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A Study on the Attitude Towards Social Science Among Secondary School Students Studying in Selected MBOSE Affiliated Schools Located in Shillong, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya

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Abstract

This study investigates the attitudes of secondary school students towards Social Science in selected MBOSE-affiliated schools in Shillong, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 240 students in Classes IX and X across twelve schools, ensuring balanced representation by gender and school type viz. the government aided schools and private non-aided schools. The research employed a self-constructed Likert attitude scale and a supplementary questionnaire to assess students' interest, perceived benefits, perceived difficulty, and demographic factors influencing their attitudes. Findings reveal that both boys and girls generally hold positive attitudes toward Social Science, with boys showing slightly higher interest and lower perceived difficulty, particularly across History, Civics, Geography, and Economics. Students from aided schools demonstrated more favorable attitudes than those from private unaided schools, highlighting the impact of institutional support and teaching practices. While most students recognize the relevance of Social Science for civic awareness and personal development, challenges such as memorization, perceived difficulty (especially among girls), and uncertainty about career relevance persist. The study highlighted the importance of innovative, student-centered pedagogies, contextualized content, and experiential learning to sustain engagement. Recommendations include integrating technology, community involvement, differentiated instruction, and continuous teacher professional development. The research advocates for curriculum reforms and supportive learning environments to make Social Science education more meaningful, inclusive, and future-oriented considering the scope of Secondary School Education.

Keywords: Attitude, Social Science, Secondary School Students, MBOSE, government aided schools, private schools, Teaching Strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Attitude, in the field of psychology, refers to a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way toward a particular object, person, or situation (Ajzen, 2001). This complex construct is comprised of three main components, namely, the cognitive (beliefs and knowledge), affective (emotional responses), and behavioral (actions or tendencies) elements (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Attitudes are not innate; they are shaped by personal experiences, social influences, and learning processes such as classical and operant conditioning, as well as through observation and imitation of significant

others like parents and teachers (Bandura, 1977, 1986). Over time, these influences combine to form stable attitudes that guide individuals' perceptions and behaviors. In education, attitude plays a pivotal role in shaping students' engagement, motivation, and academic outcomes. A positive attitude toward learning encourages curiosity, perseverance, and self-discipline, which are crucial for academic success and the development of lifelong learning habits (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012). Conversely, negative attitudes can hinder participation, reduce motivation, and limit achievement (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Further, if we consider School Education, Secondary school level is a critical period for academic and personal development, as students encounter a wide range of subjects and challenges. The attitude that students develop toward specific subjects can significantly influence their academic performance and future choices (Osborne, Simon, & Collins, 2003). Research consistently demonstrates that students with positive attitudes toward subjects like Mathematics or Science achieve higher scores and show greater interest (Ma & Kishor, 1997). Positive attitudes drive motivation and persistence, while negative or indifferent attitudes can lead to disengagement and lower achievement (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). In Social Science, attitudes are especially important, as the subject demands not only factual recall but also critical thinking, analysis, and empathy (Alexander, 2006).

In this paper, the researcher delves into the importance of Social Science in Indian Secondary Education. The significance of Social Science in Indian education has been recognized by various commissions and policies. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) emphasized Social Science as essential for promoting national integration, social cohesion, and democratic values (Kothari Commission, 1966). The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and its 1992 revision reiterated the need for a balanced approach, highlighting Social Science's role in fostering cultural understanding and constitutional values (MHRD, 1986, 1992). The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 marked a shift towards a holistic, inquiry-based, and interdisciplinary approach to Social Science education (NCERT, 2005). It advocates for connecting classroom learning with students lived experiences, encouraging critical analysis, and integrating various Social Science disciplines to provide a comprehensive perspective. The NCF SE 2023 builds on these foundations, emphasizing the development of adaptable, empathetic, and responsible citizens (NCERT, 2023). It calls for curricula that address contemporary challenges like social justice and environmental sustainability, promote experiential learning, and encourage critical inquiry and collaboration.

In Meghalaya, the MBOSE considers Social Science as a core subject at the secondary level, covering themes such as history, livelihoods, culture, democracy, and economic development (MBOSE, 2022). Despite its importance, there are concerns about declining student interest, making it vital to study attitudes in the unique socio-cultural context of Shillong.

As we all know, Social Science at the secondary level includes History, Civics, Geography, and Economics. History fosters critical thinking and empathy by examining past events and their impact (Wineburg, 2001). Civics educates students on governance, democracy, and citizenship (NCERT, 2006). Geography develops an understanding of human-environment interactions and spatial patterns (National Research Council, 1997). Economics introduces concepts like scarcity, markets, and resource allocation, promoting analytical and decision-making skills (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010). Collectively, these branches equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to participate effectively in society.

2. Review of Related Literature

For this study, which examines attitudes towards Social Science among secondary students in selected

MBOSE-affiliated schools in Shillong, the review was conducted on both Indian and international research to highlight key influences on student perceptions.

From the studies conducted in India, Gajjela, Mahendhar, and Sarma (2020) found that secondary students generally held positive attitudes towards Social Studies, though interest declined in higher grades and was negatively influenced by higher parental income. They recommended practical interventions, such as field trips and Social Studies labs, to boost engagement. Moshahid and Quraishi (2022) reported a significant link between intelligence and Social Science achievement, with no notable gender differences. Alipsa, Majhi, and Dansana (2025) observed that private school students had more positive attitudes than those in government schools, though skepticism about Social Science's career relevance was common, highlighting the need for career-oriented guidance and curriculum reforms.

From the studies undertaken abroad, Emmideme (1985) found negative student attitudes towards Social Studies in Ghana, contrasting with teachers' positive views, and recommended learner-centered teaching. Ahmed and Maryam (2016) in Pakistan reported that limited information and teacher guidance led to low motivation for Social Science, advocating for improved teacher training. Andres and Babaran (2024) in the Philippines reported general positive attitudes and a strong correlation between positive perception and academic performance, recommending active learning strategies. Fuentes et al. (2023) identified multiple factors influencing attitudes, including cognitive and affective dimensions, while Guimba, Aguino, and Abbas (2016) in the Philippines highlighted the importance of teacher enthusiasm and relevance to students' lives.

3. Rationale of the Study

Despite the recognized importance of Social Science in Secondary Education, many students exhibit ambivalent or negative attitudes toward the subject. Few of the contributing factors include perceived difficulty, limited relevance to everyday life, and traditional teaching methods that fail to engage learners (Agarwal & Singh, 2019). In Shillong, where socio-cultural diversity and rapid urbanization shape educational experiences, it is especially important to understand how students in MBOSE-affiliated schools perceive Social Science and what influences these attitudes. Such understanding is crucial for curriculum planners, teachers, and policymakers, as positive attitudes can boost engagement, motivation, and academic achievement, while negative perceptions may hinder learning and personal growth. This study seeks to identify key factors such as perceived difficulty, interest, and perceived benefits—that shape students' attitudes, with the goal of informing more effective and engaging curricular and instructional practices.

The need for this research is heightened by incidental evidence suggesting that students in Shillong, undervalue Social Science to a certain extent when compared to other subjects. Considering the unique cultural and educational context of the area, localized research is essential. By examining attitudes toward each branch of Social Science, this study aims to provide actionable insights that can help address negative perceptions and foster a more meaningful, relevant Social Science education in the region.

4. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To find out the overall attitude of secondary school students towards Social Science in MBOSE-affiliated schools in Shillong considering the related variables such as interest towards the subject, perceived benefits of the subject and perceived difficulty level of the subject.

2. To examine students' attitudes towards each branch of Social Science—History, Civics, Geography, and Economics—with respect to interest, perceived benefits, and perceived difficulty.
3. To compare differences in attitude based on demographic variables such as gender and type of school (aided/private unaided).
4. To identify the key factors influencing students' attitudes towards Social Science.

5. Methodology

The present study is based on a descriptive research design aimed at finding out the attitudes of Secondary School students towards Social Science in MBOSE-affiliated schools in Shillong. The research targeted all Class IX and X students from twelve selected schools, ensuring equal representation of boys and girls through stratified random sampling, resulting in a total sample of 240 students. Data were collected using a self-constructed 5-point Likert attitude scale, covering History, Geography, Civics, Economics, and General Social Science, as well as a supplementary questionnaire for demographic and experiential insights. Both tools were validated by experts for content accuracy. Data collection was conducted personally by the researcher, maintaining confidentiality and a high response rate. The collected data were analyzed using percentage analysis and other descriptive statistics, ensuring a systematic and rigorous approach.

6. Major Findings

After careful analysis and interpretation, the investigator is able to report the following findings:

1. Both boys and girls in MBOSE-affiliated schools in Shillong, generally display positive attitudes toward Social Science, though boys show slightly higher positivity.
2. Boys report higher interest in Social Science compared to girls, indicating greater engagement among male students.
3. Both genders recognize the value and relevance of Social Science in education and daily life, with boys scoring marginally higher.
4. Girls report higher perceived difficulty in Social Science than boys, especially in History, Geography, and Economics.
5. Students show favorable attitudes toward all branches—History, Civics, Geography, and Economics but Economics is perceived as the most challenging.
6. Boys consistently report higher interest and lower perceived difficulty across all branches, while girls show greater consistency in recognizing benefits.
7. Students in aided (government-aided) schools display more positive attitudes towards Social Science than those in private unaided schools.
8. Boys in aided schools have the highest attitude scores, and girls in aided schools also score higher than their private school counterparts.
9. Differences in attitude scores between aided and unaided schools are statistically significant, highlighting the role of institutional support and resources.
10. Most students feel their teachers make Social Science lessons easy to understand, and interactive activities like group discussions and projects enhance engagement.
11. The majority of students report a supportive and positive classroom atmosphere, with minimal boredom or anxiety during Social Science classes.
12. Most students find textbooks and materials easy to follow, though some still face challenges with

memorization.

13. Parental encouragement and peer discussions about Social Science are common, promoting collaborative learning and interest.
14. Students' perceptions about the importance of Social Science for future studies or careers are mixed, indicating a need for better career guidance.
15. A large proportion of students believe that learning Social Science helps them become more responsible citizens, affirming the subject's civic and personal development role.

7. Discussion of Findings

The present study provides valuable insights into the attitudes of secondary school students in selected MBOSE-affiliated schools in Shillong, towards Social Science. The findings indicate that, overall, students maintain a generally positive attitude towards the subject, with both boys and girls recognizing its significance in their academic journey and daily life. Boys, however, exhibit slightly higher positivity and interest levels than girls, a trend observed across all branches of Social Science. This marginal gender difference in attitude aligns with some previous studies (Gajjela, Mahendhar, & Sarma, 2020; Andres & Babaran, 2024), while contrasting with others that found no significant gender-based differences (Alipsa, Majhi, & Dansana, 2025; Moshahid & Quraishi, 2022). It may be noted that, girls report higher perceived difficulty, especially in branches like Civics, Geography, and Economics, suggesting the need for differentiated instructional strategies and additional support for female students.

The study also reveals branch-specific trends whereby History and Geography are generally well-liked, with students recognizing their relevance and practical benefits. Civics is valued for its role in raising awareness about rights and responsibilities, though it is perceived as more challenging by girls, possibly due to its abstract content. Economics, while appreciated for its practical application, is considered the most difficult branch by both genders, particularly girls. These findings highlight the importance of making Social Science content accessible and relatable, especially for topics perceived as abstract or challenging.

A significant circumstantial finding is the influence of school type. Students in aided (government-aided) schools demonstrate more positive attitudes towards Social Science than their counterparts in unaided private schools. This suggests that institutional support, availability of resources, and school environment play a crucial role in shaping student attitudes. Boys in aided schools show the highest mean attitude scores, further emphasizing the positive impact of a supportive school environment. Responses to the questionnaire highlight several factors contributing to positive attitudes. Few of these factors include effective and engaging teaching methods, interactive classroom activities, supportive classroom environments, and strong parental encouragement. Most students find Social Science manageable, do not experience boredom or anxiety in class, and appreciate the practical relevance of the subject. However, challenges remain, such as difficulties with memorization and mixed perceptions regarding the subject's value for future studies or careers. These challenges point to the need for improved learning strategies and enhanced career guidance.

The findings also highlight the critical role of social context seen in peer discussions and family support which were found to be common and beneficial, reinforcing the importance of collaborative learning and a positive classroom atmosphere. Students overwhelmingly recognize Social Science as instrumental in fostering responsible citizenship, underscoring its civic and developmental value.

8. Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the findings, several practical recommendations are proposed to enhance students' attitudes and learning outcomes in Social Science:

1. Teachers should incorporate group discussions, debates, and cooperative projects into their lessons. These strategies can foster teamwork, increase student participation, and make Social Science more interactive and engaging.
2. Schools should integrate inquiry-driven and project-based activities into the curriculum. Encouraging students to ask questions, conduct research, and solve real-world problems can deepen understanding, promote critical thinking, and develop autonomy.
3. The use of digital tools, multimedia presentations, online simulations, and virtual field trips should be promoted. Technology can make lessons more dynamic, cater to diverse learning styles, and provide access to global perspectives.
4. Teachers should connect Social Science lessons to local events, community issues, and students' everyday experiences. This approach increases the perceived relevance of the subject and boosts intrinsic motivation.
5. Organizing field trips, community visits, and hands-on activities can make abstract concepts tangible and help students relate classroom knowledge to the real world.
6. Schools should regularly invite community experts and resource persons to share their experiences and insights. This not only enriches learning but also exposes students to various career paths and practical applications of Social Science.
7. Teachers must foster an inclusive classroom where all students feel valued and encouraged. Special attention should be given to students who find the subject challenging, with differentiated instruction and additional academic support.
8. Continuous professional development is essential. Workshops, seminars, and in-service training can help teachers stay updated on modern pedagogical techniques and effective engagement strategies.
9. In line with NEP 2020, storytelling, role-play, and dramatization should be incorporated into lessons to make historical and civic concepts more vivid, memorable, and enjoyable.
10. Assigning projects, journals, and presentations that require synthesis and application of knowledge can foster independence. Providing timely feedback and recognizing achievements will further motivate students and reinforce positive attitudes.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the complex nature of student attitudes towards Social Science in selected MBOSE-affiliated schools in Shillong, and highlights the critical need for a holistic, context-sensitive approach to Social Science education. The findings point to the importance of moving beyond traditional, lecture-based instruction towards more innovative, student-centered pedagogies that actively engage learners and make content relevant to their lives and communities. Contextualizing lessons, incorporating experiential learning, and leveraging real-world examples can help bridge the gap between abstract concepts and students' everyday experiences, thereby enhancing motivation and understanding.

Further, the study emphasizes the necessity of ongoing professional development for teachers, equipping them with modern pedagogical techniques and strategies that address diverse learning needs and foster inclusive classroom environments. Parental and community engagement should also be strengthened, as these social factors play a significant role in shaping students' perceptions and enthusiasm for the subject.

Addressing disparities related to gender and school type requires targeted interventions, such as differentiated instruction and additional academic support for students who find the subject challenging. Finally, the research proposes the need for curriculum reforms that prioritize critical thinking, civic awareness, and practical skills, ensuring that Social Science education remains meaningful and future-oriented. By fostering supportive learning environments and continuously adapting teaching practices to the evolving needs of students, educators and policymakers can help cultivate a generation of informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Continued research in this area is essential to monitor changing attitudes and to guide effective educational practices and policy decisions in Meghalaya and similar contexts.

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