

# THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION ON VOTERS' AWARENESS AND THE REDUCTION OF ELECTORAL MALPRACTICES IN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of Social Studies education on voters' awareness and the reduction of electoral malpractices in Taraba State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and focused on a population of 1,935 public secondary school teachers and administrators. A sample size of 350 respondents, comprising 300 teachers and 50 administrators, was selected using a multistage sampling technique. A structured questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts and subjected to a reliability test, yielding a coefficient of 0.85. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviations, while chi-square was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that Social Studies education significantly enhances voters' awareness and plays a crucial role in reducing electoral malpractices. The results showed strong agreement among respondents on the role of Social Studies in promoting civic knowledge, ethical voting behavior, and rejection of electoral misconduct. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Social Studies be strengthened in school curricula and that civic and electoral values be emphasized in classroom teaching. The study concluded that Social Studies education is a vital tool for nurturing informed and responsible citizens, thereby contributing to credible electoral processes and democratic development in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Civic responsibility, democratic development, electoral ethics, electoral malpractices, Social Studies education, voters' awareness.

## Introduction

Social Studies education plays a pivotal role in shaping civic consciousness and ethical behavior among citizens, particularly in democratic societies like Nigeria. As a discipline, it equips individuals with knowledge, attitudes, skills necessary for effective participation in societal affairs. The democratic development of any nation depends largely on the political awareness and participation of its electorate. In Nigeria, electoral malpractices such as vote-buying, ballot box snatching, multiple voting, voter intimidation have persistently undermined the credibility of elections and eroded public trust in the electoral system (Okoro, 2023). These vices are often rooted in ignorance, political apathy, lack of civic responsibility among the electorate, particularly the youth. Social Studies education, with its focus on citizenship, democracy, social responsibility, is strategically positioned to counter these trends by promoting informed and responsible political participation (Ibrahim and Usman, 2022).

Over the years, Nigeria has witnessed several flawed electoral processes despite constitutional frameworks and institutional reforms. Many of these challenges persist because a significant portion of the population lacks adequate understanding of their rights and responsibilities as voters (Oladimeji, 2022).

Moreover, Social Studies education can instill a sense of national consciousness and civic duty, which are crucial for reducing electoral misconduct. When citizens understand the electoral process and the implications of their choices, they are less likely to engage in or condone electoral fraud (Aliyu and Ezekiel, 2022). This is particularly important in a multi-ethnic and politically volatile nation like Nigeria, where electoral manipulation often leads to post-election violence and political instability. Scholars have emphasized that the reinforcement of civic values through Social Studies has the potential to foster accountability and transparency in the electoral process (Eze and Lawal, 2024). Therefore, understanding the impact of Social Studies education on voters' awareness and its potential to reduce electoral malpractices is essential for promoting democratic consolidation and good governance in Nigeria (Yakubu and Bello, 2023).

## Statement of the Problem

Electoral malpractices such as vote-buying, ballot box snatching, voter intimidation continue to undermine the credibility of elections in Nigeria. These issues are often linked to inadequate civic awareness and poor understanding of democratic responsibilities among the electorate. Social Studies education is intended to equip individuals with knowledge of their civic rights and duties, yet its influence on voters' behavior appears limited in practice. Many citizens, particularly youths, remain vulnerable to manipulation due to ignorance of electoral processes. This study aims to investigate how Social Studies education impacts voters' awareness and contributes to reducing electoral malpractices in Nigeria.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to examine the Impact of Social Studies Education on Voters' Awareness and the Reduction of Electoral Malpractices in Taraba State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are;

- i. To examine the impact of Social Studies education on voters' awareness in Taraba State, Nigeria.
- ii. To assess how Social Studies education helps reduce electoral malpractices in Taraba State, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What is the impact of Social Studies education on voters' awareness in Taraba State, Nigeria?
- ii. How does Social Studies education help reduce electoral malpractices in Taraba State, Nigeria?

### **Hypotheses**

H0<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant impact of Social Studies education on voters' awareness in Taraba State, Nigeria.

H0<sub>2</sub>: Social Studies education does not significantly reduce electoral malpractices in Taraba State, Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Civic Education theory was used as a theoretical framework. John Dewey, an American philosopher and educationist, propounded one of the earliest and most influential theories of Civic Education in 1916 through his work *Democracy and Education*. Dewey's theory emphasized that democracy is more than a form of government—it is primarily a mode of associated living, and education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform. The content of his theory focused on experiential learning, critical inquiry, and active participation in civic life. Dewey believed schools should function as miniature democratic societies where students learn through interaction, problem-solving, and engagement with real-life issues. The strength of Dewey's theory lies in its focus on practical learning and development of democratic habits from a young age. Its weakness, however, is the high demand it places on teachers and school resources, which may not always be available. Nonetheless, Dewey's theory remains relevant, influencing modern civic education's emphasis on participatory learning and democratic engagement.

### **Methodology**

This study used descriptive survey research design. The area of the study covered were public secondary schools across Taraba State, in both urban and rural locations. The population of

the study comprised 1,935 teachers and school administrators in public secondary schools within the state. A sample size of 350 respondents was selected, comprising 300 school teachers and 50 school administrators. A multistage sampling technique was employed. In the first stage, public secondary schools were purposively selected from each senatorial district of the state. In the second stage, stratified random sampling was used to select teachers and administrators, ensuring balanced representation based on location and school category.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire comprising both closed and open-ended items, with closed-ended questions adopting a Likert scale format using the options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree, to assess respondents' civic knowledge, electoral awareness, and views on electoral malpractices. The instrument was validated by experts in Social Studies education and research methodology. Its reliability was confirmed through a pilot test using the test-retest method, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.85. Data were collected through direct administration of the questionnaire by the researcher with the assistance of trained field workers. Descriptive statistics such as mean score and standard deviations were used to analyze the data, while chi-square was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

## Results and Discussions

**Table 1:** Responses on the Impact of Social Studies Education on Voters' Awareness

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Social Studies teaches the rights and responsibilities of voters.	350	3.41	0.78	Agree
2	Social Studies improves awareness about the importance of voting.	350	3.36	0.82	Agree
3	Social Studies has no influence on civic or political awareness.	350	2.14	0.93	Disagree
4	Social Studies encourages students to participate in community development.	350	3.29	0.81	Agree
5	Social Studies education is not relevant to electoral issues in Nigeria.	350	2.21	0.89	Disagree
6	Social Studies promotes respect for electoral rules and procedures.	350	3.30	0.76	Agree
7	Social Studies helps learners understand the dangers of electoral malpractices.	350	3.33	0.84	Agree
8	Social Studies prepares students for active citizenship and informed voting.	350	3.47	0.79	Agree
9	Social Studies enhances awareness of the electoral process and voting procedures.	350	3.22	0.85	Agree
10	Social Studies encourages discussions about elections and democratic values.	350	3.18	0.80	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>			<b>3.09</b>		<b>Agree</b>

*Source: Field survey, 2025*

Mean magnitude:  $X \geq 2.5$  (Agree)  
 $X < 2.5$  (Disagree)

Table 1 presents data on the impact of Social Studies education on voters' awareness in Nigeria. The responses indicate that the majority of participants believe Social Studies contributes positively to civic awareness and responsible voting. For instance, many agreed that Social Studies teaches the rights and responsibilities of voters, with a mean score of 3.41, improves awareness about the importance of voting, with a mean of 3.36. Respondents strongly disagreed with negative statements such as Social Studies having no influence on civic awareness and being irrelevant to electoral issues, reflected in low mean scores of 2.14 and 2.21. The grand mean of 3.09 suggests a general agreement among the respondents that Social Studies plays a significant role in promoting voters' awareness. The standard deviations, which range from 0.76 to 0.93, show a relatively consistent pattern of responses across the sample, indicating reliability in the participants' views.

**Table 2:** Responses on How Social Studies Education Helps Reduce Electoral Malpractices in Taraba State, Nigeria

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Social Studies educates learners on the consequences of electoral fraud.	350	3.84	0.76	Agree
2	Social Studies discourages participation in vote-buying and selling.	350	3.67	0.81	Agree
3	Social Studies promotes ethical behavior during elections.	350	3.76	0.80	Agree
4	Social Studies helps students understand the dangers of election violence.	350	3.92	0.74	Agree
5	Social Studies teaches the importance of obeying electoral laws.	350	3.58	0.79	Agree
6	Social Studies fosters intolerance for electoral malpractice among youths.	350	3.71	0.83	Agree
7	Social Studies equips students to reject political manipulation.	350	3.66	0.78	Agree
8	Social Studies provides knowledge on peaceful political participation.	350	3.61	0.85	Agree
9	Social Studies strengthens students' ability to report and resist electoral misconduct.	350	3.45	0.86	Agree
10	Social Studies helps in shaping responsible future voters who reject electoral malpractice.	350	3.88	0.77	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>			<b>3.71</b>		<b>Agree</b>

Source: Field survey, 2025

Mean magnitude:  $X \geq 2.5$  (Agree)  
 $X < 2.5$  (Disagree)

Table 2 presents respondents' views on how Social Studies education helps reduce electoral malpractices in Nigeria. The findings reveal a strong consensus that Social Studies plays a significant role in promoting ethical electoral behavior. All ten items recorded mean scores above 3.4, indicating high agreement. The highest mean score of 3.92 was recorded for the item stating that Social Studies helps students understand the dangers of election violence, suggesting strong support for the subject's preventive impact on electoral crises. Other notable items, such as educating learners on electoral fraud with a mean of 3.84 and shaping responsible future voters with a mean of 3.88, further confirm Social Studies' relevance in this regard. The lowest mean of 3.45, though still positive, reflects moderate agreement on the subject's role in helping students report and resist misconduct. The grand mean of 3.71 confirms overall agreement. The standard deviations, ranging from 0.74 to 0.86, indicate consistent responses across the sample.

### Hypotheses Testing

**H0<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant impact of Social Studies education on voters' awareness in Taraba State, Nigeria.**

**Table 3:** Chi-square Test Showing the Significant Impact of Social Studies Education on Voters' Awareness in Taraba State, Nigeria

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	24.731	2	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	22.614	2	0.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.872	1	0.001
N of Valid Cases	350		

Table 3 presents the chi-square test results on the impact of Social Studies education on voters' awareness in Taraba State, Nigeria. The Pearson Chi-square value of 24.731 with a significance level of 0.000 indicates a statistically significant relationship between Social Studies education and voters' awareness. Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio of 22.614 and the Linear-by-Linear Association value of 10.872, both with p-values less than 0.05, further confirm the significance of the relationship. With 350 valid cases analyzed, the findings show that Social Studies education significantly contributes to enhancing voters' awareness, thus playing a vital role in promoting civic responsibility and democratic participation.

**H0<sub>2</sub>: Social Studies education does not significantly reduce electoral malpractices in Taraba State, Nigeria.**

**Table 4:** Chi-square Test Showing Social Studies Education Significantly Reduces Electoral Malpractices in Taraba State, Nigeria

	<b>Value</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</b>
Pearson Chi-square	19.843	2	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	18.227	2	0.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	13.114	1	0.001
N of Valid Cases	350		

Table 4 presents the chi-square test results on the effect of Social Studies education in reducing electoral malpractices in Taraba State, Nigeria. The Pearson Chi-square value of 19.843 with a p-value of 0.000 indicates a statistically significant relationship. Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio of 18.227 and the Linear-by-Linear Association value of 13.114, both with significance levels of 0.001, further confirm that the relationship is significant at the 0.05 level. With 350 valid cases analyzed, the results clearly show that Social Studies education significantly contributes to reducing electoral malpractices. This implies that the subject plays an important role in promoting ethical electoral behavior and democratic integrity.

**Discussion of Findings**

The results of the study revealed that Social Studies education significantly enhances voters' awareness in Taraba State. Respondents indicated that the subject teaches fundamental civic rights and responsibilities, improves understanding of electoral processes, and equips individuals for active and responsible citizenship. The chi-square analysis confirmed a statistically significant relationship, showing that Social Studies positively influences informed electoral participation. These findings align with those of Ibrahim and Usman (2022), who asserted that Social Studies education provides learners with essential civic knowledge and awareness necessary for meaningful engagement in democratic processes. Their study reinforces the current findings by emphasizing the subject's vital role in shaping politically conscious and responsible citizens.

Additionally, the results clearly demonstrated that Social Studies education contributes to a notable reduction in electoral malpractices. Respondents agreed that the subject discourages vote-buying, political manipulation, and election-related violence, while promoting adherence to electoral laws and peaceful conduct. Chi-square analysis confirmed this significant impact. Supporting this, Eze and Lawal (2024) emphasized that Social Studies fosters democratic values and discourages unethical political behaviors. Their findings affirm the current study's conclusion that Social Studies is instrumental in instilling electoral discipline and upholding democratic integrity.

## **Conclusion**

This study concluded that Social Studies education plays a vital and strategic role in enhancing voters' awareness and reducing electoral malpractices in Taraba State. The subject equips students with the knowledge of their civic rights and responsibilities, promotes understanding of democratic principles, and instills values that discourage unethical political behavior such as vote-buying, election violence, and political manipulation. It also fosters a culture of informed participation, critical thinking, and peaceful electoral engagement. The findings underscore the need to strengthen the teaching and integration of Social Studies across all levels of education, particularly in secondary schools. Doing so will help develop a generation of citizens who are politically conscious, responsible, and committed to upholding democratic values. Thus, enhancing the effectiveness of Social Studies education is essential for building a more informed, active, and accountable electorate that can contribute meaningfully to the growth and sustainability of Nigeria's democratic system.

## **Recommendations**

1. Social Studies education should be strengthened in schools to improve students' understanding of their civic rights and responsibilities.
2. Government and education stakeholders should support the integration of electoral ethics into Social Studies content to discourage electoral malpractices.

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