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TEAM BASED LEARNING AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN SOCIAL STUDIES AMONG PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN OGUN STATE

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Abstract

This research examined how team-based learning impacts the academic performance of pre-service teachers addressing controversial topics in social studies within Ogun state. The study employed a quasi-experimental design, consisting of one experimental group and one control group, and incorporated pre-tests, an intervention, and post-tests. The study population included all second-year pre-service social studies teachers at both government colleges of education in Ogun state (Federal College of Education, Osiele, and Sikiru Adetona College of Technology and Education, Omu-Ijebu). The sample comprised seventy (70) volunteers. Three hypotheses were evaluated in this study. Three research instruments were utilized: the Team-Based Learning Package (TBLP), the Conventional Method Training Package (CMTP), and the Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT) with a reliability coefficient of .72. The program lasted for six weeks. Data collected was analyzed using ANCOVA. The analysis results indicated that team-based learning was significantly more effective than traditional methods in improving the learning outcomes of pre-service teachers regarding controversial issues in social studies. Additionally, academic ability had a notable impact, favoring students with higher academic performance. The findings suggest that team-based learning can greatly enhance students' academic success in social studies. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the government organize seminars and lectures to improve teachers' innovative strategic skills.

Keywords: Team-based learning, Conventional method, Controversial issues, Social Studies, Academic ability.

Introduction

Education serves as a tool utilized by various nations to enhance individuals' abilities to thrive as members of society and make meaningful contributions to national progress (Gana, Abdullahi & Abdullahi, 2023). At all educational levels in Nigeria, objectives prioritize the cultivation and reinforcement of critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal communication skills. To accomplish these goals, students must actively engage in the teaching and learning process. It is essential for educators to establish a learning environment that connects the theoretical knowledge students acquire in the classroom with their practical experiences. This growing concern regarding the attainment of educational objectives through conventional teaching methods has led to calls from curriculum experts for a greater emphasis on interactive teaching strategies that involve students more deeply in the learning process. Implementing various innovative and active learning strategies is vital for improving

students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Embracing active learning and student-centered approaches aids in enhancing students' comprehension of various concepts introduced by the teacher during the educational process. Recently, a notable trend in education emphasizing teaching and learning is the push from stakeholders for a shift towards and promotion of a student-centered approach, knowledge integration, and the incorporation of technology. Educators are endorsing strategies designed to enhance students' problem-solving and critical-thinking abilities to meet overall educational objectives. Numerous instructional methods have been recognized for their potential to elevate students' levels of interaction, collaboration, and discussion (Christopher, Guffey & Williams, 2021; Flores et al., 2024; Tabibi et al., 2020). This has contributed to the growing prominence of active and cooperative learning. One significant collaborative learning method that merges problem-solving and student-centeredness is Team-Based Learning (TBL). TBL integrates the benefits of teamwork with structured accountability and organized instructional sequences (Michaelsen, 2004; Sibley and Ostafichuk, 2014). Team-Based Learning emphasizes small-group collaboration and active participation from students.

Team-Based Learning (TBL) is an active instructional method and collaborative learning strategy that enables students to utilize their theoretical knowledge through a range of individual and group activities while also offering immediate feedback (Abd El Latif & Wafaa, 2018). TBL integrates aspects of student-centered learning and problem-solving, enhancing student engagement, which leads to outcomes like knowledge retention, academic success, and better critical thinking skills (Abd El Latif & Wafaa, 2018). It involves a cooperative and active learning model where the instructor assigns academic tasks beforehand, assesses students' knowledge levels at a group level based on their recorded performance, and then corrects any misconceptions (Barton et al., 2017). TBL is a collaborative learning method that prepares students with essential skills needed for the workplace. Given the nature of social studies, which focuses on students addressing and resolving social issues either solo or collaboratively, the integration of team-based learning into social studies education is supported. Research on the benefits of TBL has predominantly emerged from the field of medical sciences (Elamin et al., 2024; Gana et al., 2023; Tabibi et al., 2020). A key question of this study is how effectively TBL will produce similar outcomes in the realm of social studies education. Therefore, this research evaluated the influence of team-based learning on the academic performance of pre-service social studies teachers in Ogun State, particularly regarding contentious topics within the subject.

Literature Review

Team-Based Learning (TBL), introduced by Michaelsen in the 1970s, was developed to boost student engagement in large college-level business courses. Since its inception, TBL has been implemented across various educational domains, including nursing, to enhance student participation, performance, accountability, and overall engagement (Abd El-Latif et al., 2018; Elamin et al., 2024), as well as in Pharmacotherapeutics courses to improve knowledge application, teamwork, and lifelong learning skills (Tami et al., 2017). TBL is an active instructional method that emphasizes small group learning, allowing students to put theoretical concepts into practice through a range of individual and group tasks while receiving immediate feedback (Abd El Latif & Wafaa, 2018). This teaching approach promotes active, cooperative participation whereby learners can interact and generate new knowledge (Tabibi, 2020).

TBL blends problem-solving elements with a student-centered focus to enhance engagement, achieve learning outcomes, and foster critical thinking while also improving retention and academic success (Abd El Latif & Wafaa, 2018). The objectives of TBL include strengthening students' problem-solving abilities, increasing classroom participation, and encouraging active learning environments (Tabibi, 2020). The framework of TBL is rooted in individual and group engagement, as well as student involvement in discussions. Over time, TBL has attracted the interest of educators from various academic fields (Flores-Cohaila et al., 2024). The main aim of TBL is for students to utilize course content to address complex challenges (Sibley & Ostafichuk, 2014). TBL enhances engagement levels, improves academic results, and develops problem-solving skills, particularly among lower-performing students (Deamley et al., 2018). Students report heightened satisfaction regarding the quality of their learning experiences, teamwork, clinical reasoning, professional growth, and confidence in their problem-solving abilities (Kim et al., 2016). Through TBL, learners can apply their knowledge through structured and carefully designed activities organized by instructors. This approach positively influences teamwork, collaborative abilities, communication skills, and problem-solving (Swanson et al., 2019). Furthermore, TBL allows educators to manage several small groups effectively within a classroom setting. It fosters more profound and more effective learning experiences while alleviating stress and workload, thereby enhancing students' preparedness for classroom participation.

Team-Based Learning (TBL) is implemented in phases. The first phase consists of preparation by individual students followed by a readiness assurance test taken by students during class; this is then succeeded by a team readiness assurance test, problem-solving application exercises, and prompt feedback (Burgess & Matar, 2020). TBL effectively merges the benefits of collaborative learning with systems of accountability and organized instructional sequences (Michaelsen, 2004; Sibley & Ostafichuk, 2014). The success of TBL hinges on four critical components: "teams must be appropriately formed and managed; motivated to arrive at class prepared; learn to apply course concepts to tackle problems, and must be genuinely accountable" (Sibley and Ostafichuk, 2014: 9). It is essential for the educator to ensure that teams consist of approximately 5 to 7 members with similar levels of ability.

The main purpose of introducing Social Studies into Nigerian schools was to provide students with a comprehensive learning that encourages civic participation, critical thinking, and a sense of national cohesion to tackle current national issues. At its introduction, Social Studies was part of the national curriculum, aimed at supporting social development and civic education goals. The Nigerian Social Studies curriculum embraces a multidisciplinary approach designed to equip learners with the necessary knowledge, skills, and values to actively engage in society. The curriculum emphasizes the cultivation of values and informed perspectives (Odia & Aghaowa, 2019). Social Studies centers on exploring human interactions with society. It focuses on fostering interaction, enhancing pupils' problem-solving abilities, conducting research, and developing collaboration and social entrepreneurship skills. The subject is flexible, allowing for various strategies to achieve its objectives. Many instructional methods in Social Studies classrooms prioritize self-directed learning with the student at the forefront. Social Studies educators are expected to provide not only theoretical instruction but also practical knowledge that students can apply in their everyday lives through experiential learning (Özcan & Gültekin, 2024). One effective and collaborative approach that can be utilized in teaching and learning Social Studies is team-based learning.

Controversial topics are among the subjects that students encounter during their social studies education. Teaching themes such as violence related to elections, acceptance of election outcomes, separatist movements in the southeast, issues of ethnicity and religious affiliation, freedom of expression and media, as well as the challenges of poverty, inequality, Boko Haram, and banditry in the northwest and northeast, necessitates the teacher's expertise to effectively engage students. Instructing on controversial topics demands values such as open-mindedness, respect for differing opinions, awareness of participation, skepticism, appreciation of diversity, critical thinking, and effective interpersonal communication skills (Misco, 2020). Engaging in discussions around controversial matters is one method used in social studies education to enhance student participation in class (Özcan & Gültekin, 2024). These controversial subjects often provoke thought and discussion, enable students to form opinions on certain issues, and create opportunities for addressing matters that increase students' interest, tolerance, engagement, and political efficacy (Alarcon & Bellows, 2017; McAvoy & Ho, 2020). Moreover, encouraging students to engage in discussions about social problems and controversial topics prompts them to reflect on societal issues that impact their community. Additionally, meaningful engagement of students fosters their roles as active citizens who are aware of social and global challenges, propose compromise solutions, and enhance their communication abilities (Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Pace, 2021).

One moderating factor considered in this study is academic ability. Ability grouping refers to the placement of students into different categories based on their previous academic performance. Soluade and Sofadekan (2019) and Wang, King, and McInerney (2024) have identified variations in students' academic outcomes linked to their ability levels and grouping, with high-ability students performing better. Conversely, Saka (2024) has observed no significant impact of ability grouping on students' academic success. The mixed findings regarding the effect of academic ability on students' performance highlight the necessity for additional research into the moderating roles of academic ability.

Tami et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative comparison of students' attitudes and perceptions towards team-based learning (TBL) versus traditional lectures, employing a randomized, prospective, cross-over design. The researchers analyzed student feedback using a grounded theoretical coding approach. The findings indicated that team-based learning enhances students' comprehension of course material (both knowledge and application), promotes teamwork abilities, and fosters skills for lifelong learning. Tabibi et al. (2020) evaluated the influence of team-based learning on the performance of medical students enrolled in the Medical Physics course, utilizing a quasi-experimental sample of 28 medical students from Qom University of Medical Sciences, Iran. The outcomes revealed that a majority of participants preferred the TBL approach over lectures, and that the TBL strategy motivated them to take part in the learning process. Additionally, the performance of students who engaged in TBL in the Medical Physics course was enhanced compared to their performance in previous courses.

Abdulmutallib et al. (2021) investigated the effect of a team-based strategy on students' achievement in Business Statistics at the Federal College of Education (Technical), Gombe, using a quasi-experimental design. The research sample included two intact classes comprising one hundred and eighty-nine (189) NCE III Business Education students specializing in Accounting. The data were analyzed utilizing mean, standard deviation, and

an independent t-test. The results indicated that students instructed through the team-based strategy exhibited a statistically significant greater understanding of business statistics compared to those who learned through the conventional lecture approach. Gana et al. (2023) examined the effects of team-based learning on secondary school students' academic performance and retention in the teaching of the nervous system (Biology) in Niger state, using a quasi-experimental design. The study sample consisted of one hundred and fifty-five (155) students selected through stratified random sampling techniques. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (t-test). The findings indicated that students in the experimental group (Team-Based Learning) achieved and retained knowledge better than those in the control group (Lecture method). Elamin et al. (2024) assessed students' accountability, performance, and satisfaction with the team-based learning strategy, while also considering the impacts of gender and cumulative grade point average. The sample comprised two hundred and fourteen students from the College of Nursing and Health Sciences at Jazan University, Saudi Arabia. Descriptive statistics, chi-square, and multilevel regression analyses were utilized to evaluate student accountability, preferences, and satisfaction with team-based learning through an online survey. The findings revealed that team-based learning increased student engagement, performance, and accountability, with a notable gender effect favoring males.

Statement of the Problem

Team-based learning (TBL) has become increasingly popular in higher education, particularly within the medical and business disciplines. Although TBL has been widely implemented in medical, nursing, and other science courses, its effectiveness in social sciences and specifically social studies remains to be explored. Additionally, given that social studies emphasize developing essential skills to address various social problems and engage in unbiased discussions about controversial topics, there is a need to explore various innovative strategies. Consequently, this study evaluates how team-based learning impacts the academic performance of pre-service teachers in Ogun state regarding controversial issues in social studies.

Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in Vygotsky's Socio-Constructivist Theory of Learning from the 1920s. Social constructivism is a cooperative learning approach that relies on interaction, dialogue, and sharing knowledge among learners. Lev Vygotsky popularized this theory in 1968. It highlights the significance of language and culture as the lenses through which people perceive, communicate, and comprehend reality. The foundation of the theory lies in the idea that knowledge is not a mere reflection of an objective reality; instead, it results from the mind selecting, interpreting, and reconstructing experiences. Social constructivism posits that knowledge arises from the interaction of subjective viewpoints and environmental influences. The development of new knowledge entails processes of construction, storage, and retrieval. The social constructivist teaching approach prioritizes social interactions and positions the teacher as a facilitator of learning. It operates under the assumption that learning transpires through social interactions and assistance from others, often within a group context. Furthermore, an individual's understanding is molded through these social interactions. The teacher's responsibility is to use methods that center around learners and promote collaboration. Students collaborate in groups to exchange ideas, solve problems, or create new contributions to existing knowledge. The theory also downplays repetitive teaching styles,

advocating instead for dynamic interactions among students, teachers, and other elements of the educational experience. It enhances the retention of knowledge by ensuring that students remember the facts they discover and construct on their own rather than solely those imparted by their teachers, among other advantages. Social constructivism operates under the tenets that knowledge is built through human activities; reality is shaped by classroom members and learning is a dynamic. It also incorporates the belief that individuals construct their understanding. Each new piece of knowledge enhances a person's comprehension, indicating that learning is a social endeavor, an active process, and that mental engagement and motivation are crucial to learning. Social constructivism is often referred to as collaborative learning due to its emphasis on interaction, discussion, and student collaboration. This educational strategy allows for various group dynamics and interactive techniques, which may involve large class discussions, small group dialogues, or pairs of students working on specific projects or assignments (Akpan et al., 2020). The core aspect of the theory is that learners share ideas, engage in brainstorming, seek to understand cause-and-effect relationships, resolve problems, or generate new knowledge. The connection between this theory, which centers on social interactions, and team-based learning, which revolves around group activities, lies in the shared emphasis on social engagement, interaction, and the enhancement of students' problem-solving skills for effective learning to occur.

Objectives

1. Assess the influence of team-based learning on the students' academic performance in controversial issues among pre-service teachers in Ogun state
2. Examine the moderating role of academic ability on the academic performance of pre-service teachers in controversial issues in social studies when taught with team-based learning and conventional methods.

Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were raised for the study.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean post-test achievement scores of students exposed to controversial issues in social studies under different conditions.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the post-test mean achievement scores of students with different academic abilities.

Methodology

The study was conducted using a quasi-experimental design, including one group that received the treatment and a control group, employing pre-tests, interventions, and post-tests. Participants in this research consisted of pre-service social studies teachers from the Federal College of Education, Osiele, and Sikiru Adetona College of Technology and Education, Omu-Ijebu. These two institutions are the only government-owned colleges of education in Ogun state. A total of seventy (70) volunteer students were chosen for the study, with thirty-five (35) students from each college. The pre-service social studies students at Federal College of Education Osiele participated in Team-Based Learning, while the pre-service social studies students from Sikiru Adetona College of Technology and Education, Omu-Ijebu served as the control group. The research employed three main tools: the Team-Based Learning Package (TBLP), the Conventional Method Training Package (CMTP), and the Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT). The procedural materials focused on subjects such as separatist movements, election-related violence, ethnicity and freedom of expression, and media

control, all derived from controversial topics within the social studies National Certificate in Education syllabus. To ensure the content and face validity of these tools, experts in measurement and education reviewed the materials. Their feedback was used to make necessary adjustments to the instruments. Furthermore, a pilot test of the tools was carried out with a randomly selected group of 30 students from Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Ijanikin, Lagos State, who were not part of the main research. The reliability of the instruments was determined using the split-half method, resulting in a reliability coefficient of 0.72. The program took place over a six-week period. In the initial week, a pre-test was administered to the students based on selected themes from the NCE II social studies curriculum. Following the pre-test, both groups participated in four weeks of instructional sessions focusing on separatist movements, election-related violence, ethnicity and freedom of expression, and media regulation. Each session lasted 40 minutes daily and included student preparation, a student readiness assurance test, followed by a team readiness assurance test, practical exercises for problem-solving, and immediate feedback. After the instruction period, a post-test was given to participants in both groups, and the gathered data were analyzed using ANCOVA inferential statistics.

Results

Ho_1: There is no significant difference in the mean post-test achievement scores of students exposed to controversial issue in social studies under different conditions.

Table 1: Summary of the Analysis of Covariance Test on Students' Achievement Score in Controversial Issues in Social Studies According to Teaching Strategies and Ability Grouping.

Source	Type III Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	659.036[a]	4	164.759	65.139	.000	.800
Intercept	163.350	1	163.350	64.582	.000	.498
Pretest	60.099	1	60.099	23.761	.000	.268
Group	24.991	1	24.991	9.880	.003	.132
Ability Grouping	254.704	1	254.704	100.700	.000	.608
Group * AG	26.804	1	26.804	10.597	.002	.140
Error	164.406	65	2.529			
Total	22331.000	70				
Corrected Total	823.443	69				

R Squared = .800 (Adjusted R Squared = .788)

1 shows the result of the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) test of the main effect of treatment on academic performance and ability grouping. The result points to a significant main effect of treatment ($F(2, 65) = 9.880$, $P < 0.05$). This implies that the difference in the students' post-test mean knowledge scores on controversial issues in social studies after exposure to treatment is statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. Hence, there is significant difference in the mean post-test achievement scores of students exposed to controversial issues in social studies under different conditions. The students in the experimental group (team-based learning) performed better than students in the control group. Therefore, the null hypothesis Ho_1 is rejected.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference in the post-test mean achievement scores of students With different academic abilities.

The result points to a significant main effect of treatment ($F(2, 65) = 100.700$, $P < 0.05$). This revealed significant main effect of academic ability on the students' post-test achievement scores on controversial issues in social studies. This outcome implies that the post-test mean achievement scores of high and low academic ability students are significantly different at the .05 level. As a result, null hypothesis two is rejected.

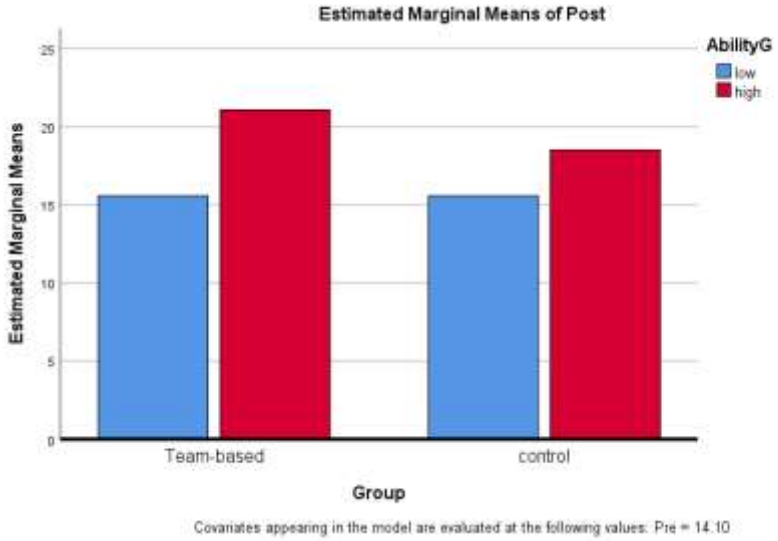

Figure 1: Interaction effect of teaching strategies and academic ability on the students' achievement scores.

The illustration in fig.1 shows that the high academic ability group recorded a higher mean score than the low academic ability group under the team-based learning and conventional method.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from Ho_1 indicated a notable main effect of instructional strategies on students' learning outcomes regarding controversial topics in social studies. The results further showed that the experimental group (team-based learning) outperformed the control group (conventional method). This aligns with the conclusions of Tabibi et al. (2020), Abdulmutallib et al. (2021), Gana et al. (2023), and Elamin et al. (2024), whose research demonstrated the efficacy of team-based learning in enhancing student academic success following the intervention. However, this finding contrasts with those of Soluade (2018) and Akinola (2023), who observed no significant difference in students' performance concerning the civic education component of social studies. Additionally, this outcome supports the theory of social constructivism, which posits that learning occurs through interaction, discussion, and shared knowledge among peers. The findings may be attributed to the level of interaction that team-based learning facilitates among students, as learners are more motivated when engaging with their peers. Specifically, the results indicated that team-based learning holds greater potential for enhancing students' academic performance compared to conventional

teaching methods. Regarding the findings of Ho_2, the results indicated a significant difference in the performance of students engaged with controversial issues in social studies, based on their academic ability. This finding is corroborated by research conducted by Soluade et al. (2019) and Wang et al. (2024), who identified significant performance differences among students based on academic ability. This result contradicts the findings of Saka (2024), who reported no significant impact of ability grouping on students' academic achievement. This indicates that a student's academic ability can influence their academic performance, regardless of the instructional strategies applied.

Conclusion

The research investigates how team-based learning impacts the academic performance of pre-service teachers discussing contentious topics in social studies in Ogun state. A notable primary effect of team-based learning on student academic performance was observed. This indicates that team-based learning can enhance students' learning outcomes in social studies. Furthermore, significant influences of academic ability on students' performance were noted. This suggests that a student's academic capability is vital in determining their academic success.

Recommendations

In light of the findings, the following suggestions are proposed:

1. Team-based learning, which emphasizes collaboration and problem-solving, is shown to be more effective than traditional teaching methods in social studies. Therefore, social studies educators should adopt innovative and interactive approaches such as team-based learning to boost students' engagement in classroom activities and improve academic success.
2. Educators and prospective teachers should gain familiarity with team-based learning models through workshops and seminars facilitated by the government and other relevant parties.
3. Curriculum developers and implementing bodies should promote team-based strategies in Nigeria.

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