

Development and Validation of the Students' Attitudes Toward Social Studies Scale (SAT3S)

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Abstract: Research focusing attitudes of students toward Social Studies have dealt with interest and usefulness of the subject. There are little or no validated instruments to measure other dimensions of students' attitudes toward the subject. The purpose of this study is to develop an instrument for measuring junior secondary school students' attitudes toward Social Studies. Based on an earlier study and literature search, items initially generated were content validated, and yielded a 62-item instrument. The instrument was later on administered to 1,630 students in the final year of the Junior Secondary School. Students responded to each item on a 4-point Likert type scale ranging from strongly agree - 4, agree-3, disagree-2 to strongly disagree - 1. Factor analysis yielded 4 dimensions. The entire scale yielded a reliability of 0.93, while its sub-scales' reliability indices range between 0.73 and 0.89.

Key words: Validation, social studies, students, SAT3S

INTRODUCTION

Student's attitude toward school subjects is a significant affective dimension that influences learning outcomes. Where as, many scholars agree that attitudes are as important in learning as the cognitive component (Obemeata, 1995; Yoloye, 1999) the difficulty in measuring students' attitudes toward learning seems to have shifted the focus, almost entirely, on measurement of the cognitive achievement in classroom assessment practices. Findings from research in different subjects indicate that students with positive attitudes toward school subjects perform better than students with negative attitudes (Olaoye, 2003; Yoloye, 1994). Fennema (1989) is of the opinion that performance is an interaction of behaviour during learning task. It then means that performance is a function of attitudinal disposition and other behaviour during the classroom interaction.

Even though studies that measured students' attitudes toward Social Studies are limited when compared with other school subjects such as mathematics and sciences, findings have been inconsistent and varied with culture. In the United States of America, for example, students' attitudes towards Social Studies have been consistently poor (Schug *et al.*, 1984) research in Western Australia highlighted two dimensions with regards to students' attitudes toward Social Studies. One, there is low status of Social Studies when compared with other school subjects. Findings from the study revealed that Social Studies ranked 12th among the 13 subjects listed.

Two, there is a decline in students' likeness for Social Studies from lower to upper primary school. Gender differences (Fouts, 1989; Gill, 1994; Hanson, 1992; Pettitt, 1995), teaching strategies and learning mode (Moroz, 1996; Fouts, 1989) are amongst the plausible reasons for the observed pattern of students' attitudes toward Social Studies.

Also, attitudinal studies in Social Studies have commonly focused on interest and perceived usefulness of the subject (Fraser, 1981; Thieveno and Moroz, 2005). Currently, there is dearth of validated instruments to measure students' attitudes toward Social Studies.

Therefore, the development of reliable and valid instruments is germane to tracking students' attitudes toward school subjects especially for a core subject such as Social Studies, which is regarded as a tool for Civic and Citizenship education (Moroz, 1996). Such instruments should not be limited to measuring students' attitudes along narrow dimensions of interest and likeness; other dimensions can be assessed with a reasonable level of confidence. The scale (SAT3S) included constructs that are considered important to attitudes toward Social Studies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Item development: A review of literature on measurement of attitudes and an earlier study conducted to assess students' attitudes toward Social Studies (Falaye, 2006), were valuable in generating the initial items contained in

the scale. The first version of the scale was reviewed by two Social Studies teachers and one test and measurement expert. The final instrument, which consists of 62 items, is made up of two sections.

This study contains items on respondents' demographics such as age and sex. The items measuring students' attitudes to Social Studies on a 4-point Likert scale.

Sample: The study involved all Junior Secondary School students in their final year. Social Studies is a core subject and hence it is compulsory for all students at this level. To enhance representativity, usability and the level of generalization of the instrument, co-educational and single-sex schools of similar status in terms of year of establishment were involved in the study. The sample consisted of 1, 630 students made up of 772 boys and 858 girls.

Procedure: The 62-item instrument was administered on all final year Social Studies students. They were requested to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each of the items measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2) to strongly disagree (1). Scores of negatively worded items were reversed; the higher the scores, the more positive the respondents' attitudes.

Data analysis: Principal component factor analysis with orthogonal varimax rotation was used to analyze the data in order to determine the number of underlying factors. A scree test was also used to determine the number of meaningful factors.

Two criteria were used to identify major factors of the scale.

- The Eigen value of the factor must be greater than 1 (Kaiser, 1960).
- The Scree plots for the factors must be on a slope (Stevens, 1992).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are discussed under the following:

- The number of interpretable components in the initial instrument.
- Minimum factor loading of the selected items.
- Reliability and Validity properties of the entire scale and its' components.

Interpretable components of the initial 62-item instrument: Four factors emerged using the 2 criteria. The

factors were named appropriately after reviewing the items under each component.

- Factor 1 : Self concept
- Factor 2 : Usefulness of Social Studies
- Factor 3 : Preference for Social Studies
- Factor 4 : Attitude towards Social Studies Teachers.

Minimum factor loading of the selected items: The minimum factor loading used for selection was approximately 0.4 (Table 1-4). This shows that each of the selected items has a meaningful association with respective factor under which it is highly loaded.

Reliability and validity estimates

Components of Student Attitude Towards Social Studies Scale (SAT3S): The cronbach reliability co-efficient

Table 1: Factor I-self concept

Item number	Factor loading	Final communality estimate
V37	0.672	0.561
V38	0.666	0.497
V48	0.661	0.513
V36	0.658	0.558
V42	0.654	0.484
V47	0.654	0.485
V44	0.642	0.475
V35	0.639	0.469
V43	0.628	0.430
V51	0.608	0.496
V50	0.583	0.473
V45	0.528	0.397
V41	0.471	0.346
Eigen value	14.33	
% of variance	23.12	

Table 2: Factor 2-Usefulness of Social Studies

Item number	Factor loading	Final communality estimate
V33	0.619	0.477
V29	0.602	0.442
V32	0.568	0.487
V35	0.554	0.479
V30	0.505	0.439
V13	0.481	0.443
Eigen value	6.06	
% of variance	9.77	

Table 3: Factor 3- Preference for social studies

Item number	Factor loading	Final communality estimate
V11	0.656	0.570
V40	0.637	0.552
V46	0.602	0.504
V34	0.546	0.525
V2	0.540	0.620
V1	0.514	0.484
V5	0.468	0.469
V12	0.454	0.439
V10	0.583	0.457
V3	0.549	0.539
V4	0.495	0.427
V14	0.421	0.460
Eigen value	1.59	
% of variance	2.57	

Table 4: Factor 4-attitude towards social studies teachers

Item number	Factor loading	Final communality estimate
V19	0.679	0.566
V21	0.667	0.566
V20	0.619	0.487
V18	0.600	0.538
V23	0.596	0.549
V60	0.558	0.498
V58	0.540	0.497
V17	0.525	0.612
V57	0.524	0.421
V15	0.507	0.556
V28	0.499	0.446
V24	0.492	0.519
V16	0.490	0.598
V25	0.450	0.496
V6	0.446	0.415
V22	0.442	0.581
V9	0.435	0.411
V55	0.433	0.485
V8	0.421	0.407
V59	0.414	0.508
V52	0.353	0.390
Eigen value	1.38	
% of variance	2.22	

alpha for each of the four sub-scales of the attitude towards Social Studies scale as presented in Table 1-4 was estimated to establish both construct validity and reliability of each of them.

For the first sub-scale which, is self concept, (factor 1), the established Cronbach reliability co-efficient alpha (R) for the items was 0.63. The R value was considered low, therefore all the items with corrected item total correlation less than 0.30 were discarded. When R was estimated on the retained items, R value increased to 0.89. Similar procedure was performed on the second sub-scale, which is usefulness of Social Studies (factor 2). The six items under the sub-scale produced R value of 0.68. When items with corrected item total correlation less than 0.30 were removed, R value increased to 0.73.

For factors 3 and 4 (Preference for Social Studies and attitudes toward Social Studies teachers), all the items were retained because none of them has corrected item total correlation less than 0.30. R values estimated for the preference for Social Studies and attitudes toward Social Studies teachers sub-scales were 0.76 and 0.83, respectively. It can then be concluded that each of the 4 sub-scales of the entire attitudes toward Social Studies scale was found to possess relatively high construct validity and reliability.

The entire Students' Attitudes Toward Social Studies Scale (SAT3S): All the items that were retained for the final version of the scale were subjected to reliability analysis. The Cronbach reliability co-efficient alpha (R) established on the entire scale was 0.93. This shows that the scale is highly reliable to measure students' attitudes toward Social Studies.

CONCLUSION

It is a general belief among scholars and educators that attitude is an important non-cognitive component of learning. Hitherto, there had been little or no comprehensive, valid and reliable scale to measure students' attitudes toward Social Studies. It is therefore imperative that attitudes of learners be assessed and nurtured with the aim of improving students' learning outcomes.

Social Studies, being a core subject, amongst other subjects at the secondary school level, it becomes necessary that a valid and reliable scale be developed to measure students' attitudes toward the subject. The psychometric properties of the entire SAT3S, as well as those of the four sub-scales that emerged after factor analyzing the data show that the scale can be used with a high level of confidence.

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