments and grades that demonstrate their understanding and mastery of the curriculum. For students to attain higher levels in life, they must first pass all their subjects offered at upper basic school level. The teacher's role is vital because the teaching strategies employed directly influence the attitude students develop toward the subject. Effective instructional strategies can motivate students, foster positive attitudes, and enhance their academic performance. Therefore, the teaching and learning process of Social Studies in modern society require innovative approaches such as role-play and service learning, which could create positive student attitudes and improve academic performance. Students are more eager to learn when teachers utilize suitable strategies that

engage them actively.

This study is concerned with whether role-play or service learning can create positive attitudes and improve academic performance in Social Studies. Role-play, as one of the modern trends in teaching Social Studies, will allow students to engage in hypothetical situations by adopting various roles. To support this, Igwe and Onyekwere (2024) found that role-play significantly enhanced students' attitudes toward Social Studies, fostering empathy and a better understanding of social dynamics. They highlight the need to adopt modern teaching strategies that involve students actively in learning activities rather than passive reception of information. Similarly, Adebayo and Bolaji (2019) demonstrated that students involved in role-playing scored higher in assessments than those taught through conventional methods. On the other hand, another innovative teaching strategy that could boost learning habits and improve scores is service learning. Service learning will integrate community service with academic learning, enabling students to apply classroom knowledge to real-world situations. It enhances academic outcomes by fostering practical problem-solving skills and critical thinking (Okafor & Bello, 2024). Using this approach, where students interact with learning materials and community projects, creates permanent experiences—"seeing is saying to be believing," and touching and playing create lasting impressions. Okafor and Bello (2024) found that students who participated in service learning projects developed a stronger sense of civic responsibility and displayed more enthusiasm for the subject.

Recent statistical data on the performance of students in Social Studies in Nigeria reveal mixed outcomes. According to the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE, 2022), only 40% of students who sat for the Social Studies examination achieved a pass grade. This figure indicates a decline from the previous year, where the pass rate was 68%. Furthermore, the analysis results of 2023 showed that 45% of candidates passed the Social Studies examination, with many students failing to meet the minimum required marks for a credit pass (BECE, 2023). Such fluctuations in academic performance and students' attitudes toward Social Studies could be

attributed to various factors, including teaching strategies. The researcher observed with dismay that many studies of this nature have been conducted in other states like Cross River and Ogun. The previous reviews used different methodologies, concepts, and focus concerning the use of innovative teaching strategies to improve academic performance and enhance students' attitudes. This has created a gap of interest in this present research in Benue State.

Statement of the Problem

Social Studies is a core subject in Nigerian secondary schools. It is aimed at equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary for responsible citizenship. However, research and observations have shown that students' attitudes toward the subject are often negative, as some students engage in cultism, examination malpractice, and texting on their handsets while in class, leading to poor academic performance and graduation without truly understanding how to contribute to society. Traditional teaching methods such as lectures and rote memorization may have contributed to students' lack of engagement in the subject. Consequently, there is a growing need to adopt more innovative instructional strategies that can enhance students' learning experiences and outcomes.

Role-play and service learning have been identified as promising strategies that actively engage students and provide real-world learning experiences. However, their impact on students' attitudes and academic performance in Social Studies has not been extensively studied in the Nigerian context, particularly in Benue State. This study sought to address these gaps by investigating the effects of role-play and service learning strategies on students' attitudes and academic performance in Social Studies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of role-play and service-learning strategies on students' attitudes and academic performance in Social Studies in Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the mean difference of students' attitude ratings in Social Studies between role-play and service-Learning strategies in

Makurdi Education Zone in Benue State.

- 2 . Ascertain the mean difference of students' academic performance in Social Studies between role-play and service-learning strategies.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- 1 . What is the mean difference of students' attitude ratings in Social Studies between role-play and service-Learning strategies in Makurdi Education Zone in Benue State?
- 2 . What is the mean difference of students' academic performance in Social Studies between role-play and service-learning strategies?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significant;

- 1 . There is no significant mean difference of students' attitude ratings in Social Studies between role-play and service-Learning strategies in Makurdi Education Zone in Benue State.
- 2 . There is no significant mean difference of students' academic performance in Social Studies between role-play and service-learning strategies.

Method

The study adopted a nonequivalent groups of quasi-experimental design. Nonequivalent quasi-experimental design is a research methodology that allows the researcher to determine the difference in intervention when the two strategies are used. This design is relevant to the study because role-play and service learning are two teaching strategies that would enable the researcher to measure the outcomes between experimental groups. The study comprised two groups: one experimental group received treatment involving role-play, while the other was taught using a service learning strategy. The population of this study consisted of 3,714 Upper Basic 2 students, as reported by the State Universal Basic Education Board (2024). The sample size was 186 students. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed: first, purposive sampling was used to select one school

from Fiidi ward and another from Central South Mission ward. The two intact classes were selected from Fiidi and Central South Mission Wards. Also, the role-play teaching strategy was implemented in Gaadi Comprehensive Secondary School Makurdi, a school in Fiidi ward, while service learning was implemented in Government Secondary School Makurdi, a school in Central South Mission Ward. The researcher employed the services of classroom teachers as research assistants, who were trained for four weeks on the methodology of the instruments. These teachers were experts in Social Studies and had taught for three or more years in these selected schools.

Prior to the intervention, both experimental groups received pre-tests using the Social Studies Attitude Scale (SSAS) and the Social Studies Performance Test (SSPT) to establish baseline measures. The two topics of Social Studies used were family and marriage. The topics were chosen based on Upper Basic Two, and they are appropriate for these classes. The students were already familiar with the topics from their home and school environments. The researcher aimed to find out if these students, during the treatment period, would explore all possible ways to understand the roles of father, mother, and others in society, as well as the types of marriage and the effects of divorce and separation on members of society. At the end of the intervention, both groups were administered post-tests using the same instruments: SSAS and SSPT. The SSAS consisted of 20 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1), while the SSPT was adopted from past BECE examination question papers and comprised 20 structured multiple-choice items covering family and marriage topics in Social Studies.

The instruments and instructional packages (lesson plans) were validated by two experts in Social Studies from the Department of Art and Social Sciences Education and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation, all from Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. The reliability coefficients of the instruments were 0.78 for SSAS and 0.88 for SSPT, determined through Cronbach's Alpha and Kuder-Richardson 20, respectively. These coefficients were considered adequate for the instruments to be administered, as they are above 0.50.

Data analysis involved calculating means and standard deviations to answer the research questions. Additionally, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to test the null hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05. This statistical approach helped control for potential

pre-test differences and provided more accurate estimates of the treatment effects.

Results and Discussion

Analysis and interpretation of data was done in line with the research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question 1: What is the mean difference of students' attitude ratings in Social Studies between role-play and service-Learning strategies in Makurdi Education Zone in Benue State?

Table 1: Mean Difference and Standard Deviation Scores of Students' Attitude Ratings in Social Studies between Role-Play and Service-Learning Strategies in Makurdi Education Zone in Benue State

Variable	Strategy	N	Pretest		Post-test		Mean Gain
			$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	
Attitude	Role-Play	108	19.91	7.69	72.41	9.28	52.50
	Service Learning	78	19.14	7.14	47.50	15.52	28.36
	Mean Difference	186					24.14

Table 1 results show the mean difference and standard deviation scores of students' attitude ratings in social studies between role-play and service-learning strategies in Makurdi Education Zone in Benue State. The mean score for the pretest was 19.91, while at post-test it increased to 72.41, with standard deviations of 7.69 and 9.28 for role-play, respectively. The pretest score for service learning was 19.14, rising to 47.50 at post-test, with standard deviations of 7.14 and 15.52, respectively. The results further indicate that the mean gain for role-play was 52.50, which is higher than the 28.36 gain observed in the service-

learning strategy. The mean difference of 24.14 favors role-play. The implication of this result shows that role-play has a more significant positive impact on students' attitudes toward social studies compared to service-learning. This implies that incorporating role-play strategies in social studies instruction in Nigeria could enhance students' engagement, interest, and positive attitudes toward the subject. Improving attitude is crucial for fostering active learning and better understanding of social studies content, which can contribute to national development by cultivating informed and participative citizens.

Research Question 2: What is the mean difference of students' academic performance in Social Studies between role-play and service-learning strategies?

Table 2: Mean Difference and Standard Deviation of Students' Academic Performance in Social Studies between Role-Play and Service-Learning Strategies

Variable	Strategy	N	Pretest		Post-test		Mean Gain
			$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	
Performance	Role-Play	108	21.81	5.74	43.10	3.63	21.29
	Service Learning	78	24.42	7.42	42.42	1.53	17.93
	Mean Difference	186					3.36

Table 2 presents the comparative analysis of students' academic achievement in social studies under role-play and service-learning approaches in Makurdi Education Zone, Benue State. Initially, the pretest mean score was 21.81, which increased to 43.10 after the intervention, with standard deviations of 5.74 and 3.63 for role-play, respectively. For the service-learning method, the pretest mean was 24.42, and it rose to 42.42 at post-test, with standard deviations of 7.42 and 1.53, respectively. The average improvement for the role-play group was 21.29 points, slightly higher than the 17.93 points gained through

service-learning. The overall mean difference of 3.36 favors the role-play approach. The implication of the result implies that role-play strategies can lead to better academic performance in social studies among Makurdi students. Implementing more interactive and participatory teaching methods like role-play could enhance students' understanding and attitude of social studies concepts. This, in turn, may contribute to improved educational outcomes across Nigeria by making learning more engaging and effective.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant mean difference of students' attitude ratings in Social Studies between role-play and service-Learning strategies in Makurdi Education Zone in Benue State.

Table 3: ANCOVA analysis of significant Mean difference of Students' Attitude Ratings in Social Studies between Role-play and Service Learning strategies

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	31895.837 ^a	14	2278.274	16.251	.000
Intercept	79135.595	1	79135.595	564.479	.000
Strategies	13626.168	1	13626.168	97.196	.000
Preattitude	3798.675	13	292.206	2.084	.017
Error	23972.899	171	140.192		
Total	769985.000	186			
Corrected Total	55868.737	185			

a. R Squared = .571 (Adjusted R Squared = .536)

Table 3 shows ANCOVA analysis of significant mean difference of students' attitude ratings in social studies between role-play and service learning strategies. The result revealed a significant difference in attitude ratings ($p = .000$) based on the teaching strategy employed. The

effect of the strategy was significant, indicating a difference between the role-play and service-learning groups. Further, student pretest attitude was also a significant factor ($p = .017$), suggesting that initial attitudes influenced the outcome. The null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant mean difference of students' academic performance in Social Studies between role-play and service-learning strategies.

Table 4: ANCOVA analysis of significant Mean difference of students' academic performance in Social Studies between Role-play and Service-Learning strategies

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	131.467 ^a	20	6.573	.734	.787
Intercept	26255.631	1	26255.631	2930.478	.000
Strategies	13.864	1	13.864	1.547	.215
pretest	110.600	19	5.821	.650	.863
Error	1478.318	165	8.960		
Total	342606.000	186			
Corrected Total	1609.785	185			

a. R Squared = .082 (Adjusted R Squared = -.030)

The ANCOVA analysis in Table 4 indicates that there is no significant difference in students' academic performance in Social Studies between the role-play and service-learning strategies, as evidenced by the p-value of .215, which is well above the conventional significance threshold of .05. The model explains only about 8.2% of the variance in performance ($R^2 = .082$), and the adjusted R^2 is negative (-.030), suggesting that the model does not effectively account for differences in scores beyond chance. The significant intercept ($p = .000$) reflects the baseline level of performance but does not relate to the effectiveness of the strategies. Both the strategy variable and the pretest scores, which serve as covariates, are not significant predictors (p -values = .215 and .863, respectively), indicating that neither the type of strategy nor prior knowledge significantly influences post-test performance when controlling for pretest scores. The null hypothesis was not rejected, confirming that there is no statistically significant difference in academic performance between the two teaching methods.

Discussion

The findings established that there was a significant difference in student attitude ratings between role-play and service-learning groups in

Makurdi Education Zone. The finding of Eze (2020) agreed there was significant improvement in the mean attitude ratings of students who participated in role-play activities compared to those taught through traditional lectures. Chukwu (2018) support the previous finding, revealing that those who engaged in community service (service learning) as part of their Social Studies education had higher mean attitude ratings than their counterparts who did not participate in these activities. Also, the study of Igwe and Onyekwere (2024) agreed that role-play significantly enhanced students' attitudes toward Social Studies, fostering empathy and a better understanding of social dynamics. The implications of these findings extend beyond the classroom; positively influencing students' attitudes can lead to the development of socially conscious and empathetic individuals who are better prepared to contribute meaningfully to society. When students develop favorable attitudes toward social issues, they are more likely to participate actively in community development and civic responsibilities, fostering societal progress. Moreover, promoting engaging and attitude-enhancing instructional strategies can help reduce social apathy and indifference, ultimately contributing to a more cohesive and responsible society. These results underscore the

importance of adopting teaching approaches that prioritize attitude development, as this can have far-reaching effects on societal well-being by nurturing responsible, empathetic citizens.

The findings showed that there was no statistically significant difference in academic performance between the two teaching methods. The finding disagrees with Adebayo and Bolaji (2019), who discovered that students involved in role-playing scored higher on assessments than those using service-learning strategies. These results imply that while role-play may be more effective in improving students' attitudes and engagement with Social Studies, both strategies are equally viable in terms of academic achievement, suggesting that educators can choose either method based on their specific learning goals and contexts. Additionally, the emphasis on attitude enhancement highlights the importance of interactive and participatory teaching methods in fostering positive student perceptions, which could translate into increased motivation and lifelong interest in Social Studies. These results imply that while role-play may be more effective in improving students' attitudes and engagement with Social Studies, both strategies are equally viable in terms of academic achievement. This suggests that educators can select either method based on their specific learning objectives and the needs of their students.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that while there is a significant difference in student attitude ratings favoring one teaching method over the other, both role-play and service-learning equally support students' academic performance. This suggests that although these methods may differently influence students' perceptions and attitudes towards learning, they are similarly effective in promoting academic achievement. Consequently, educators can choose either approach based on their specific goals, knowing that both can deliver comparable academic results but may differently impact students' attitudes.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, it was recommended that:

1. To enhance students' attitudes toward Social

Studies, teachers should incorporate the teaching method that showed a greater positive impact on attitudes, such as role-play or service-learning, depending on the Social Studies topic(s).

2. Since both methods are equally effective academically, teachers should consider integrating a combination of role-play and service-learning strategies to balance attitude development with academic performance, thereby maximizing overall student engagement and learning outcomes.

References

- Adebayo, O. O., & Bolaji, A. (2019). Impact of role-play method on students' achievement in Social Studies. *International Journal of Education and Development*, 7(2), 45-52.
- Adeyemi, O., & Uzoma, U. (2021). Social Studies Education and character development of Nigerian students. *Journal of Social Studies Education*, 12(3), 89-105.
- Ajayi, O. (2019). Influence of attitude on Social Studies achievement among secondary school students. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Psychology*, 17(2), 124-131.
- Baker, P., & Smith, R. (2021). Changing attitudes through Social Studies Education: A review of effective strategies. *International Journal of Civic Education*, 9(4), 233-250.
- Chukwu, T. (2018). Enhancing social studies learning through participatory methods. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 10(1), 67-82.
- Eze, L. (2020). Effects of role-play and service learning on students' attitudes toward Social Studies. *African Journal of Educational Research*, 14(2), 150-165.
- Garcia, M., & Nguyen, T. (2022). Philosophy of Social Studies Education: A global perspective. *International Journal of Education Philosophy*, 8(3), 112-128.
- Igwe, O., & Onyekwere, C. (2024). Role-play and social dynamics: Impact on student attitudes in social studies. *Journal of Modern Teaching Strategies*, 15(1), 45-60.

- Nwoke, C. (2021). Strategies for fostering positive attitudes in Social Studies Education. *Educational Review Journal*, 18(4), 276-290.
- Nworgu, B. (2018). Educational assessment and measurement. In *Educational Research and Evaluation* (pp. 102-124). Nsukka: University Trust Publishers.
- OECD. (2023). Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators. OECD Publishing.
- Okafor, C., & Bello, G. (2024). Community-based projects and student academic performance in Social Studies. *Journal of Community Engagement and Education*, 9(2), 97-115.
- UNESCO. (2021). Education: A fundamental driver of development. UNESCO Publishing.