Influence of Social Justice Advocacy on Multicultural Competence of University Undergraduates in Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The study identified social justice advocacy on multicultural competence of university undergraduates of university undergraduates in Ondo State, Nigeria. These was with a view to providing empirical information on social justice advocacy on multicultural competence of university undergraduates of university undergraduates in the study area. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design of Regression analysis. The target population of the study comprised 757 Social Studies university undergraduates in Ondo State. The sample for the study consisted of 500 undergraduates. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select sample for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select two out of the three Senatorial Districts (SDs) in Ondo State. The purpose was to choose SDs that have +universities offering Social Studies. One university was selected from each of the two SDs selected using simple random sampling technique while 250 undergraduates were selected from each of the universities using simple random sampling technique, making a total of 500 university undergraduates. Two research instruments were used to collect data for the study. These instruments Social Justice Advocacy Questionnaire (SJAQ) and Multicultural Competence Scale (MCS). Data collected were analysed using frequency, percentage, mean, and regression analysis. Results of the study showed that there was significant influence of social justice advocacy on multicultural competence of university undergraduates in Ondo State, Nigeria (F = 31.970; p < 0.05). This means that social justice advocacy influenced multicultural competence of university undergraduates in the study area. The study concluded that social justice advocacy influences multicultural competence of university undergraduates in the study area.

INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism as a socio-political concept, and ideological framework has been a subject of debate and discussion for decades as it aims to promote diversity, equality, and inclusivity for all cultural groups in society that solicits for the appreciation, integration and recognition, of diverse cultural identities within a society. Regrettably, observations have shown that several countries including Nigeria are bedeviled with challenges which include cultural clashes, ethnic chauvinism, erosion of social cohesion, economic disparities, identity, integration challenges, insecurity, marriage instability, Political and communal clashes, Political backlash, religious extremism, segregation, and marginalisation, to mention but a few. These socio-political menaces have resulted to several destruction of lives and properties among others (Omiyefa, 2024).

This then justifies the need for multicultural understanding among the citizenry. It acknowledged that societies are made up of various cultural groups, each with its own

beliefs, languages, practices, and values. Multiculturalism encourages co-existence and dialogue among these different cultures, fostering social cohesion and mutual respect (Omiyefa & Salawu, 2022). Multiculturalism is regularly seen as a reaction to diverse issues and demanding situations in human society that emerged from cultural diversity, which roots can be traced to the era of colonialism and globalisation, where increased migration and interaction between cultures led to a recognition of cultural diversity. In the latter half of the 20th century, particularly in countries such as Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, multiculturalism emerged as an official policy that aimed at managing the complexities of a diverse population. Embracing multiculturalism can assist to deal with social issues such as racial and ethnic tension, terrorism and insurgency, inter and intra-cultural marriage and many more, by means of creating awareness, educating people on exceptional cultural perspectives, tolerance and change In policies. Some of these issues in human society that call for multiculturalism comprised ethnic and racial discrimination that could result in social inequality, conflict, and exclusion. Multiculturalism becomes a complicated and multifaceted issue, addressing great demanding situations in present day society.

Multicultural competence is described as the capacity to appreciate, comprehend, and communicate effectively with people from various cultural backgrounds (Ponterotto, 2010). It consists recognising, appreciating, and valuing variations in beliefs, behaviours, and norms amongst numerous cultural groups. Multicultural competence has the potential to perform efficiently amidst cultural context and the capability to examine one's own cultural assumption, value and biases (Janet 2015). Johnson and Allen (2016) considered multicultural competence as an act of developmental steps, and practicing types of attitudes, competencies, and know-how which can assist counselors comprehend and work effectively with clients from various cultural backgrounds. Multicultural competence is essential for undergraduates in Nigeria to advance in multiple environments, encourage social cohesion, promote communication and leadership skills, and make positive and meaningful contributions to societal growth.

Developing multicultural competence is crucial for undergraduates who are future leaders in various professional fields in this digital society, especially in countries with rich cultural differences like Nigeria. Multicultural competence is a crucial asset for undergraduates in today's diverse society. Previous research reports have indicated that multicultural competence is connected to variety of positive outcomes, some of which include; improved communication skills (Ponterotto, 2010), increased critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Banks, 2004), increased empathy (Worrell & Skaggs, 2017), and better academic performance and retention rates (Museus and Jayakumar, 2012). In Nigeria, where cultural diversity is rich, undergraduates face unique challenges and opportunities in developing multicultural competence. Studies have highlighted the significance of multicultural competence in education and professional settings (Afolabi, 2021; Orji & Oluwaseun, 2022)

Multicultural competence allows people to work efficaciously in numerous teams, complements problem-fixing abilities, and promotes inclusivity (Fantini, 2019). Owning such ability can for undergraduates, enhance educational overall performance and boom employability in a competing task market. Additionally, multicultural competence fosters higher interpersonal relationships, appreciates and applauds respect for differences within campus communities (Afolabi, 2021). In research by Afolabi (2021) on multicultural

competence of undergraduates in a Nigerian university, he observed a significant gap in understanding and engagement, despite their basic knowledge of multiculturalism. Similarly, Orji and Oluwaseun (2022) mentioned that awareness to numerous cultural experiences in an academic setting definitely inspired students' attitudes in the direction of multicultural interactions.

Several factors could make contribution to the improvement of multicultural competence, which include but not limited to individual previous knowledge, family history, academic possibilities, and social influences. Among those factors, the impact of family system is specifically pertinent to be taken into consideration in this study in shaping people' attitudes and behaviour in the direction of diversity. Family shape is an important factor that can mold undergraduates' multicultural competence. The idea of family is multifaceted and dynamic, reflecting the complexities of human relationship, social interactions, and cultural practices. Family shape has been proven to influence people' worldviews, values, and attitudes toward variety (Hofstede, 2001). For instance, nuclear households can also additionally emphasise individualism, even as extended households may also prioritise collectivism (Triandis, 1995), single-parent families might also additionally face specific demanding situations in enhancing multicultural competence (Hill, 2015).

Despite diversities across societies and historical contexts, the household remains a fundamental unit of socialisation that plays a significant part in shaping individual and community. Family is a fundamental social institution that typically consists of a group of people who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption, and who live together, share responsibilities or are closely interconnected in various ways. Family units can vary widely in structure and composition based on cultural norms, societal values, and individual circumstances. Family structure refers to the composition and dynamics of a family unit. In Nigeria, this can range from nuclear families, extended families, single-parent households, contract families, childless families, blended or step families and so on. (Hill, 2015) defines family structure as the organisation and composition of a family, including factors such as family size, parental status, household dynamics, family type, family functioning and processes. Family size is the number of individuals living in a household (Hill 2015). Parental status is the presence or absence of biological parents, single parenthood or blended families (Hughes, 2003). Household dynamics is the relationships and interactions among family members, including communication patterns, conflict resolution and emotional support (Gay, 2000). Family type is the classification of families based on factors such as nuclear, extended, single-parent, or blended families (Hofstede, 2001). Family functioning is the way in which family members interact and work together, including aspects such as problem-solving, decision-making and emotional support (D'Andres & Daiels, 2012). Family processes are the ongoing patterns and interactions within a family, including communication, conflict and emotional support (Worrell & Skaggs, 2017). This study therefore, explores how family structure influences multicultural competence of university undergraduates in Ondo State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of social justice advocacy on multicultural competence of university undergraduates in Ondo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are to:

i. assess the level of engagement in social justice activities among university undergraduates in the study area;

ii. determine the influence of social justice advocacy on multicultural competence of university undergraduates in the study area.

Research Questions

Two research questions were raised to this study;

i. What are the levels of engagement in social justice advocacy of university undergraduates in Ondo State, Nigeria?

ii. does social justice advocacy influence multicultural competence of university undergraduates in Ondo State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance in the study:

• There is no significant influence of social justice advocacy on multicultural competence of university undergraduates in Ondo State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research adopted the descriptive survey design of regression analysis, The research design was considered appropriate for the study because the purpose of the study was to identify and understand the relationship that existed between the dependent variable (multicultural competence) and the independent variables (social justice advocacy). It used quantitative data to provide relevant and accurate information that required using questionnaire to extract the views of respondents. It allowed the respondents to be at the center of the research and felt that their responses are confidential and would be used for the purpose of this study alone.

Population

The population used for the study comprised of 757 Social Studies university undergraduates with diverse levels of engagements in social justice activities in Ondo State, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample used for the study consisted of 500 university undergraduates in Ondo State, Nigeria. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select the sample for the study. At the first stage, purposive sampling technique was used to select two out of the three Senatorial Districts (SDs) in Ondo State. The purpose was to carry out the study in Senatorial Districts that have universities offering Social Studies. At the second stage, one university was selected from each senatorial district using simple random sampling technique. At the

third stage, 250 university undergraduates were selected from each university using simple random sampling technique making a total of 500 university undergraduates.

Research Instruments

Two research instruments were used for the study, namely;

    i. Social Justice Advocacy Questionnaire (SJAQ)

    ii. Multicultural Competence Scale (MCS).

Social Justice Advocacy Questionnaire (SJAQ)

Social Justice Advocacy Questionnaire (SJAQ) was designed by the researcher. It consisted of two sections, A and B. Section "A" measured the demographic traits of the respondents such as gender, level, name of university and discipline. Section B consisted of 15 questions which measured various social justice activities such as attitudes towards social justice, experiences of discrimination and so on. The respondents were asked to tick appropriately the correct response to the question in the questionnaire. This was based on four-point Likert scale model of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Multicultural Competence Scale (MCS)

This research instrument was designed by the researcher. The scale contained two sections; A and B. section A contained items to measure the demographic traits of the respondents such as gender, level, name of university and discipline, while section B contained 15 items on different multicultural competence among undergraduates such as knowledge, skills and attitudes towards diversity. The respondents were asked to tick appropriately the correct response to the items in the scale based on 3 points rating scale of Always (A), Sometimes (S) and Never (N).

Validation of the Instruments

The validity of the instruments was carried out by the Supervisor and other experts in the field of Social Studies as well as Test and Measurement to ensure that it measured what it was designed to measure. The experts reviewed the items in terms of relevance to the subject matter, appropriateness of language usage and clarity of purpose. The experts ascertained that the instruments have adequate face and content validity.

Reliability of the Instruments

The reliability of the instruments was determined by finding the internal consistency. A trial test was carried out with a few groups outside the sampled institutions. The instruments was administered, data collected were tested using Cronbach's alpha and the result yielded a co-efficient of 0.71 for social justice advocacy questionnaire(SJAQ) and 0.80 for multicultural competence scale (MCS).

Administration of Questionnaire

The researcher paid a familiarisation visit to the management and respondents in the two universities on different days to acquit them with the importance of the study and the benefits to them as stakeholders. Rules and regulations guiding administering the questionnaire and confidentiality of the information were discussed. This enabled the researcher to gain maximum cooperation of the respondents. Questionnaires were later distributed, administered and collected same day. The data gathered were collated for analysis and interpretation.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data collected from the field by the researcher. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and mean were used to answer research questions. Inferential statistics such as regression analysis was used to test hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the level of engagement in social justice advocacy of university undergraduates in Ondo State, Nigeria?

In order to answer this research question, data collected on the fifteen items of Section B of the instrument on the level of engagement in social justice advocacy of university undergraduates in the study area were scored such that ''Strongly Agree'' (SA) response was allotted 4; ''Agree'' (A) response was allotted 3; ''Disagree'' (D) response was allotted 2; and ''Strongly Disagree'' (SD) response was allotted 1. The instrument has 15 items that were used to measure the level of engagement in social justice advocacy of university undergraduates in Ondo State. Responses from individual to each item were computed and the minimum and maximum scores obtained in this scale were 15 and 60 respectively. Responses of the respondents considering the level of engagement in social justice advocacy of university undergraduates on the scale 15-29 were adjudged as having ''Low''. Responses of the respondents considering the level of engagement in social justice advocacy of university undergraduates on the scale 30-41 were adjudged as having ''Moderate''. Responses of the respondents considering the level of engagement in social justice advocacy of university undergraduates on the scale 42-60 were adjudged as having ''High''. The summary of the results is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Descriptive analysis of the level of engagement in social justice advocacy of university undergraduates in Ondo State

S/N	Level	Range	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Low	15-29	08	1.6
2.	Moderate	30-41	44	8.8
3.	High	42-60	448	89.6
Total			500	100

N = 500

Results in Table 4.1 shows the descriptive analysis of the level of engagement in social justice advocacy of university undergraduates in Ondo State, Nigeria. Considering the maximum frequency and percentage, it can be deduced from the Table that the level of engagement in social justice advocacy of university undergraduates in Ondo State, Nigeria was high at 89.6%..

Hypothesis: There is no significant influence of social justice advocacy on multicultural competence of university undergraduates in the study area.

In order to test this hypothesis, data collected on the 15 items on each of social justice advocacy (independent variable) and multicultural competence (dependent variable) of university undergraduates in the study area were subjected to regression analysis. The result is presented in Table 4.2

Table 4.2: Regression analysis of the influence of social justice advocacy on multicultural competence of university undergraduates in Ondo State

R = 0.246[a] R^2 = 0.060 Adj. R^2 = 0.058 F = 31.970	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	27.412	1.665		16.460	.000
SJA	0.190	0.034	0.246	5.654	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Multicultural Competence (MC), b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Justice Advocacy (SJA)

Results in Table 4.2 shows that there was significant influence of social justice advocacy on multicultural competence of university undergraduates in Ondo State, Nigeria (F = 31.970; $p < 0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. The result implied that social justice advocacy influenced multicultural competence of university undergraduates in the study area.

Results of the study revealed that the level of engagement in social justice advocacy of university undergraduates is high in Ondo State, Nigeria. The result implies that university undergraduates in the study area really have strong affinity for social justice advocacy. This could be connected with the fact that the respondents were of the opinion that engagement in social justice advocacy would promote a better and peaceful society through religion, culture and even race when they are not dogmatically adopted. The result supports the findings of Rallis, et al., (2016) when they explored the relationship between social justice advocacy and multicultural competence among counselors and showed that counselors who engaged in social justice advocacy reported higher levels of multicultural competence and social justice advocacy. Meji, et.al., (2017) investigated multicultural competence and social justice advocacy in student affairs professionals and found out that professionals with higher levels of multicultural competence were more likely to engage in social justice advocacy. Hoffman, et al., 2018) carried out a study on social justice advocacy and multicultural competence in teacher education using mixed-methods of study to investigate the relationship between social justice advocacy and multicultural competence in teacher

education. His Findings suggested that teachers who participated in social justice advocacy experienced higher levels of multicultural competence.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings of the study revealed that the level of engagement in social justice advocacy of university undergraduates in Ondo State, Nigeria is high. The result implies that university undergraduates in the study area really have strong affinity for social justice advocacy. This could be connected with the fact that the respondents were of the opinion that engagement in social justice advocacy would promote a better and peaceful society through religion, culture and even race when they are not dogmatically adopted. The result supports the findings of Rallis, et al., (2016) when they explored the relationship between social justice advocacy and multicultural competence among counselors and showed that counselors who engaged in social justice advocacy reported higher levels of multicultural competence and social justice advocacy. Meji, et.al., (2017) investigated multicultural competence and social justice advocacy in student affairs professionals and found out that professionals with higher levels of multicultural competence were more likely to engage in social justice advocacy. Hoffman, et al., 2018) carried out a study on social justice advocacy and multicultural competence in teacher education using mixed-methods of study to investigate the relationship between social justice advocacy and multicultural competence in teacher education. His Findings suggested that teachers who participated in social justice advocacy experienced higher levels of multicultural competence. However, Henderson, et al., (2019) performed studies on the connection among multicultural competence and social justice advocacy in intellectual fitness experts. Results confirmed that experts with better degrees of multicultural competence have been much more likely to interact in social justice advocacy. Furthermore, Singh, et al., (2020), executed a study on the connection among social justice advocacy and multicultural competence in network leaders, his findings indicated that leaders who engaged in social justice advocacy have better understanding of multicultural competence. This research offers precious insights into the connection among social justice advocacy and multicultural competence, highlighting the significance of promoting each construct in diverse fields and contexts. Accomplishing social justice advocacy can beautify multicultural competence, and vice versa.

CONCLUSION

The research showed that the level of involvement in social justice activities of university undergraduate in Ondo State, Nigeria is high, hence, it has a great influence on multicultural competence of university undergraduates in the study area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

(a) Curriculum developers should make Social Studies a compulsory subject across all levels of education because of the contents that serve as panacea to societal issues and problems.

(b) Cultural education should be incorporated into the school curricula for inclusive education across the nation. To this end, acculturation in form of cultural day that has recently been introduced to schools should be made compulsory in all other parts of the country

(c) Lecturers are encouraged to adopt an inclusive teaching method and see all students as one without discrimination, even in their sitting arrangement.

(d) School programmes, especially during students' union week should include symposia and other education-related activities that promote social justice advocacy should be encouraged.

(e) Field-Trips to Federal High Courts, Magistrate courts and other Human Right programmes should be made mandatory for students to have a first-hand experience of advocating for social justice.

(f) Parents should be encouraged to allow their children to join social clubs (under close watch) where morals and value-laden activities are being practiced.

(g) Channels on television-set and social media that teaches and or promote social justice should be subscribed to

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