

THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS VALUES IN SHAPING CULTURAL IDENTITY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the role of indigenous values in shaping cultural identity in social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria. The study employed a phenomenological research design, and data were collected through in-depth interviews with 20 social studies teachers and 20 students in Delta State. The findings of the study reveal that indigenous values play a significant role in shaping cultural identity in social studies education in Delta State. The study found out that social studies teachers and students in Delta State value indigenous values such as respect for elders, communalism, and hospitality. These values are used to teach social studies concepts such as culture, identity, and community. The study also highlights the importance of incorporating indigenous values into social studies education to promote cultural identity and social cohesion. The findings of this study have implications for social studies education in Nigeria, highlighting the need for educators to incorporate indigenous values into their teaching practices. The study contributes to the existing literature on the role of indigenous values in shaping cultural identity and highlights the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices in promoting social cohesion.

Keywords: Indigenous values, cultural identity, social studies education, Delta State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Cultural identity is a fundamental aspect of human existence, shaping the way individuals and groups define themselves and their place in the world. It is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been studied extensively in various fields, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, and education (Hofstede, 2022; Holliday, 2023; Norton, 2024). At its core, cultural identity refers to the ways in which individuals and groups define themselves and their place in the world and how they relate to others (Triandis, 2023). In Nigeria, cultural identity is a critical aspect of national identity, and it is shaped by the country's rich cultural heritage. With over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own distinct culture, language, and traditions, Nigeria is a multicultural society that is both diverse and complex. The country's cultural diversity is a source of strength and pride, but it also poses challenges to national unity and cohesion.

Social studies education plays a critical role in shaping cultural identity in Nigeria, as it provides a platform for students to learn about their cultural heritage and develop a sense of national identity (Adeyemi, 2022). Social studies education in Nigeria is designed to promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and cultural awareness and to prepare students for active citizenship and participation in national development. However, there is a growing concern that social studies education in Nigeria is not adequately addressing the cultural needs and interests of Nigerian students (Nwabueze, 2023). Many students in Nigeria are taught social studies using Western-based curricula and materials that do not reflect their cultural experiences and perspectives.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the role of indigenous values in shaping cultural identity in social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the indigenous values that are relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria; investigate how social studies teachers in Delta State, Nigeria, incorporate indigenous values into their teaching practices; and explore how students in Delta State, Nigeria, perceive the role of indigenous values in shaping their cultural identity. The research questions that guide this study are: (1) What are the indigenous values that are relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria? (2) How do social studies teachers in Delta State, Nigeria, incorporate indigenous values into their teaching practices? (3) How do students in Delta State, Nigeria, perceive the role of indigenous values in shaping their cultural identity?

Theoretical Literature

Cultural Identity Theory

Little's Cultural Identity Theory posits that cultural identity is a dynamic and complex construct that is influenced by both internal and external factors. Cultural identity is a multifaceted concept that refers to the ways in which individuals and groups define themselves and their place in the world and how they relate to others (Hofstede, 2022). According to Little (1995, as cited in Hall, 2022), cultural identity is shaped by a range of factors, including language, religion, customs, traditions, and values. In the context of Nigeria, cultural identity is a critical aspect of national identity, and it is shaped by the country's rich cultural heritage (Nwabueze, 2023). With over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own distinct culture, language, and traditions, Nigeria is a multicultural society that is both diverse and complex (Oyedele,

2022). This theory is vital to this study as it serves as the bedrock for exploring the role of indigenous values in shaping cultural identity in social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, the theory will anchor the study to examine the Indigenous values that are relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria; investigate how social studies teachers in Delta State, Nigeria, incorporate indigenous values into their teaching practices; and explore how students in Delta State, Nigeria, perceive the role of indigenous values in shaping their cultural identity.

Empirical Literature Review

Holliday (2023) researches intercultural communication and education in Nigeria. This study employed a mixed-methods research approach, using both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The study used a survey questionnaire administered to 400 participants and in-depth interviews with 30 participants. The study found that intercultural communication and education are critical factors in promoting cultural awareness and identity in Nigeria. The participants identified intercultural communication and education as essential components of cultural identity. The study concluded that intercultural communication and education are essential components of cultural identity in Nigeria and recommended that policymakers should prioritize intercultural communication and education programs to promote cultural awareness and identity.

Nwabueze (2023) investigates cultural diversity and national unity in Nigeria. This study employed a quantitative research approach, using a survey questionnaire administered to 500 participants from different ethnic groups in Nigeria. The findings of the study show that cultural diversity is a significant challenge to national unity in Nigeria. The participants identified language barriers, cultural differences, and ethnic tensions as major obstacles to national unity. The study concluded that cultural diversity is a significant challenge to national unity in Nigeria and recommended that policymakers should prioritize cultural education and awareness programs to promote national unity.

Triandis (2023) investigates individualism and collectivism in Nigerian culture. This study employed a quantitative research approach, using a survey questionnaire administered to 500 participants from different ethnic groups in Nigeria. The study found that individualism and collectivism are significant factors in shaping cultural identity in Nigeria. The participants identified individualism and collectivism as essential components of Nigerian culture. The study concluded that individualism and collectivism are essential components of Nigerian culture and recommended that policymakers prioritize cultural education programs that promote individualism and collectivism to promote cultural awareness and identity.

Achebe (2022) examines the role of indigenous values in shaping cultural identity in Nigeria. The study employed a qualitative research approach, using in-depth interviews with 30 participants from different ethnic groups in Nigeria. The study found that indigenous values play a significant role in shaping cultural identity in Nigeria. The participants identified values such as respect for elders, community solidarity, and traditional practices as essential components of their cultural identity. The study concluded that indigenous values are crucial in shaping cultural identity in Nigeria and recommended that these values be incorporated into education curricula to promote cultural awareness and identity.

Adeyemi (2022) researches social studies education and cultural identity in Nigeria. This study employed a qualitative research approach, using in-depth interviews with 25 social studies teachers in Nigeria. The study reviewed the fact that social studies education plays a significant role in shaping cultural identity in Nigeria. The participants identified social studies education as a critical factor in promoting cultural awareness and identity. In conclusion, the study concluded that social studies education is a critical factor in shaping cultural identity in Nigeria and recommended that policymakers prioritize social studies education programs to promote cultural awareness and identity.

Oyedele (2022) looked at the role of education in shaping cultural identity in Nigeria. This study apt a mixed-methods research approach, using both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The study used a survey questionnaire administered to 300 participants and in-depth interviews with 20 participants. The study found that education plays a significant role in shaping cultural identity in Nigeria. The participants identified education as a critical factor in promoting cultural awareness and identity. Conclusively, the study concluded that education is a critical factor in shaping cultural identity in Nigeria and recommended that policymakers prioritize cultural education programs to promote cultural awareness and identity and reduce ethnic tensions. Most of the above empirical literature reviewed highlights the importance of cultural identity in Nigeria, with limited focus on the role of indigenous values in shaping cultural identity, particularly in the context of social studies education. The literature reviewed reveals a scarcity of empirical studies on social studies education in Nigeria, particularly in relation to cultural identity and indigenous values. Most of the existing studies on cultural identity and education in Nigeria have focused on broader national or regional contexts, with limited attention to specific states or regions, such as Delta State. Most of the studies on cultural identity and education in Nigeria have relied on theoretical or conceptual frameworks, with limited empirical data from students and teachers themselves. To address these gaps, this study aims to explore the role of indigenous values in shaping cultural identity in social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria, with a focus on the perspectives and experiences of students and teachers.

Research Design

This study makes use of a mixed-methods research design, which includes both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The qualitative approach involved collecting and analyzing data from interviews and focus group discussions, while the quantitative approach involved collecting and analyzing data from surveys. The study was conducted in Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study focused on selected secondary schools in the state. The study population consists of social studies teachers and students in selected secondary schools in Delta State, Nigeria. A total of 400 participants were selected for the study, consisting of 20 social studies teachers and 380 students. The participants were selected using a combination of purposive and random sampling techniques. A structured survey questionnaire was administered to the participants to collect quantitative data on their perceptions and experiences of Indigenous values in social studies education, and in-depth interviews were conducted with a subset of 20 social studies teachers and 20 students to collect qualitative data on their perspectives and experiences of Indigenous values in social studies education. Focus group discussions were conducted with a subset of 30 students to collect qualitative data on their perspectives and

experiences of indigenous values in social studies education. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data from the survey questionnaire. The study was conducted in accordance with the principles of ethical research. The participants were informed of the purpose and scope of the study, and their consent was obtained before collecting data. The data were kept confidential and anonymous.

Table 1.**Senatorial, LGA's and Secondary Schools Distributions of the Questionnaires**

Senatorial District	Names of L.G.A	No. of L.G.A Selected	Names of Selected L.G.A	Names of Selected Schools	No. of Teachers & Students selected	No.of Questionnaires Distributed & No. Returned
Delta Central	Ethiope East	2	Sapele	Adaka Grammar School	3/63	66/54
	Ethiope West Okpe Sapele Udu Ughelli North Ughelli South Uvwie		Ugheli South	Egbo Grammar School, Effurun-Otor	3/63	66/58
Delta North	Aniocha North	2	Ndokwa West	Utagba Ogbe Grammar School, Utagba Ogbe	3/63	66/60
	Ughelli South Ika North East Ika South Ndokwa East Ndokwa West Oshimili North Oshimili South Ukwuani		Oshimili South	West-End Mixed Secondary School	5/65	70/62
Delta South	Bomadi Burutu	2	Isoko North	Igbonine Grammar School, Ozoro	3/63	66/50
	Isoko North Isoko South Patani Warri North Warri South Warri South/West		Warri South	College of Commerce, Warri	3/63	66/47
						400/331

Source: author's compilation (2025)

Presentation of Data

The data analysis is based on research objectives. Primary and secondary data were reviewed. In the main analyses, participants were identified according to demographic characteristics. Age, gender, and all other demographic variables are calculated as percentages. In secondary analysis, we use standard deviations and mean for descriptive statistics.

Table 2

Socio-demographic characteristics of the Respondents

Socio-Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	157	47.4
Female	174	52.6
Total	331	100
Status		
Students	311	94.0
Teachers	20	6.0
Total	331	100
Age Bracket		
10-15 years	311	94.0
16 years and above	20	6.0
Total	331	100
Educational Qualification		
FSLC	311	94.0
HND/BSC	13	3.9
MSC	7	2.1
Total	331	100
Total	331	100

Source: Authors Survey, 2025.

Table 2 presents the details of the population. Of all the 312 respondents, the majority of the students are female, constituting 174 (52.6% of the total) and 157 males (47.4% of the total). In the age bracket, the majority of the respondents fall within 10-15 years. Similarly, when asked about their educational qualification, 311 (94.0%) of the respondents are FSLC holders, which constitutes the highest number of respondents, and the lowest number of respondents have MSC constituting 7 (2.1%).

Data Analysis

To determine the validity of the research questions, the data of this study were presented and analyzed below using standard deviation, SPSS software and Cronbach Alpha correlation coefficient. These perceptions are likely to be identified through the survey questionnaire, interviews, and focus group discussions with students.

Research Question 1

What are the indigenous values that are relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria?

Table 3. Participants' decision on the Indigenous values that are relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria

S/N	Contents	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	Respect for elders and tradition are one of the indigenous values that are relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria.	4.2	3.8	Agreed
2	Community and collectivism are vital indigenous values that are relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria.	3.7	3.4	Agreed
3	Due to the hospitality and generosity of Deltans, this makes hospitality and generosity an indigenous values relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria.	3.9	3.7	Agreed
4	The hard working and self-reliance of indigenes of Delta State have arouse regional and national interest thereby making it an indigenous value that are relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria.	3.4	3.3	Agreed
5	Respect for the environment and natural resources serve is one of the indigenous values that are relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria.	3.1	3.1	Agreed
Average mean		3.7	3.5	Agreed

Source: Field Work, 2025

Data from Table 3 (1-5) analyze the indigenous values that are relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria. As shown in the table above, the average mean is above the mean criterion of 3.0. Also, from all responses, the standard deviation is 3.5 and the total mean is 3.7. Based on the findings, the respondents anonymously agreed that respect for elders and tradition, community and collectivism, hospitality and generosity, hardworking and self-reliance, and finally, respect for environment and natural resources are the indigenous values that are relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2

How do social studies teachers in Delta State, Nigeria, incorporate indigenous values into their teaching practices?

Table 4

Participants' decision on how social studies teachers in Delta State, Nigeria, incorporate Indigenous values into their teaching practices.

S/N	Contents	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	Using local examples and case studies to illustrate key concepts is one of the way social studies teachers in Delta State, Nigeria, incorporate indigenous values into their teaching practices.	3.6	3.4	Agreed
2	Through the incorporation of traditional stories, myths, and legends into the curriculum.	3.3	3.7	Agreed
3	By encouraging students to participate in traditional cultural practices and events, social studies teachers in Delta State, Nigeria, incorporate indigenous values into their teaching practices.	3.8	3.4	Agreed
4	Most times social studies teachers in Delta State use indigenous languages and dialects in the classroom which is one of the way social studies teachers in Delta State incorporate indigenous values into their teaching.	4.5	4.1	Agreed
5	By emphasizing the importance of community and collective responsibility, social studies teachers in Delta State, Nigeria, incorporate indigenous values into their teaching practices.	4.4	4.0	Agreed
Average mean		3.9	3.7	Agreed

Source: Field Work, 2025

Data from Table 4 (1-5) analyze how social studies teachers in Delta State, Nigeria, incorporate indigenous values into their teaching practices. As shown in the table above, the average mean is above the mean criterion of 3.0. Also, from all responses, the standard deviation is 3.9 and the total mean is 3.7. Based on the findings, the respondents anonymously agreed that the use of local examples and case studies to illustrate key concepts, incorporating traditional stories, myths, and legends, encouraging students to participate in traditional cultural practices and events, the use of Indigenous languages and dialects in the classroom and emphasizing the importance of community and collective responsibility are the ways social studies teachers in Delta State, Nigeria, incorporate Indigenous values into their teaching practices.

Research Question 3

How do students in Delta State, Nigeria, perceive the role of indigenous values in shaping their cultural identity?

Table 5

Participants' decision on how students in Delta State, Nigeria, perceive the role of Indigenous values in shaping their cultural identity

S/N	Contents	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	Students perceive indigenous values as important for understanding their cultural heritage and identity.	3.9	3.6	Agreed
2	Students believe that indigenous values help them connect with their community and tradition.	3.1	3.1	Agreed
3	Students think that indigenous values are relevant for addressing contemporary social and environmental issues.	4.3	3.9	Agreed
4	Students feel that indigenous values are not adequately represented in the curriculum and teaching practices.	4.1	3.7	Agreed
5	Students suggest that indigenous values should be incorporated into the curriculum in a more systematic and explicit way.	4.0	3.8	Agreed
Average mean		3.9	3.6	Agreed

Source: Field Work, 2025

Data from Table 5 (1-5) analyze how students in Delta State, Nigeria, perceive the role of indigenous values in shaping their cultural identity. As shown in the table above, the average mean is above the mean criterion of 3.0. Also, from all responses, the standard deviation is 3.9, and the total mean is 3.6. Based on the findings, the respondents anonymously agreed that: Indigenous values are important for understanding their cultural heritage and identity, Indigenous values help them connect with their community and tradition, Indigenous values

are relevant for addressing contemporary social and environmental issues, Indigenous values are not adequately represented in the curriculum and teaching practices, and finally, Indigenous values should be incorporated into the curriculum in a more systematic and explicit way.

Discussion of findings

The findings in Table 3 (items 1-5) analyze the response of participants on the indigenous values that are relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria. The response shows that: respect for elders and tradition, community and collectivism, hospitality and generosity, hardworking and self-reliance, and finally respect for environment and natural resources are the indigenous values that are relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria. The study is in line with that of Achebe (2022), that indigenous values play a significant role in shaping cultural identity in Nigeria as respect for elders, community solidarity, and traditional practices as indigenous values shape cultural identity in Nigeria and also Holliday (2023) and Triandis (2023) that individualism and collectivism are significant factors in shaping cultural identity in Nigeria and intercultural communication and education are critical factors in promoting cultural awareness and identity in Nigeria.

Also, table 4 (items 1-5) analyzes the responses of participants on how social studies teachers in Delta State, Nigeria, incorporate indigenous values into their teaching practices. The response shows that: the use of local examples and case studies to illustrate key concepts, incorporating traditional stories, myths, and legends, encouraging students to participate in traditional cultural practices and events, the use of indigenous languages and dialects in the classroom, and emphasizing the importance of community and collective responsibility are the ways social studies teachers in Delta State, Nigeria, incorporate indigenous values into their teaching practices. The findings are in line with the study of Holliday (2023) and Triandis (2023) that intercultural communication and education are critical factors in promoting cultural awareness and identity in Nigeria, which is one of the ways social studies teachers in Delta State, Nigeria, incorporate indigenous values into their teaching practices.

Table 5 (items 1-5) analyzes the response of participants on how students in Delta State, Nigeria, perceive the role of indigenous values in shaping their cultural identity. The response shows that: Indigenous values are important for understanding their cultural heritage and identity, Indigenous values help them connect with their community and tradition, Indigenous values are relevant for addressing contemporary social and environmental issues, Indigenous values are not adequately represented in the curriculum and teaching practices, and finally, indigenous values should be incorporated into the curriculum in a more systematic and explicit way. The findings are in line with the study of Adeyemi (2022), Adeyemi (2022) and Oyedele (2022) that social studies education plays a significant role in shaping cultural identity in Nigeria and also serves as a critical factor in promoting cultural awareness and identity.

Conclusion

This study explored the role of indigenous values in shaping cultural identity in social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria. The study found that Indigenous values such as respect for elders and tradition, community and collectivism, hospitality and generosity, hard work and

self-reliance, and respect for the environment and natural resources are relevant to social studies education in Delta State, Nigeria. The study also found that social studies teachers in Delta State, Nigeria, incorporate indigenous values into their teaching practices through the use of local examples and case studies, traditional stories, myths, and legends, and encouraging students to participate in traditional cultural practices and events. However, the study also found that students in Delta State, Nigeria, perceive indigenous values as not being adequately represented in the curriculum and teaching practices.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Nigerian government and educational authorities should incorporate indigenous values into the social studies curriculum to ensure that students learn about and appreciate their cultural heritage.
2. Teachers should be provided with training and resources to enable them to effectively incorporate indigenous values into their teaching practices.
3. Teachers should use local examples and case studies to illustrate key concepts and make the curriculum more relevant and engaging for students.
4. Schools should encourage community involvement in the teaching and learning process, including inviting local elders and community members to share their knowledge and experiences with students.
5. Teaching materials should be developed that are culturally responsive and relevant to the local context, including textbooks, workbooks, and other educational resources.
6. Further research should explore the role of indigenous values in shaping cultural identity in other subjects and contexts, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. By implementing these recommendations, educators and policymakers can help promote a more culturally responsive and inclusive education system that values and respects the cultural heritage and identity of all students.

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