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GENDER INFLUENCE ON THE ATTITUDINAL DISPOSITION OF JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TOWARD COOPERATIVE LEARNING METHOD IN PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT*: This study explored the impact of gender on the attitudinal disposition of junior secondary school students toward Cooperative Learning Method in Port Harcourt. The quasi-experimental design was adopted. A total of 240 JSS II students took part in the study. There was a total of 120 JSSII students in the experimental and control groups respectively which gave a total of 240 respondents. Only the result of 120 students in the experimental groups was presented in this study. A validated 10-item instrument, Students Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method Scale (SATCLMS) was used for data collection. The test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of SATCLMS to obtain an index of r=0.78. One research question and one hypothesis guided the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question whereas independent sample t-test was used to test the hypothesis. The findings of the study indicated that the attitude of the male students was slightly more positive than the attitude of the female students towards cooperative learning methods. However, the observed mean difference not statistically significant across sexes. It was recommended among others that teachers of social studies should endeavour to adopt CLM to impact on the attitudes of students in social studies.*

KEYWORDS*: Gender, cooperative learning method, junior secondary students' attitude,*

INTRODUCTION

The extent of curriculum implementation, level of efficiency, productivity and higher educational attainment in junior secondary schools is shaped or influenced by the gender differentials likely to predict the communication and interaction style among teachers and their students (Afolabi, 2009; Akiri & Ugborugbo, 2008; Sussman & Tyson, 2000). Consequently, teachers are expected to possess the personality and attitude (as cognitive, emotional, and action tended to a particular behavioural intent) that instills in students the enduring predisposition to consistently and rationally respond towards a person, object, situation, idea or concept taught in social studies (Adesoji, 2002; Smith, 1998).

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This underscores the importance of attitude in the development of self-awareness, interpersonal awareness, appreciation for diverse perspectives, and critical thinking skills required in affective education (Rudestam, 2004). Affective education is part of the educational process that regards attitudes, feelings, beliefs and emotions that promote pro-social behaviours and the formation of bonding among students (male and female) who interact or work together in groups (Lang, Katz & Menezes, 1998). Therefore, students' experience, achievement and continuing educational development stems on the collaborative approach required in cooperative learning rather than emphasis on the "status and power" of group members likely to cause psychological and emotional trauma that will eventually affect junior secondary students output or achievement (Afolabi, 2009; Guiller & Durndell, 2007;Sussman & Tyson, 2000).

Borich (2011) noted that cooperative learning instils in junior secondary students important behavioural attributes like attitudes and values, pro-social behaviours, alternative perspective and viewpoints, integrated identity, and higher thought processes that prepare them to reason and perform in an adult world. The gender of junior secondary students participating in cooperative learning groups influences the creation of bonding, collaborative learning, and development of certain specific skills which help them learn to cope with interpersonal conflict and negative emotions likely to emanate in the interaction with opposite sexes (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

Furthermore, cooperative learning is an educational process in which speaking, listening, writing and reflections as crucial tools for active learning is enhanced by students using their social skills and mental abilities to:interact and cooperate with peers, develop their cognitive and affective learning outcomes, and make critical decisions concerning themselves (Acikgoz, 1992; Kagan, 1990). In cooperative learning, students gain more experience, improve better attitudes toward the subject matter, develop their social skills, and learn to respect different points of views (Kose, Abdurrahman, Aysegul& Kutret,2010).

Gender seems to determine not only the interaction style but also group development and junior secondary students' achievement (Savicki, Kelley & Lingenfelter, 1996; Dee, 2005). This is premised on Savicki, Kelley and Ammon (2002) assertion that the female only groups (FO) more than either the male only (MO) or evenly mixed gender (MIX) groups are likely to develop: higher capacity to question and modify their opinion, more direct and personal communication, more trust among members and more advanced levels of bonding and group development. Consequently, teachers' input and gender have been identified catalyst that significantly influences junior secondary students' achievement in social studies (Wenglisky, 2001; Afolabi & Audu, 2007).

Cooperative learning actively engages students in the learning process and seeks to improve their critical-thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving skills. Critical thinking cannot occur outside a context of attitudes and values, pro-social behaviour, alternative perspectives, and an integrated identity. But together with these outcomes, cooperative learning can provide the ingredients for higher thought processes and set them to work on realistic and adult-like tasks (Greeno, 2006; Jacobs, Power & Loh, 2002). This justifies the position of Holmlund and Sund (2005) and Tymms (2005) that teachers' gender has no effect on students' outcome, teachers' productivity, overall

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effectiveness and efficiency, interaction, the performance of complex tasks and decision making in junior secondary schools.

Statement of the Problem

Gender is an important determinant of the levels or extent of communication and interaction needed in a school subject like social studies which strongly emphasizes on the development of the affective domain, attitudes, feelings, beliefs and emotions.That influences the formation of bonding among students who work together in groups for the productivity, effectiveness and efficiency in junior secondary schools. Conversely, this could breed the rising levels of violent and antisocial behaviours that have accentuated to the declining instructional quality and fallen standard seriously plaguing junior secondary education in Nigeria. Evidence supports that gender bias in the composition of students in groups heightens the issue of gender dominance that may eventually undermine the opportunity for meaningful interaction likely to foster the cooperative attitudes and values requisite for independent thinking advancement of knowledge and improvement in learned or inherent skills that will profit them both inside and outside the classroom. This background necessitated an investigation into the influence of gender on the attitude of junior secondary school students toward Cooperative Learning Method in Rivers State, Nigeria**.**

Aim and objective

The aim of the study investigated the impact of sex on the attitude of junior secondary school students toward Cooperative Learning Method in Rivers State, Nigeria**.** Specifically, the purpose of this study was to:

-Determine the attitude of junior secondary students towards Cooperative Learning Method (CLM) in social studies in Port Harcourt LGA.

Research question

The following research question guided this study:

-What is the difference between the attitude of male and female junior secondary students towards Cooperative Learning Method (CLM) in social studies?

Hypothesis

The following research hypothesis guided this study:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female of junior secondary students towards Cooperative Learning Method (CLM) in social studies

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The design adopted in this study is the quasi-experimental design. The independent variable is gender while the dependent variable is the students' attitude towards cooperative learning method.

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Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

A total of 240 JSS II students took part in the study. Firstly, simple random sampling technique was used to select four schools randomly selected from the 13 government owned junior secondary school in Port Harcourt LGA. From each of the selected four schools, one arm of JSS II was selected randomly and two classes/schools were assigned to an experimental group and the other two groups were assigned to the control groups. There was a total of 120 JSSII students in the experimental and control groups respectively which gave a total of 240 respondents.

Instrumentation

The validated 10-item instrument, Students Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Method Scale (SATCLMS) was used for data collection. 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 while the second part consists of ten (10) items eliciting information on students towards Cooperative Learning Method. 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. The test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of SATCLMS to obtain an index of r=0.78.

Experimental procedures

Before the commencement of the experiment copies of SATCLMS were administered to the students in the experimental group before the instructions began. The researcher coordinated the administration whereas the teachers who were assigned to the various classes conducted it. 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 cooperative learning method was used to teach the experimental groups whereas lecture method was used to teach the students in the control group. At the end of the treatment period using both methods, a post- test of the SATCLMS was administered to both groups. The data obtained in the pre-test and post-test were subjected to statistical analysis. Only the data on the post-test of the male and female students in the experimental group was presented in the present study.

Data analysis

Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question whereas independent sample t-test was used to test the hypothesis.

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RESULTS

Table 1: Mean Post-Attitude of Junior Secondary School Students' towards Cooperative Learning Method (CLM)

		Male, N=57		Female, N=63	
SN	Item	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
1	Cooperative learning encourages students' class participation	2.81	0.72	2.84	0.97
2	Cooperative learning Promote co-operation among Students	2.65	0.74	2.57	0.95
3	Splitting the class into small units makes learning easier	2.68	0.71	2.76	0.89
4	I like to teach other students in my class	2.86	0.64	2.75	0.82
5	I like to be taught by other students in my class	2.65	0.74	2.60	0.83
6	Use of instructional materials are highly promoted in cooperative learning	2.67	0.72	2.57	0.80
7	Teacher's supportive role makes learning effective	2.75	0.71	2.60	0.85
8	Students encourage and build each other up during cooperative learning	2.53	0.63	2.65	0.83
9	Playing the role of the teacher encourages students to study hard privately.	2.77	0.68	2.67	0.78
10	Relationship among students is close and friendly in Cooperative learning	3.26	0.84	3.21	0.74
	overall mean	**2.76**	**0.71**	**2.72**	**0.85**

Table 1 shows that the male students who were taught using CLM strongly opined that the relationship among students is close and friendly in cooperative learning (M=3.26, SD=0.71) this was followed by the fact that they like to teach other students in their classes,(M=2.86) and cooperative learning encourages students' class participation(M=2.81, SD=0.72) among others. The female students on the other hand also strongly opined that relationship among students is close and friendly in cooperative learning (M=3.21, SD=0.74). This was followed by the fact that cooperative learning encourages students' class participation (M=2.84, SD=0.97) and splitting the class into small units makes learning easier (M=2.76, SD=0.89) among others. The overall mean post-test attitudinal score of male students was 2.76, SD=0.71 whereas that of the female students was 2.72, SD=0.85.

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Table 2: Mean, SD and independent sample t-test on the difference in the mean attitudes towards CLM based on gender of the students in the experimental group

Sex	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value
Male	57	69.08	9.09	.538	118	.592
Female	63	68.06	11.46			

Table 2 shows that the mean attitude towards CLM among male students who were taught using CLM was 69.08, SD=9.09 whereas that of their counterparts was 68.06, SD=11.46. The Table 2 further shows that the calculated t-value was .538 with a degree of freedom, df, of 118 and p= .592.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result as shown in Table 1 showed that the male students who were taught using CLM strongly opined that the relationship among students is close and friendly in cooperative learning (M=3.26, SD=0.71) and that they like to teach other students in their classes,(M=2.86) and the female students on the other hand also strongly opined that relationship among students is close and friendly in cooperative learning (M=3.21, SD=0.74) and that cooperative learning encourages students' class participation (M=2.84, SD=0.97) among others. The overall mean post-test attitudinal score of male students was 2.76, SD=0.71 whereas that of the female students was 2.72, SD=0.85. When put to the statistical test, the result on Table 2 shows that there was no significant difference between the attitude of male and female of junior secondary students towards Cooperative Learning Method (CLM) in social studies (t=.538, df=118, p=.592). The null hypothesis was upheld at .05 alpha level. The result of the present study is consistent with an earlier findings of Borich (2011) noted that cooperative learning instills in junior secondary students important behavioural attributes like attitudes and values, pro-social behaviours, alternative perspective and viewpoints, integrated identity, and higher thought processes that prepare them to reason and perform in an adult world. Gender seems to determine not only the interaction style but also group development and junior secondary students' achievement (Savicki, Kelley & Lingenfelter, 1996; Dee, 2005).

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study indicated that the attitude of the male students was slightly more positive than the attitude of the female students towards cooperative learning methods. However, the observed mean difference was not large enough to establish a statistical significance across sexes. The implication of the present finding was that the CLM was proven to favour both sexes over the improvement of their attitudes towards the learning through the CLM.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the present study it was recommended that:

1. Teachers of social studies should endeavour to adopt CLM to impact on the attitudes of students in social studies

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2. The teachers should implement the instructional model in such a way to eliminate gender issues in the teaching and learning of social studies.

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