

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF MUSIC-BASED INSTRUCTION ON STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIAL STUDIES

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Abstract

Music has long been recognized as a powerful pedagogical tool capable of enhancing students' emotional engagement and fostering a positive attitude towards learning. Its rhythmic and expressive qualities can transform classroom experiences. Despite its established relevance across educational contexts, few empirical studies have investigated the effect of music-based instruction on students' attitudes towards Social Studies—a subject central to national development and citizenship education. Hence, this study aims to fill that gap by investigating how the use of music-based instruction as a teaching method influences students' attitudes towards Social Studies. A quasi-experimental research design was adopted, involving 188 junior secondary school students studying Social Studies. The experimental group was taught using a music-based instructional method, while the control group received instruction through

the conventional lecture method. Data were collected using the Attitudinal Scale Questionnaire for Social Studies Students (ASQSSS), which was validated by experts in educational research and Social Studies pedagogy. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.75. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The results revealed a significant difference in the attitudes of students taught using music-based instruction compared to those taught using the conventional lecture method, in favour of the music group [$F(1,185) = 43.49$; $p < 0.05$]. However, no significant difference was found between the attitudes of male and female students exposed to the music-based instruction [$F(1,95) = 1.33$; $p > 0.05$]. The study concludes that music-based instruction can be effectively employed to enhance students' attitudes towards Social Studies.

Keywords: *Music-based Instruction, Attitude, Junior Secondary school, Social studies*

Introduction

Music is a highly effective instructional tool for teaching languages and other subjects, particularly among young learners. Well-composed songs tend to linger in a learner's memory long after a lesson has ended. Children often acquire vocabulary, grammatical structures, key concepts, and even the rhythm of language effortlessly through singing—an activity they naturally enjoy. Moreover, music serves multiple pedagogical functions, both within the classroom and beyond, such as at home or during travel. It can establish a desired atmosphere, facilitate transitions between activities, and foster a sense of connection between teachers and learners (Kumar, et al. 2022). One practical way to incorporate music into classroom instruction is by playing background music at the beginning of a lesson. Just as visual elements are used to create an engaging learning space, teachers should also consider how auditory stimuli like music can influence classroom ambience. Entering a classroom can be an overwhelming experience, especially for young learners. Music has the capacity to transform the classroom into a more welcoming and less intimidating environment (Fallin et al. 2021).

Additionally, music can be used to signal transitions between classroom activities. Children often respond to music in a uniquely engaged manner. When a familiar or enjoyable song begins to play, students tend to react almost immediately. For instance, a Social Studies teacher may use a specific song to welcome students to the class. Over time, learners begin to associate particular melodies with specific routines, prompting an automatic and positive response. Even in the absence of explicit cues, students gradually internalise the language and vocabulary embedded in the music (Rinde & Kenny, 2021). The educational value of music extends beyond engagement. It has been shown to support the learning of other subjects, including Social Studies, and to develop transferable skills. According to Stewart, (2025), a music-rich environment—characterised by singing, listening, and movement—offers substantial developmental benefits, especially as children transition into more formal learning. She emphasises that musical engagement requires more than vocal or instrumental performance; it

demands the coordination of various skill sets, including auditory and visual processing, as well as the use of both fine and gross motor skills. Music supports language development. Although children are naturally predisposed to interpret sounds and words, exposure to music education significantly enhances these innate abilities. Growing up in an environment enriched with musical experiences often contributes positively to the development of language skills in children (Christiner & Reiterer, 2018). According to the Children's Music Workshop, the influence of music education on language development is observable in the brain. Recent studies demonstrate that musical training can physically stimulate the left hemisphere of the brain, the region responsible for processing language. This training can even shape the brain's neural circuits in specific ways. The group also asserts that associating familiar songs with new information can assist in embedding that information in young minds (Veblen, 2018).

Furthermore, music enhances spatial temporal abilities. Research has identified a causal relationship between music instruction and spatial intelligence the capacity to mentally manipulate objects and understand how parts fit together. This is a skill frequently used in problem solving, whether in mathematics or in subjects like Social Studies. There is strong evidence that sustained music education improves children's spatial temporal reasoning over time. Such abilities are essential for solving complex, multistep problems encountered in fields like architecture, engineering, mathematics, visual arts, gaming, and computer science (Jaschke et al. 2018).

Social Studies education is widely recognized as a discipline that equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for effective participation in society. Education has been acknowledged globally whether in developed or developing contexts—as a powerful tool for driving social, cultural, political, economic, and technological progress (Chankseliani et al. 2021). It also plays a critical role in empowering individuals to become responsible and functional members of their communities. To facilitate the internalization of the values and competencies embedded in Social Studies, there must be effective channels through which these ideals are transmitted. One such channel is music, which provides an engaging and memorable medium for imparting knowledge and fostering value orientation in learners.

The overarching aim of Social Studies is to prepare young people to become humane, rational, responsive, and responsible citizens in an increasingly interconnected world (Morah, 2024). In recognition of its importance, Social Studies has been made a compulsory subject at both the primary and junior secondary school levels in Nigeria, and an elective at the senior secondary level (FRN, 2015). Within the Social Studies classroom, music has the potential to create an optimal environment for teaching and learning. Qi (2024) noted that a learning atmosphere enriched with joy, enthusiasm, and emotional engagement is one in which meaningful learning can flourish—and music is a powerful catalyst for such an atmosphere. The integration of music into instruction fosters a welcoming and stimulating classroom environment that supports student engagement and participation.

Music as an instructional strategy brings with it the potential to foster emotional and cultural relevance. Many themes in Social Studies such as unity, identity, social justice, civic

responsibility, and patriotism—can be powerfully reinforced through songs, chants, or rhythm-based exercises (Shuwen, 2024). Music not only aids memory retention but also promotes empathy and social cohesion among learners. Sanni, Shekoni, Olukoya and Jimoh (2025) argued that Indigenous language promoted through music is capable of improving students learning outcome and impact in them positively, and particularly their critical thinking skills.

Elpus (2018) affirmed that music, one of life's greatest pleasures, can equally become one of the greatest assets in learning. By orchestrating a learning environment that is resonant and immersive, the teacher can provide learners with a symphony of educational opportunities that are both meaningful and enduring. In essence, music can enrich Social Studies education by making abstract concepts tangible, energising the learning space, and helping learners connect personally and culturally to the content being taught.

Attitude plays a crucial role in determining students' engagement, motivation, and overall success in any subject, including Social Studies. A positive attitude towards a subject is often a reflection of how well students relate to the content, the instructional methods employed, and the emotional climate of the classroom (Kuuk & Arslan, 2020). When students perceive a subject as monotonous, abstract, or irrelevant, they tend to exhibit disinterest, low participation, and poor academic outcomes. In contrast, when learners are immersed in a vibrant and stimulating learning environment where lessons are delivered through creative means such as music—they are more likely to develop a favourable disposition towards the subject (Sharp et al. 2020). Music, with its rhythm, melody, and emotive power, has the unique ability to capture learners' attention, create a relaxed learning atmosphere, and stimulate affective engagement. When strategically integrated into Social Studies instruction, music can foster curiosity, increase enthusiasm, and cultivate sustained interest in complex or seemingly distant topics. For example, songs that reflect historical events, cultural practices, or civic ideals can make content more relatable and emotionally resonant, thereby helping students form personal connections with what they are learning (Jing, 2025). These emotional connections are key to shaping students' attitudes, as they transform passive learners into active participants. Moreover, when students enjoy the learning process, they tend to develop a sense of ownership and pride in their academic journey. Thus, by incorporating music into Social Studies education, teachers not only enhance content delivery but also promote a more positive, confident, and motivated attitude among learners laying a foundation for deeper understanding, value internalisation, and long-term academic success.

It is widely acknowledged that the effectiveness of instruction is largely influenced by the quality of teaching strategies adopted in the classroom. In the Nigerian education context, concerns about declining student engagement and achievement have been consistently raised across multiple forums. These concerns are particularly pronounced in subjects like Social Studies, where abstract concepts and conventional lecture methods often result in low student interest, poor attitude, and limited long-term retention. Underperformance of students have attributed to the persistent use of inappropriate teaching methods, which fail to stimulate learners' curiosity or sustain their motivation (Adam et al, 2025; Akintoye et al. 2023). While

innovative strategies such as inquiry, discovery, and problem solving have been introduced to enhance instructional delivery, they have produced only marginal improvements in learning outcomes (Adam et al. 2024). Despite the richness of Social Studies in values, civic awareness, and social responsibility, the subject is often perceived by students as tedious and disconnected from their everyday realities.

Emerging literature, however, points to the potential of music as a pedagogical tool that can transform the learning environment, especially at the secondary school level (Crawford, 2017). Music has been shown to improve language acquisition, stimulate emotional engagement, enhance memory retention, and foster positive classroom dynamics Bokiev et al. 2018 Songs and rhythm-based activities not only make learning enjoyable, but also provide culturally relevant avenues through which knowledge, values, and attitudes can be meaningfully transmitted. Yet, in spite of its proven benefits in other disciplines, music remains underutilized in the teaching of Social Studies in Nigerian schools. This gap suggests the need for empirical inquiry into its effectiveness in improving students' disposition towards the subject. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the effect of music on secondary school students' attitude towards Social Studies.

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What is the difference in the attitude of students in Social Studies when taught using (i) music and conventional lecture method?
2. What is the difference in the attitude of male and female students to Social Studies when taught using music?
1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of students in Social Studies when taught using music and conventional lecture method.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female students in Social Studies when taught using music

Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to assess the effectiveness of the strategies used in teaching Social Studies. The population for this study comprised all Junior Secondary School Two (JSS II) students offering Social Studies in public secondary schools within Lagos State. Education District V. Junior Secondary School Two (JSS II) students were chosen for two primary reasons. First, they were likely to have been exposed to several Social Studies topics during their first year, thus acquiring foundational values and skills imparted by their teachers. Second, as students in their second year of junior secondary education, they were at a developmental stage that enabled full participation in school activities, unlike their counterparts in the third year who would be preoccupied with preparations for the Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination. The study involved 188 JSS II students drawn from

four schools, randomly selected from the three education zones of Badagry, Amuwo Odofin and Ojo in Lagos State Education District V. The existing population in each class was used without alteration; that is, all students present in each selected class participated in the study. The selection of district and the schools used was done through Simple Random Sampling Technique. This was done through the hat and draw by lot system. Districts were numbered in pieces of paper and shuffled from which district five was randomly picked. Two schools were randomly picked from Ojo zone. One served as experiment and the other as control. The experimental group consisted of 98 students with 41 males and 57 females. The control group consisted of 90 students with 44 males and 46 females.

The Attitudinal Scale Questionnaire for Social Studies Students (ASQSSS) was employed for data collection. The ASQSSS comprised ten items designed to capture respondents' attitudes in two key areas: their disposition towards specific topics in Social Studies and their attitude towards instructional materials provided by the teacher. The instrument was subjected to a validity assessment by Social Studies experts, who are seasoned researchers in the field. In addition, experienced secondary school Social Studies teachers provided valuable input on the instruments. Their reviews focused on aspects such as face validity, content validity, grammatical accuracy and clarity of expression. The revised instruments were subsequently re-evaluated for face and content validity by the research supervisors. Reliability was established through the test-retest method, and the correlation was computed using Cronbach's Alpha formula. The ASQSSS was trial tested in two schools each from Ojo Local Government and Amuwo Odofin Local Government Areas of Lagos State. When subjected to Cronbach's Alpha, the instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.75.

The Education District V Headquarters was visited to officially inform the relevant authorities of the intention to conduct the study in selected schools within its jurisdiction. Approval was subsequently granted. All participating schools were visited with a letter of introduction from the university, issued through the Head of Department. The principals of the schools expressed their willingness to support the research, and the researcher held preliminary discussions with the Social Studies teachers in the selected schools.

The research instruments were administered by the researcher with the support of six trained research proctors. The selected topics were taught over a six-week period. A pretest was conducted prior to the commencement of the treatment, which lasted four weeks. The experimental group was taught by exposing the vital concepts of the topics taught were incorporated into the song with which the students were taught. Each rhythm of the song was practiced by the teacher//researcher for students to understand. Students finally got it right and were interested in singing the song without an error.

Upon completion of the treatment, a post-test was administered to the treatment groups within the following week. The results from the pretest and post-test were analysed using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to determine the extent of improvement in the students' academic performance.

Results

Research questions 1: What is the difference in the attitude of students in Social Studies when taught using music and conventional lecture method?

Table 1: Posttest Attitude Mean and Standard Deviation score of Music and Conventional Method Group

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation
Music Group	49.37	2.02
Conventional lecture Group	40.24	1.23

Table 1 reveals that the music group had a posttest mean score 49.37 while the conventional method had a post achievement mean score of 40.24. To determine if the difference is significant hypothesis one was tested.

Hypothesis one: There is no significant difference in the attitude of students in Social Studies when taught using music and conventional lecture method.

Table 2: ANCOVA Table on Effect of Treatment on Students' Attitude towards Social studies

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1178.840a	1	589.420	273.163	.000
Intercept	406.019b	1	203.010	1324.037	.000
Pre Achievement Test	299323.961	1	299323.961	168.111	.000
Teaching Strategy	664849.764	1	664849.764	43.486	.000
Error	1178.840	185	589.420		
Total	406.019	188			
Corrected Total	26.156	187			

Table 2 reveals the results of effect of music method on the attitude of students in social studies. The results show that there was a significant difference in the attitude of students taught using music and lecture method in favour of those exposed music [$F(1, 185) = 43.49$; $p < 0.05$]. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the attitude of students in social studies when taught using music and lecture method is rejected.

Research question 2: What is the difference in the attitude of male and female students to Social Studies when taught using music?

Table 3: Posttest Attitude Mean and Standard Deviation score of Male and Female Students

Gender	Mean	Standard Deviation
Male	49.21	2.92
Female	49.47	1.94

Table 3 shows the female students recorded higher scores than their male counterparts in music 49.47; 49.21 respectively. The significance of these scores is tested under hypothesis two.

Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of male and female students in Social Studies when taught using music

Table 4: Summary of ANCOVA of Gender Effect on Students Attitude in Social Studies when taught with Music

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	433.578 ^a	1	86.716	18.76	.000
Intercept	5027.639	1	5027.639	1088.18	.000
Pre Test	.000	1	252.773	168.11	.000
Gender	6.134	1	6.134	1.33	.250
Error	1298.275	95	4.620		
Total	667018.000	98			
Corrected Total	1731.854	97			

The results in Table 4 show analysis of covariance of gender effect on students' attitude t when taught using music. The table shows that the pretest is significant ($F(1,95) = 1.33$; $p < .05$). This indicates that there was difference in the entry levels of the males and females before the treatment. The results further indicate no significant difference ($F(1,95) = 1.33$; $p > .05$) in the attitude of male and female students after exposure to music method. This shows that a null hypothesis which states that there is no significant gender effect on students' attitude in social studies when taught with music is not rejected.

Discussion of findings

Research question one examined if there was a difference in the attitude of students taught using music and those exposed to conventional lecture method. The findings indicated a

statistically significant difference in the attitude of students taught using music and those taught using the lecture method, in favour of the music group. The present findings on the effectiveness of music as a teaching strategy in Social Studies align with earlier studies which reported positive effects of music on learning (Özdemir & Çiftçibasi, 2017; Waddell & Williamon, 2019; Araújo et al. 2017). The findings of this study suggests that the integration of music into pedagogy has the potential to enhance learners' engagement and receptiveness. This outcome may be attributed to several key factors. Music has been widely acknowledged as a powerful emotional and cognitive stimulant. When strategically integrated into teaching, it can create an enjoyable, relaxed, and stimulating learning environment that fosters learner motivation and reduces anxiety (Kumar et al. 2022). Such an atmosphere is conducive to the development of a positive disposition towards learning, especially in subjects perceived by students as abstract or unengaging when taught through traditional means.

Another important factor is that music likely enhanced the students' ability to retain information and connect with the content on a deeper level. The rhythmic and melodic elements of music may have facilitated memorisation and recall, thereby improving the students' perception of their own competence in the subject. This, in turn, could have led to an increased sense of self-efficacy, which is strongly correlated with a positive learning attitude (Fallin et al. 2021). The comparatively lower attitudinal scores of students in the control group may reflect the limitations of the lecture method, which often fails to sustain learners' interest or accommodate diverse learning styles. The method's reliance on rote transmission of knowledge may not be sufficient to stimulate enthusiasm or encourage meaningful connections with the subject matter.

The implications of these findings are significant for curriculum developers, teacher educators, and classroom practitioners. They suggest the need to diversify instructional strategies, particularly by integrating creative and culturally relevant tools such as music to enhance learner engagement and attitude. The use of music could be particularly beneficial in subjects like Social Studies, where affective learning outcomes such as values, attitudes, and citizenship education are critical. Teacher training programmes should equip educators with the skills to integrate music and other art-based strategies into their instructional repertoire. In-service training and professional development workshops can further enhance teachers' capacity to design and deliver content using music in a pedagogically sound manner.

Research question two investigated the difference in the attitude of male and female students exposed to music-based instruction. The results of this study indicated no statistically significant difference in the attitude scores of male and female students after exposure to music-based instruction in Social Studies. This finding suggests that both male and female learners responded similarly to the use of music as a teaching strategy, demonstrating that the approach is equally effective in influencing students' attitudes across gender lines. This outcome may be attributed to the universal appeal and inclusivity of music as a pedagogical tool. Music, regardless of genre or form, has been shown to engage learners emotionally and cognitively in a way that transcends gender boundaries. When properly selected and integrated into

instructional processes, music tends to resonate with learners' shared experiences and interests, creating a learning environment that is both engaging and emotionally supportive for all students. In this case, the musical content used in instruction likely addressed themes or rhythms familiar and accessible to both boys and girls, thereby eliminating gender-based discrepancies in learners' responses.

Another possible explanation lies in the nature of the Social Studies curriculum, which emphasises values, attitudes, and shared human experiences. The integration of music into this subject may have enhanced the affective connection to content without favouring one gender over the other. This aligns with research suggesting that when teaching methods are emotionally engaging and contextually relevant, learners are more likely to exhibit positive learning attitudes regardless of gender.

Moreover, the findings may reflect a growing parity in classroom participation and learning disposition among male and female students, particularly in contemporary educational settings that promote gender inclusivity. Educational reforms and policies advocating equal opportunities for boys and girls may have contributed to levelling the attitudinal playing field, especially when non-traditional instructional strategies such as music are employed to reach diverse learners. The absence of gender difference in students' attitude following exposure to music-based instruction has several implications for educational practice and policy. Firstly, it reinforces the value of inclusive teaching strategies that cater to a diverse student population without bias. Music can be confidently adopted by educators as a gender-neutral pedagogical approach to foster engagement, promote inclusivity, and enhance affective learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The findings from this study provide compelling evidence on the effectiveness and inclusivity of music-based instruction in the teaching of Social Studies. Firstly, the significant difference in students' attitudes in favour of those taught using music indicates that music is a powerful pedagogical tool capable of enhancing learners' engagement and disposition toward the subject. Its capacity to create an emotionally stimulating and learner-friendly environment likely contributed to the improved attitudes observed in the experimental group. Secondly, the absence of a significant gender difference in students' attitudes after exposure to music-based instruction highlights the gender-neutral nature of this teaching strategy. This suggests that music, when thoughtfully selected and appropriately integrated, appeals equally to both male and female students, fostering positive learning experiences across gender lines. Together, these findings underscore the pedagogical potential of music not only as a means of enhancing affective learning outcomes but also as an inclusive strategy that supports gender equity in education. The results call for greater attention to the use of creative, student-centred methods like music to foster more engaging, equitable, and effective classroom environments.

Recommendations

1. Curriculum developers and educational planners should incorporate music as a structured instructional strategy in the teaching of Social Studies.

2. Professional development programmes should be organised to equip Social Studies teachers with the necessary skills to select and integrate relevant, culturally appropriate, and pedagogically sound music into their lessons.
3. Since music-based instruction benefits both male and female students equally, teachers should be encouraged to adopt this method to promote gender-inclusive learning environments.
4. Educational researchers should explore the application of music-based instruction in other subjects beyond Social Studies. This will help to determine its broader educational relevance and contribute to evidence-based practices for improving student engagement and attitudes in various academic disciplines.

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