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## Knowledge of domestic violence as correlate of social studies students' interest and academic engagement in Anambra state

**Josephine Ngozi Morah**

Department of Arts and Social Science Education, Faculty of Education  
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Corresponding Author's Email: [jn.morah@coou.edu.ng](mailto:jn.morah@coou.edu.ng)

### Abstract

*The study determined how knowledge of domestic violence as correlates to undergraduate students' academic interest and engagement in social studies in upper basic education in Anambra State, Nigeria. Three (3) purposes of the study, three (3) research questions and two (2) hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted correlational survey design. The population of the study is sixty thousand three hundred and seventy-one (60371) students in upper basic education in Anambra State. The sample size of this study comprised three hundred and ninety-seven (397) students of Upper Basic Education in Anambra State. Data was collected using Students' Knowledge of Domestic Violence Questionnaire, Students' Academic Engagement Questionnaire (SAEQ), and Social Studies Interest Scale (SSIS). Reliability indices of 0.89, 0.86 and 0.86 respectively. The data collected were analyzed using SPSS and interpreted using mean, standard deviation, and regression analysis. The findings of the study among others were that there is significant relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their interest and engagement in social studies. The study recommended that Schools should work closely with families and community to provide comprehensive support for students affected by domestic violence among other recommendations.*

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, knowledge, interest, academic engagement, social studies

### Introduction

Domestic violence has become a burning social issue that requires stakeholders' attention on addressing the issue especially as it concerns the school children. It however become pertinent to start making positive impact on the school children through school subjects like social studies, which educates students on social issues. Social Studies is an integrated subject that deals with the activities of man especially interactions with one another in the environment (Arisi, 2015). The subject is designed to develop in the learners the ability to effect change in the democratic process of their communities and encourages harmonious coexistence through tolerance. According to National Council for Social Studies (2010), Social Studies is a discipline that inculcates in the learner the ability to make rational decisions for the public good as citizens of culturally diverse, democratic societies in an interdependent world. The need to raise responsible and responsive citizens through social studies cannot be underestimated because it is enriched with the basic knowledge and skills that will help the school children to interact meaningfully with their fellow human beings including their environments. Morah (2023) opined that Social Studies is a subject designed to build a sound and balanced mind,



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societal values, skills, knowledge and attitude to the learner, it's a foundation for functional social education directed towards the development of intelligent, responsible and self-directing citizen. It is pertinent to note that societies use school subjects to transmit worthwhile knowledge into their younger ones. Social studies are one of those subjects that is capable of encouraging young ones to be responsible and grow into peaceful citizens that are capable of expressing love to themselves and people around them.

The introduction of Social Studies into Nigeria's educational system (like every other country) was based on this need to meet societal needs and aspirations, and use the education so gained to promote national integration (Meziobi, Nzokurun and Meziobi, 2014). The objectives of Social Studies as stated in the National Curriculum published by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2007:iii) are to help students: develop the ability to adapt to the changing environment; become responsible and disciplined individuals capable and willing to contribute to the development of the society; inculcate the right type of values; develop the sense of comprehension as citizens towards other people, their diverse cultures, history and those fundamental things that make them human; develop the capacity to recognize the many dimensions of being human in different cultural and social context and; develop a sense of solidarity and sharing security in one's own identity.

Bearing the above objectives in mind, it is envisaged that the teaching and learning of the subject would help children to develop into adulthood who will live in harmony in their various family without domestic violence or engage in other social vices. Although Social Studies is taught as a core subject at junior secondary schools, many students still find it difficult to develop interest and engaged in classroom activities (Lloyd, 2018). It is worthy of note that national values are incorporated into social studies programs in order to help foster civic responsibility and active citizenship among students (NCSS, 2010). Understanding national values is crucial for appreciating one's own culture and respecting others' culture too. This is capable of promoting global unity and peace. This may also aid in the alleviation of emotional and psychological trauma children experience at home, which sometimes results from domestic violence.

Domestic violence is a social issue that school children or any other person will not like to face at least for the sake of their sanity. Domestic violence refers to violence against a person, or a threat of violence or imminent danger by someone who that person has been in a domestic relationship with such as a father, mother, children, and guardians (Reddy, 2017). Facing intimidation or marginalization from family members who are supposed to protect someone's interest may be highly discouraging in all ramifications especially as it concerns academics. No child will be happy to see his parents intimidate each other, such will likely affect the activities of the child at school. In line with the above, The United States Department of Justice (2017) defines domestic violence as a pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power over another intimate partner.

There are various types of domestic violence and they include the following as outlined by Mission Australia (2021), physical abuse (which involves the use of weapon or other harmful materials to injure someone), emotional abuse (bullying someone to the extent of affecting the person's self-worth), financial abuse (taking complete control or restricting a partner access to bank accounts, social abuse (isolating one from making friends), sexual abuse (this involves having intimacy of the other partner without their consent), elder or child abuse (neglecting to take care of children or elderly person at home is also a form of abuse. It is pertinent to understand that whichever form of domestic violence that is meted out on someone is capable of affecting the person either emotionally, psychologically, socially or educationally. But for this research is focused on the educational effects of domestic violence. It seems that sometimes people abuse each other without even showing any form of concern and this is capable of affecting the self-esteem of the victim. Most times people's beliefs tend to make them involve in domestic violence without realizing the gravity of what they are doing. In Anambra for

example, which is an Igbo land man are usually regarded as superior to women and as such most Anambra men try to make their wives to submit to them wrongly there by encouraging domestic violence.

Understanding students' knowledge of domestic violence in relation to Social Studies students' interest and academic engagement in the modern world cannot be underestimated. The nature of activities obtainable in the families of the students are likely to determine their interest in school activities. Students' interest can be defined as an individual's present experience that arouses his action in activities. It could be seen as more lasting feelings derived from an event or activity that is enjoyable which results in persistence in a task (Harackiewicz, Smith & Priniski, 2016). Therefore, students' interest can be a psychological state that increases attention and effort, experienced in particular activities or topics over time (Soledad, 2019). According to Norshariani, Abed, Ria, and Lilia (2018), students' interest is a natural tendency or curiosity to participate in school activities and choose a particular learning task or career.

Most times the existing domestic violence at home may influence the interest of the students to the extent that their academic engagement is negatively affected too. The interest of students in Social Studies classroom activities can be directly influenced by the domestic violence actions such as bullying, beating, starving, hatred, low academic attention, sexual and verbal abuse among others. Students from violent families or homes seem to be dull and exhibit behaviour of withdrawal in activities (Arisukwu, Olaosebikan, Asaleye and Asamu, 2019). The conditions that emanate from dysfunctional families can make students like or dislike events or activities in schools. Students that dislike activities in school may find it difficult to engage in schoolwork. This ugly menace called domestic violence some students experience at home sometimes between their parents negates their academic engagement in school. This is because it goes to the extent of influencing the type of parenting, they receive at home in terms of parenting styles. Morah (2022) opined that parenting styles involves the type of control exercised by parents over their children. Sometimes parents switch to being toxic while disciplining their children thereby exposing the children to domestic violence and causing chaos in their academics.

Students' academic engagement is a broad and complex phenomenon for which there are many definitions. This is because the concept of students' academic engagement is grounded in psychological, social, and/or cultural perspectives (Center for Postsecondary Research, 2017). Students' academic engagement can be defined in two ways. One set of definitions refers to student engagement as a desired outcome reflective of a student's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors about learning. For example, Williams and Whiting (2016) define student engagement as an individual psychological State that includes a student's effect, cognition, and behaviour.

Engagement can also focus primarily on student behaviour. According to Okeke (2017), students' academic engagement is the extent to which students are engaging in learning activities that could be directly linked with high-quality learning outcomes (achievement). It could also be defined as the quality of effort and involvement in productive learning activities (Krause & Coates, 2018). More so, students' academic engagement is a process involving both the student and the learning institutions which could be influenced by risk factors of domestic violence. For example, Fagioli, Rios-Aguilar, and Deil-Amen (2015) maintain that students' academic engagement is the interaction between the time, effort, and other relevant resources invested by both students and their schools intended to optimize the students' interest and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students' academic engagement.

Domestic violence is a pervasive societal issue with far-reaching implications for the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of its victims. Among adolescents, exposure to domestic violence has been linked to negative educational outcomes, including reduced interest in school subjects and lower levels of academic engagement. In Anambra State, studies

have revealed alarming rates of domestic violence, with adolescents being directly or indirectly affected. Despite the growing recognition of domestic violence as a public health and educational concern, the extent of students' knowledge about this issue remains underexplored in the educational context of Anambra State. This knowledge gap poses a significant barrier to implementing effective interventions that promote students' academic and social well-being. This study thus determined how knowledge of domestic violence correlates with social studies students' interest and academic engagement in Upper Basic Education in Anambra State.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the extent of students' knowledge about domestic violence?
2. What is the relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their interest in social studies?
3. What is the relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their active academic engagement?

### **Hypotheses**

1. Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their interest in social studies
2. Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their active academic engagement

### **Research Method**

The design of this study was correlational survey design in which the variables were not manipulated nor controlled. The study was carried out in Anambra State, Nigeria. The population of this study comprised sixty thousand three hundred and seventy-one (60371) students in upper basic education in Anambra State (Post Primary School Service Commission, Awka, 2024). Out of the population, twenty-nine thousand three hundred and forty-three (29343) are male students while thirty-one thousand three hundred and seventy-one (31028), are female students in upper basic education in Anambra State. The sample size of this study comprised three hundred and ninety-seven (397) students of Upper Basic Education in Anambra State. The sample distribution by gender is (190 male students and 207 female students from JSS 1-3 classes). Taro Yamane formula was used to compute the sample size, which was then selected through multistage sampling technique.

Three (3) instruments structured by the researcher were used for data collection in this study. These include Students' Knowledge of Domestic Violence Questionnaire (SKDVQ), Students' Academic Engagement Questionnaire (SAEQ), and Social Studies Interest Scale (SSIS). were validated by three lecturers; two from the Department of Social Science Education, and one lecturer from the Department of Science Education, all from the University of Nigeria Nsukka. The validators looked at the objectives of the study in line with research questions and hypotheses. The drafted and validated instruments for data collection were trial tested to determine their internal consistency. Thirty (30) copies of each of the instruments were administered to 30 JSS 3 students from junior secondary schools in Enugu State which is outside the area of the study. Reliability indices of 0.89, 0.86, and 0.86 were obtained for the SKDVQ, SAEQ and SSIS respectively using Cronbach Alpha. Direct delivery and retrieval method was used to collect data, which was analysed using SPSS v. 25. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation (for RQ 1) correlation coefficient (r) for RQ 2 and 3, while the hypotheses were tested using probability values in regression ANOVA.

## Results

**Table 1: Extent of students' knowledge about domestic violence.**

SN	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	The act of intimidating someone at home to do something against his will is domestic violence	3.58	0.76	HE
2.	When the father abandons the mother and children without providing their needs is domestic violence	2.75	0.83	HE
3.	Most times my father beats my mother over every issue at home	2.33	0.85	LE
4.	I dislike going home after school as a result of frequent fights between my father and mother	2.50	1.39	HE
5.	I am usually depressed due to the ongoing trauma at home	2.41	1.04	LE
6.	Sometimes I develop psychosomatic symptoms like headaches or stomachaches because of numerous tasks at home	2.41	1.04	LE
7.	I sleep very late at night as a result of numerous tasks to complete at home	2.08	0.86	LE
8.	My mother usually takes me and my siblings to our maternal home whenever there is an issue between her and our father	2.83	1.15	HE
9.	I am usually absent from school as result of frequent fights between my father and mother.	2.66	0.85	HE
10.	I always find it difficult to concentrate in the class activities whenever my parents abuse my capability in school	2.83	1.07	HE
11.	I come to school most times without eating because my father did not provide anything for my mother to take care of us.	1.91	0.86	LE
12.	Verbal abuse against me discourages my academic interest	2.75	1.01	HE
13.	I have challenges in maintaining healthy relationships	2.25	0.83	LE
14.	My parents do not always provide learning materials for me	2.83	1.15	HE
15.	Sometimes I experience feelings of helplessness	2.60	0.88	HE
16.	Most times I feel ashamed of my parents' incessant quarrels at home	2.41	1.04	LE
17.	I always wish there is someone I can confide in concerning the domestic violence I experience at home	3.08	1.12	HE
18.	I am usually worried about the ability of my confidant concealing the experiences of domestic violence I want to share	2.50	1.04	HE
19.	I am usually afraid to speak up because my father does not tolerate my mother to speak up at home	2.91	1.04	HE
20.	Domestic violence is not a good thing to behold	2.16	1.07	LE
21.	I feel so angry and irritated whenever I see men beating up their wives	3.08	0.87	HE
22.	Women who are victims of domestic violence lacks self confidence	2.41	1.12	LE
23.	Children who encounter domestic violence are usually melancholic in nature	2.58	1.04	HE
24.	Children who are victims of domestic violence develop trust issues	2.75	1.24	HE
25.	Domestic violence is generally the use of force on someone in order to compel him to submit	2.66	0.95	HE
<b>Cluster Summary</b>		<b>2.61</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>HE</b>
<i>N = 397;</i>		<i>Mean &lt; 2.50 = Low Extent;</i>		<i>Mean ≥ 2.50 = High Extent</i>

Table 1 presents results from analysis of data collected to determine the extent of students' knowledge about domestic violence. The findings show that items 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24 and 25 had mean responses ranging from 2.50 – 3.58. This indicates that the statements regarding domestic violence represented by these items are known by the students to a high extent. However, items 3, 5, 6, 7, 13, 16, 20, 22 had mean responses

below 2.50. This indicates that students are knowledgeable about the statements regarding domestic violence represented by these items are to a low extent. The cluster mean of 2.61 is greater than 2.50, indicating that students are knowledgeable about domestic violence to a high extent. The cluster standard deviation of 1.00 indicates that the data points deviate from the mean by an average of 1 unit, suggesting a relatively consistent spread of responses around the mean.

**Table 2: Linear regression analysis of the relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their interest in social studies.**

Model	N	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error
1	397	0.408	0.167	0.165	8.913

Table 2 presents results for the analysis of data collected to determine the relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their interest in social studies. The results indicates that a correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.408 was obtained for the relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their interest in social studies. This indicates that there is a moderate positive relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their interest in social studies. A coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) of 0.167 was also obtained and this indicates that 16.7% of variation in students' interest in Social Studies can be attributed to their knowledge of domestic violence.

**Table 3: Regression ANOVA of the relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and interest in social studies.**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6284.528	1	6284.528	79.101	.000
	Residual	31382.519	395	79.449		
	Total	37667.048	396			

Table 3 presents result from the analysis of data collected to test hypothesis 1, which states that there is no significant relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and interest in social studies. The regression ANOVA shows that an F-ratio of 79.101, with an associated p-value of 0.000 was obtained. Since the probability value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the relationship between knowledge of domestic violence and students' interest in social studies is significant.

**Table 4: Linear regression analysis of the relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their active academic engagement.**

Model	N	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error
1	397	0.487	0.237	0.235	7.470

Table 4 presents results for the analysis of data collected to determine the relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their active academic engagement. The results indicates that the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.487 was obtained for the relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their active academic engagement. This indicates that there is a moderate positive relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their active academic engagement. A coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) of

0.237 was also obtained and this indicates that 23.7% of variation in students' active academic engagement in social studies can be attributed to their knowledge of domestic violence.

**Table 5: Regression ANOVA of the relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their active academic engagement.**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6854.401	1	6854.401	122.843	.000
	Residual	22040.299	395	55.798		
	Total	28894.700	396			

Table 5 presents result from the analysis of data collected to test hypothesis 2, which states that there is no significant relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their active academic engagement. The regression ANOVA shows that an F-ratio of 122.843, with an associated p-value of 0.000 was obtained. Since the probability value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their active academic engagement is significant.

### Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that social studies students are knowledgeable about domestic violence to a high extent. This finding could be attributed to the content of the social studies curriculum, which likely emphasizes social issues, human rights, and civic responsibility. Social studies as a subject often covers topics related to family dynamics, law, and the effects of social problems on individuals and communities. As domestic violence is a critical societal issue with far-reaching consequences, it is likely included in social studies content, fostering awareness and understanding of the issue. Moreso, the growing awareness of domestic violence in society, coupled with media coverage and public campaigns about it, might have reinforced the students' knowledge on the subject, making them more informed and leading to a high extent of awareness regarding the concept. Additionally, the prevalence of social media, home videos and other information dissemination platforms might expose students to more discussions and advocacy efforts aimed at preventing domestic violence. The access to these can improve students' knowledge about domestic violence and thus contribute to the finding obtained in this study. Social studies teachers may also integrate real-life examples of domestic violence while teaching the concept or related concepts, thus allowing students to relate with it and compare with what they may have experienced in their home or society. All these can potentially contribute to the high level of knowledge students possess regarding domestic violence.

This finding corroborates those of Iffahinani, Lukman, Normala, Azlini and Kamal (2018) who reported that social work students showed more than 50% knowledge of domestic violence, which shows high knowledge level. This was further supported by Awawu, Abubakar, Tukur, Istifanus, Bilkisu and Amina (2021) who reported a 67.1% knowledge level of domestic violence among students. The study's findings are further corroborated by Ndep, Valentine, Akwafuo, Onyeka, Umechinedu, Obidile-Ikwegbu and Muhammadu (2022) who found that young adults had 72.9% knowledge of domestic violence. These findings denote a high knowledge level of domestic violence among students and thus support findings of the study. The study's findings is however not supported by Onasoga, Afolayan, Rejuaro and Onwordi (2019), who reported a low level of knowledge of sexual violence (a type of domestic violence) among undergraduate students.

The study found out that there is a moderate positive relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their interest in social studies, and 16.7% of variation in

students' interest in Social Studies can be attributed to their knowledge of domestic violence. This relationship was also significant. The finding suggests that as students become more informed about domestic violence, their interest in social studies increases. This relationship indicates that when students learn about critical social issues, such as domestic violence, they may develop a heightened awareness and interest in understanding the broader societal structures, values, and policies that impact domestic violence among individuals and communities, through social studies. Given that social studies encompass topics related to human rights, societal norms, and civic responsibilities, and domestic violence, it is not surprising that knowledge of significant social problems correlates with a greater interest in the subject. The study's indication that 16.7% of the variation in students' interest in social studies can be attributed to their knowledge of domestic violence highlights the relevance of social studies in addressing pressing societal issues and suggests that curriculum content can effectively engage students by making them aware of real-world challenges.

This finding corroborates that of Kariuki and Muthama (2018). The authors reported that secondary school students who were educated about social issues, including domestic violence, showed a significant increase in their interest in social studies. The study emphasized that knowledge of societal challenges (like domestic violence) enhances students' curiosity about the subject matter, leading to deeper interest in discussions and activities related to social studies. The study's findings also support that of Olaniyan and Afolabi (2020) who explored the relationship between awareness of gender-based violence (a form of domestic violence) and students' interest in social studies. Their findings indicated that students with a higher understanding of gender-based violence were more likely to express interest in social studies, suggesting that awareness of pressing social problems fosters greater engagement with the subject. The finding however disagrees with that of Ojo and Ogunleye (2021) whose study concluded that there was no significant correlation between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their interest in social studies, highlighting that interest in the subject may be influenced more by extrinsic factors.

The study revealed that there is a moderate positive relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their active academic engagement, with 23.7% of variation in students' active academic engagement in social studies can be attributed to their knowledge of domestic violence. This relationship is significant. This finding demonstrates that as students become more informed about domestic violence, they tend to participate more actively in their academic work. This means that students who are aware of and understand the realities of domestic violence are more likely to engage in discussions, assignments, and other academic activities in social studies. The subject often covers societal issues, including human rights, gender roles, and social justice, all of which intersect with topics like domestic violence. The significant finding that 23.7% of the variation in students' active academic engagement can be attributed to their knowledge of domestic violence implies that students' awareness of this pressing social issues like domestic violence inspires students to become more involved in their learning process probably to gain more understand about it. This suggests that students may see the relevance of social studies to real-life issues, which increases their desire to participate and contribute to class activities.

The finding of the study corroborated that of Jones and McCurdy (2017) found that students who were educated about social issues, including domestic violence, showed higher levels of academic engagement in subjects such as social studies and civic education. This indicates a positive relationship between the variables. Likewise, Abiola and Olatunji (2020) found that Nigerian secondary school students who were informed about domestic violence were slightly more engaged in social studies and related subjects than those who were not. Smith and Harris (2019) did not corroborate the study's finding which found no significant relationship between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their academic engagement.

## Conclusion

The study provides a comprehensive analysis of several key relationships involving students' knowledge of domestic violence, interest and academic engagement in social studies. Firstly, it highlights that students possess a high level of knowledge about domestic violence, suggesting a potential awareness and understanding among the student population. The study further reveals significant relationships between students' knowledge of domestic violence and their interest in social studies, as well as their active academic engagement in this subject. These relationships indicate that understanding domestic violence contributes positively to students' academic motivation and engagement in social studies, with substantial percentages of variance attributed to this knowledge. These findings highlight the importance of addressing domestic violence educationally, not only for its direct impact on students' interest and engagement but also for its implications in fostering gender-sensitive educational approaches.

## Recommendations

1. Schools should integrate age-appropriate education on domestic violence into various subjects, particularly social studies, to enhance students' understanding and empathy towards social issues.
2. The Ministry of Education at State and Federal levels should develop and implement professional development programs that equip social studies teachers with the skills and knowledge to effectively discuss sensitive topics like domestic violence in the classroom, fostering a safe and supportive learning environment.
3. Curriculum planners should review and update curriculum standards to reflect current societal issues, including domestic violence, ensuring that educational goals align with fostering students' social responsibility and critical thinking skills.
4. Schools' administrators should initiate partnerships with community organizations specializing in domestic violence prevention and support. These collaborations can enrich classroom discussions with additional resources, guest speakers, and practical insights.
5. Educational institutions should adopt interdisciplinary approaches that integrate social studies with psychology, sociology, and health education. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of domestic violence's impact and supports holistic student development.

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