

**COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD AND JUNIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This exploration was a quasi-experimental study which was aimed to investigate the effect of Cooperative Learning Method (CLM) on the Junior Secondary School (JSS) Students' Attitude towards Socially Acceptable Behaviours in Port Harcourt Local Government Area(LGA) of Rivers State, Nigeria. A sample of 240 JSS II students constituted the sample of this study. A validated 10-item instrument titled Students' Attitudes Towards Socially Acceptable Behaviour Scale (SATSABS) was used for data collection. The reliability of SATSABS was found to be  $r = 0.76$ . One research question and one hypothesis guided the study. The experimental group was taught using the cooperative learning method whereas the control group was taught using the lecture method. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question whereas analysis of covariance was used to test the hypothesis at .05 alpha level. The findings showed that students who were taught using cooperative learning method improved in learning more than their counterparts who were taught using lecture method. Furthermore, there was a significant difference in attitude towards socially acceptable behaviours between students taught with CLM and those taught with Lecture Method in favour of CLM. It was recommended among others that teachers should endeavour to adopt CLM in their teaching of students in the junior secondary schools as this has been proven to improve their attitude towards socially acceptable behaviours.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Cooperative learning method, junior secondary students', attitude, socially acceptable behaviours*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1994) sees cooperative learning as a method of teaching where students of different levels of ability work together in small groups to attain group goals that cannot be obtained by working alone or competitively. Its activities enhance active learning as a social activity that provides opportunities for students to simultaneously improve their knowledge, skill, attitude etc. (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Kagan, 1990). Ellis (2009) noted that the idea of

cooperative learning strategy “is...to ensure that each student in a cooperative learning group of, say three students is responsible for peer teaching his or her companions a portion of the material that they all need to learn”. The teacher’s role in this instructional method is to specifically act as a consultant, mediator, facilitator and planner who among other things, ensures an academically and socially supportive environment where students use their inherent or learned skills to effectively play their roles.

Cooperative learning is important in helping junior secondary students acquire from the curriculum the basic cooperative attitudes and values requisite for their independent thinking both inside and outside the classroom. It actively engages students in the learning process and seeks to improve their critical-thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, cooperative learning method advocates the de-emphasis on the competitive, teacher-centered and examination oriented methods prevalent in our educational system for the cooperative and group learning, where junior secondary students transform from mere passive to active recipients who are able to muster the right attitude that should help them in terms of discovering knowledge (Brown&Ciuffetelli, 2009). Therefore, instructional delivery method aids in students acquisition of attitudes that influences their acceptance or rejection of social norms and values that will stimulate the entire educational system.

Borich (2011) noted that cooperative learning in stills in today, junior secondary students important behaviours which expectedly prepare them for rational reasoning and success during adulthood. These behaviours include attitudes and values, pro-social and alternative perspective and viewpoints which enhance students learning and knowledge beyond that from books, newspapers, magazines and television. Consequently, lasting attitudes and values are formed through social interaction and discussions that emphasise on the harmonious exchange of acquired information and knowledge with others. This exchange shapes students views and perspectives by turning cold and lifeless facts into feelings that permeate into their attitudes and values, as an important outcome of schooling, which provides the framework for guiding actions that take a longer time outside the classroom setting (Borich, 2011).

Similarly, Burbules and Bruce (2001) reiterate that cooperative learning promotes independent thinking among the interacting agent (whether among teacher-student, student-student or family members). The actualization of this is hinged on the teacher moderated groups complementary sharing a common purpose and task during interactions that ought to help students become more self-reflective and performance sensitive. It is important to state that teacher monitoring, collaboration and intervention with the group at critical junctures could sometimes evoke emotions and attitudes that are counterproductive to group goals.

However, the acquisition of socially acceptable behaviours helps student develop the personality, attitudes, values and abilities that enable them to cope with and communicate the right learning on family, friends and the community. Despite the inconsistencies, contradictions, irrelevant, overly dramatic, and superficial appendages which sometimes impede the exploration and integration of the singular, coherent and consistent views that enhances students’ academic achievement (Bransford, Brown & Corking, 2000), and improves their critical thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving skills (Borich, 2011 citing Greeno, 2006 and Jacobs, Power & Loh, 2002). Thus

cooperative learning provides the context where alternatives and different viewpoints can be orchestrated to form more articulate attitudes and values that crystallise growth and self-directed inquiry.

Therefore, cooperative learning can provide the ingredients for higher thought processes and set them to work on realistic and adult-like tasks. This undoubtedly, facilitates the role of the classroom as an important vehicle for bolstering home and community values including modeling appropriate social behaviours that leads students even during adult life, where expectedly, they are to grapple with new and emerging life challenges in a productive, reasonable manner and integrated sense of self (Burbules & Bruce, 2001). This is the crux of the matter.

### **Statement of the problem**

Education as a dynamic process of social change thrives on the continued evaluation and identification of instructional delivery methods that will help both teachers and students complementarily acquire and inculcate knowledge, skills, attitudes and values towards educational enhancement and societal transformation. However, the over-reliance on any method (like Lecture method) which tend to advantageously situate and project either of the players (teachers and students) begets an instructional delivery method unable to instil on its products the capacity to proffer solutions to the dynamic educational problems and the evolving societal changes.

Consequently, educationists are faced with the challenge of reforming from the age-long traditional teacher-centered method of teaching which is mainly expository to the interactive or learner-centered method where both teachers and students become active participants in the learning process. It is based on the foregoing that this study investigates the efficacy of cooperative learning method in enhancing junior secondary students' attitude towards socially acceptable behaviours in Rivers State, Nigeria. With a view at inculcating the right knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that could stimulate socially acceptable norms in junior secondary students.

### **Aim and objectives of the study**

Specifically, the purpose of this study was to:

1. Determine the extent students taught with Cooperative Learning Method (CLM) differ in their attitude towards socially acceptable behaviours from those taught with Lecture Method (LM) (Control group).

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent do students taught with Cooperative Learning Method (CLM) differ in their attitude towards socially acceptable behaviours from those taught with Lecture Method (LM) (Control group)?

### **Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis guided the study:

1. There is no significant difference in attitude towards socially acceptable behaviours between students taught with Cooperative Learning Method and those taught with Lecture Method

## METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** The design adopted in this study is the quasi-experimental design. The independent variable is the instructional methods while the dependent variable is the students' attitude towards socially acceptable behaviours.

### Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population of this study consisted of two thousand, four hundred and three (2403) JSS II students. A sample of 240 JSS II students constituted the sample of this study which was selected from four schools. There was a total of 120 each student in the experimental and control groups which gave a total of 240 respondents that were used in the entire research work. Firstly, through simple random sampling techniques, four schools were randomly selected from the 13 government owned junior secondary school in Port Harcourt LGA. In each of the four secondary school selected, an arm of JSS II was then randomly selected from the arms constituting the JSSII classes of the schools under consideration. Then after, two schools/classes were randomly designated as the experimental group and the other two as the control group.

### Instrumentation

The validated 10-item instrument used for this study was titled Students' Attitudes Towards Socially Acceptable Behaviour Scale (SATSABS). This scale aims at eliciting information on student's attitude towards socially acceptable behaviour and it consists of two parts. The first part takes care of the demographic data of the students, such as name, class, gender, age etc while the second part consists of ten items eliciting information on students' attitude towards socially acceptable behaviour. Furthermore, on this scale, a modified four-point Likert response format of strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used. In order to establish the reliability of the instruments used in this research work the test- retest method of estimating reliability was used. The reliability of SATSABS was found to be  $r = 0.76$ .

### Experimental procedures

The pre-tests of all the instruments concerning the students were administered in the first week of the first term prior to experimental instructions. They were conducted by the teachers who were assigned to the various classes, and coordinated by the researcher. First, copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents to obtain the pre-test scores before they were assigned to control and experimental groups. The experimental groups were taught using the cooperative learning method whereas the control group was taught using lecture method. At the end of the treatment period using both methods, a post- test of the same instruments was administered to both groups. The data obtained in the pre-test and post-test were subjected to statistical analysis.

### Data analysis

Data generated from the pre-tests and post-tests using the research instrument were converted to numerical scores. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions whereas Analysis of Covariance was used to test the hypothesis at .05 alpha level.

**RESULTS****Table 1: Mean scores of the attitude of students in the experimental and control groups before and after instructions**

SN	Item	Pre-Attitude		Post-Attitude	
		Exp.	Control	Exp.	Control
1	I like working with other students in the class	1.97	2.10	2.82	1.84
2	I will tell the truth even if I am guilty	2.08	2.55	2.99	2.13
3	I obey school rules and teachers always	2.17	2.14	3.30	2.53
4	I always wait for my turn no matter how long it takes	3.35	3.21	3.18	2.37
5	I respect other students view during discussions	3.05	2.95	3.05	2.12
6	Hard work I believe is the only way to pass my exams	2.98	3.08	2.15	3.55
7	I don't like students who disagree with my opinion	2.87	2.80	3.60	2.14
8	I like coming to school as early as possible to avoid lateness	3.14	2.93	3.15	2.17
9	No matter the provocation on me, I will not fight back	3.06	2.88	3.24	2.12
10	I am satisfied with what I get at any point in time	3.02	2.71	1.90	3.54
<b>Overall mean</b>		<b>2.77</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>2.94</b>	<b>2.45</b>

From Table 1 above, the overall mean score for the experimental groups before teaching was 2.77, whereas that of the control groups was 2.74. The overall mean score of the experimental group after instruction was 2.94, whereas that of the control groups was 2.45. This established that there was a positive change in the attitude of students exposed to Cooperative Learning Method (CLM) after instruction as against a negative attitude of students exposed to Lecture Method.

**Table 2: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) Analysis of students' attitude towards socially acceptable behaviours**

	Sources of Variation		
	Between	Within	Total
Sum of squares SS(pre-test scores)	2.21	3591.09	3593.30
Sum of squares SS(Post-test scores)	745.54	4030.26	4775.80
Sum of products SP(xy)	40.54	3029.84	3070.38
Degree of freedom (df)	1	238	239
Adjusted sum of square (SSy1)	678.29	1473.95	2152.24
Adjusted df for adjusted SSy1	1	237	238
Variance Estimates	678.29	6.22	
F-ratio	109.05		
Critical F-ratio @ df = 1, 237	3.89		

Where  $x$  = pre-test scores,  $y$  = Post-test scores

Table 2 shows an observed F-ratio of 109.05. The critical F-ratio for 1, 237 degrees of freedom was 3.89 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, since the observed F-ratio is greater than the critical F-ratio (3.89), the null hypothesis is hereby rejected in favour of the alternative. This means that there was a significant difference in attitude towards socially acceptable behaviours between students taught with Cooperative Learning Method (CLM) and those taught with Lecture Method (LM) (Control group).

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The result as reflected in Table 1 showed that the experimental group had a mean gain of 0.17 in attitude whereas the control group had a mean loss of -0.29 in attitude towards socially acceptable behaviours. This showed that the students in the experimental group who adopted the Cooperative Learning Method gained more than those who were taught using the lecture method over attitude towards socially acceptable behaviours. This established that there was a positive change in the attitude of students exposed to Cooperative Learning Method (CLM) after instruction as against a negative attitude of students exposed to Lecture Method.

When put to the statistical test, the result showed that there was a significant difference in attitude towards socially acceptable behaviours between students taught with Cooperative Learning Method and those taught with Lecture Method. This finding is consistent with an earlier finding of Borich (2011) who noted that cooperative learning instils in today, junior secondary students important behaviours which expectedly prepare them for rational reasoning and success during adulthood. In addition, Burbules & Bruce, (2001) established that cooperative learning can provide the ingredients for higher thought processes and set them to work on realistic and adult-like tasks facilitates the role of the classroom as an important vehicle for bolstering home and community values including modeling appropriate social behaviours that lead students even during adult life, where expectedly, they are to grapple with new and emerging life challenges in a productive, reasonable manner and integrated sense of self.

## **CONCLUSION**

The finding of the present study has established that cooperative learning is capable of improving students' attitude towards socially acceptable behaviours. The student's experiment favoured the students who were taught using cooperative learning method more than those who were taught using the lecture method. The implication of the present finding is that teachers in the junior secondary schools should see the need to adopt the cooperative learning method in their teaching for the improvement of students' learning outcomes.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the present study the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers should endeavour to adopt cooperative learning method in their teaching of students in the junior secondary schools as this has been proven to improve their attitude towards socially acceptable behaviours

2. Teachers should shun the use of lecture method to teach all topics and all subjects as this is not helping the learning of the students

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