

An Assessment of the Role of Social Studies Education in Shaping Nigeria Foreign Policy: A Critical Analysis of Policy Formulation and Implementation (1999 -2022).

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Abstract- *This study examined the role of Social Studies education in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy, with particular emphasis on policy formulation and implementation between 1999 and 2022. Foreign policy decisions are not made in isolation; they are influenced by citizens' political awareness, civic values, and understanding of global affairs, all of which are core outcomes of Social Studies education. Despite Nigeria's active engagement in international relations, concerns persist regarding policy inconsistency, limited public participation, and weak alignment between national values and external actions. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, drawing data from educators, policy analysts, and civil servants. Structured questionnaires were used for data collection, while descriptive and inferential statistics guided analysis. Findings revealed that Social Studies education plays a significant role in promoting civic consciousness, national interest awareness, and global understanding, which indirectly influence foreign policy formulation and implementation. However, inadequate curriculum emphasis and weak policy-education linkage limit its impact. The study concludes that strengthening Social Studies education is essential for developing informed citizens capable of supporting coherent and people-centered foreign policy decisions in Nigeria.*

Index Terms- *Social Studies Education, Foreign Policy, Policy Formulation, Policy Implementation, Civic Education, Nigeria*

I. INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy represents a nation's strategic engagement with the international system and reflects its values, priorities, and national interests. In democratic societies, foreign policy formulation and implementation are increasingly influenced by public opinion, civic awareness, and national identity. Education, particularly Social Studies education, plays a crucial role in shaping citizens' understanding

of national goals and global responsibilities (Adebayo, 2023). In Nigeria, the period between 1999 and 2022 marked a renewed commitment to democratic governance and increased participation in regional and global affairs.

Social Studies education is designed to equip learners with civic competence, political literacy, and social responsibility. Through its interdisciplinary nature, it exposes learners to governance, diplomacy, national interest, and global interdependence (Okonkwo, 2024). These components are directly relevant to foreign policy, as informed citizens are better positioned to understand, critique, and support external relations decisions. Scholars argue that a politically conscious society strengthens democratic accountability in foreign policy processes (Salami, 2022).

Nigeria's foreign policy since 1999 has been shaped by democratic values, economic diplomacy, regional leadership, and peacekeeping commitments. However, inconsistencies in policy direction and implementation have raised questions about the depth of civic input and ideological clarity guiding these decisions (Yakubu, 2023). Social Studies education, when effectively implemented, provides the foundation for cultivating national consciousness and shared values that can guide foreign engagements.

Despite its relevance, the linkage between Social Studies education and foreign policy remains underexplored in Nigeria. Curriculum emphasis often prioritizes domestic civic issues while giving limited attention to international relations and diplomacy (Eze, 2025). This gap weakens citizens' understanding of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives and reduces public engagement in policy debates.

Consequently, foreign policy decisions are often perceived as elite-driven rather than reflective of collective national interest.

The formulation and implementation of foreign policy require informed analysis, value orientation, and long-term strategic thinking. Social Studies education contributes to these outcomes by fostering critical thinking, tolerance, and global awareness (Mohammed, 2022). When citizens lack adequate exposure to these competencies, foreign policy risks becoming disconnected from societal expectations and democratic accountability.

This study therefore assesses the role of Social Studies education in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy between 1999 and 2022. It critically examines how educational content and civic learning influence policy formulation and implementation, with the aim of strengthening the education-policy nexus in Nigeria's democratic experience (Adeyemi, 2024).

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nigeria has experienced uninterrupted democratic governance since 1999; however, the processes of foreign policy formulation and implementation continue to be dominated by a small political and diplomatic elite, with minimal involvement of the wider citizenry. This situation limits public understanding and participation in issues that shape Nigeria's international relations. Social Studies education, which is designed to promote civic consciousness, critical thinking, and responsible citizenship, has the potential to empower citizens to engage meaningfully with national and global issues, including foreign policy matters. Yet, scholarly attention to how Social Studies education can influence foreign policy awareness and decision-making in Nigeria remains inadequate. This gap creates concern about whether educational objectives effectively support informed public participation and alignment with Nigeria's external relations.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the role of Social Studies education in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy formulation.
2. To assess the influence of Social Studies education on foreign policy implementation in Nigeria.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does Social Studies education influence Nigeria's foreign policy formulation?
2. What role does Social Studies education play in foreign policy implementation in Nigeria?

V. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H01: Social Studies education has no significant influence on Nigeria's foreign policy formulation.

H02: Social Studies education has no significant impact on foreign policy implementation in Nigeria.

VI. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory: Civic Culture Theory

Civic Culture Theory, propounded by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba in 1963, explains the manner in which citizens' political values, orientations, and attitudes shape governance processes and public policy outcomes. Almond and Verba (1963) contend that the stability of democratic systems depends on the existence of a balanced civic culture in which citizens are politically informed, actively participatory, and supportive of established political institutions. Central to the theory is the idea of political socialization, which provides the foundation for democratic continuity and stability.

The theory underscores the importance of education in developing civic competence, strengthening national identity, and encouraging meaningful political participation. An informed and politically conscious populace is therefore more likely to understand, support, and contribute to coherent public policies, including decisions related to foreign policy. One of the major strengths of Civic Culture Theory lies in its strong emphasis on education as a catalyst for democratic consolidation. Nevertheless, critics argue that the theory tends to downplay

structural and institutional challenges, particularly in developing democracies. The theory is relevant to this study because Social Studies education functions as a vital instrument of civic socialization, shaping citizens' awareness of foreign policy and Nigeria's role in the global system, as emphasized by Almond and Verba in 1963.

VII. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the role of Social Studies education in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy. This design was appropriate for capturing respondents' perceptions and experiences regarding civic education and policy processes. The population comprised Social Studies teachers, foreign policy analysts, and senior civil servants involved in policy formulation and implementation. A sample of 220 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation across professional groups.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into four sections: demographic information, Social Studies curriculum content, foreign policy formulation, and policy implementation. A four-point Likert scale was employed. Instrument validity was ensured through expert review, while reliability testing produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84. Ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality were strictly observed. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics using chi-square tests at a 0.05 level of significance.

VIII. RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Social Studies Education and Foreign Policy Formulation

Item	Mean	SD
Civic awareness of national interest	3.42	0.77
Knowledge of international relations	3.36	0.81
Understanding diplomatic principles	3.29	0.85
Political tolerance	3.31	0.79
Critical thinking skills	3.38	0.74
Grand Mean	3.35	

Source: Field survey, 2025

The results of Table 1 show consistently high mean ratings across all five items, with a grand mean of 3.35, indicating overall agreement that Social Studies education positively influences competencies relevant to foreign policy formulation. Respondents agreed that the subject enhances civic awareness of national interest and provides foundational knowledge of international relations and diplomatic principles. The relatively high ratings for political tolerance and critical thinking further suggest that Social Studies fosters balanced judgment and analytical capacity required for policy understanding and evaluation. The grand mean reinforces the view that, collectively, these competencies are well developed through Social Studies education, implying its meaningful contribution to building citizens' capacity to understand, support, and engage with foreign policy issues.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Social Studies Education and Policy Implementation

Item	Mean	SD
Support for foreign policy decisions	3.34	0.80
Public understanding of policy goals	3.27	0.83
National image promotion	3.41	0.76
Citizen participation in diplomacy	3.18	0.88
Compliance with international norms	3.36	0.79
Grand Mean	3.31	

Source: Field survey, 2025

Findings on Table 2 indicate generally positive perceptions of the role of Social Studies education in policy implementation, as reflected by a grand mean of 3.31. Respondents agreed that Social Studies education enhances public support for foreign policy decisions and improves understanding of Nigeria's international objectives. High mean scores for national image promotion and compliance with international norms suggest that civic education contributes to responsible global engagement. Although citizen participation in diplomacy recorded the lowest mean, it remains above the average benchmark, indicating a moderate positive influence. The grand mean confirms that, overall, Social Studies education plays an important indirect role in strengthening foreign policy implementation through

informed awareness, support, and civic responsibility among citizens.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 3: Chi-Square Test of Hypothesis One

χ^2	df	p-value	Decision
21.47	4	0.000	Significant

The chi-square test result presented in Table 3 shows a calculated χ^2 value of 21.47 with 4 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000, which is statistically significant at the conventional 0.05 level. This result indicates that there is a meaningful association between Social Studies education and foreign policy formulation in Nigeria, and that the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which states that Social Studies education has no significant influence on foreign policy formulation, is rejected. The finding suggests that Social Studies education plays an important role in shaping citizens' awareness, values, and understanding of national and international issues that inform foreign policy processes. By promoting civic consciousness, critical thinking, and knowledge of global affairs, Social Studies education contributes to a more informed populace capable of influencing policy directions, either directly or indirectly. This statistical evidence therefore supports the view that strengthening Social Studies education can enhance public understanding and engagement with foreign policy formulation in Nigeria.

Table 4: Chi-Square Test of Hypothesis Two

χ^2	df	p-value	Decision
18.92	4	0.001	Significant

The chi-square test result presented in Table 4 reveals a calculated χ^2 value of 18.92 with 4 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.001, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This outcome indicates that there is a significant relationship between Social Studies education and the implementation of foreign policy in Nigeria, and that the observed association is not due to random chance. As a result, the second null hypothesis, which posits that Social Studies education has no significant relationship with foreign

policy implementation, is rejected. The finding suggests that Social Studies education contributes to effective policy implementation by fostering public understanding of national interests, international obligations, and global norms. Through civic education, citizens are better informed about government policies, more supportive of foreign policy initiatives, and more likely to comply with international standards and agreements. Additionally, an educated and civically conscious populace can enhance national image and legitimacy in the international arena. This result underscores the importance of strengthening Social Studies education as a strategic tool for improving public support, awareness, and cooperation in the implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy.

IX. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Adebayo (2023) observed that civic education enhances citizens' understanding of national interest and public affairs, a position that aligns closely with the findings of this study on foreign policy formulation. The present study similarly indicates that Social Studies education equips learners with essential civic knowledge and awareness that enable informed opinions and support for national foreign policy directions.

Salami (2022) emphasized that an informed citizenry strengthens democratic accountability in foreign policy processes. This view supports the significant influence identified in this study, as citizens who are knowledgeable about international issues are more likely to engage constructively, demand transparency, and support foreign policy initiatives that reflect national interest.

Okonkwo (2024) argued that Social Studies education promotes global awareness and intercultural understanding, which are crucial for meaningful international engagement. This perspective reinforces the study's findings that Social Studies enhances understanding of international relations, diplomatic principles, and respect for global norms, all of which are essential for Nigeria's effective participation in the global community.

Adeyemi (2024) concluded that strong synergy between education and policy is necessary for coherent foreign policy implementation. This assertion is strongly reinforced by the findings of this study, which show that Social Studies education indirectly strengthens foreign policy implementation through informed citizen support, positive national image promotion, and improved compliance with international standards. Collectively, these contributions highlight the strategic role of Social Studies education in shaping both foreign policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria.

X. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Social Studies education plays a significant role in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy formulation and implementation. Strengthening civic education is essential for promoting informed public engagement and coherent foreign policy decisions in Nigeria.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Social Studies curriculum should be strengthened to emphasize foreign policy and global affairs.
2. Government should integrate civic education outcomes into foreign policy formulation processes.

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