



HARD AND SOFT POWERS OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS

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Abstract

This study examined hard and soft powers of social studies teachers and compared teachers' use of these powers based on gender, and work experience. A sample of fifty social studies teachers were chosen through purposive random sampling technique from ten secondary schools in a Local Government Area of Ogun State. Questionnaires were administered to obtain data which were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. It was revealed that telling students their faults many times was the hard acts social studies teachers use most frequently, while sending students on stressful personal errands was the hard act social studies teachers use least in their classroom practices. Also, looking at students cheerfully was the soft power social studies teachers use most frequently while rewarding students with gifts and prizes was the soft act social studies teachers use least in their classroom practices. There was no difference in the use of hard powers between male and female social studies teachers. However, there was difference in the use of hard powers across work experience of social studies teachers in the study. Strategies of encouraging good behavior in social studies classes revolves around the teacher's competencies and ability to communicate hard and soft powers as at when needed. The study recommended that quality of teacher training should be increased to provide better communication of hard and soft powers with students.

Introduction

Social studies was defined by the Minnesota Center for Social Studies Education (CSSE) on 6th May 2013 as the interdisciplinary study of citizenship and government, economics, geography, history, and other disciplines in the social sciences and humanities in which students develop the content, concepts, skills, and dispositions necessary to be informed and engaged citizens in the contemporary world. This is not very markedly dissimilar to what the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) provided in 1992: Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy,

political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. NCSS avers that the primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world (NCSS Task Force on Standards for Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies, 1993, p. 213). It further goes on to say that Social studies is the interdisciplinary integration of social science and humanities concepts for the purpose of practicing problem solving and decision making for developing citizenship skills on critical social issues.

The ten central themes of current social studies are: Culture ;Time,

Continuity, and Change; People, Place, and Environment; Individual Development and Identity; Individuals, Groups, and Institutions; Power, Authority, and Governance; Production, Distribution, and Consumption; Science, Technology, and Society; Global Connections; and Civic Ideals and Practices (National Council for Social Studies, 2011) .

It is against this background that social studies teachers are being trained to equip the child with the basic social habits and cultural values which will enable him to build a good society in the future. In order to achieve all these Social studies teachers have to be professionally trained and be continuously professionally developed (Okam 2008). But of particular note in the new educational paradigm is the articulation of power in the classroom which social studies teachers have to be equally equipped with. The social studies teachers have in their power the right to use disincentives, withhold privileges, and give consequences or punishments to students. When they do this we could say that they are exercising their *hard power*. Hard power implies that if a line is crossed something will happen that will be less desirable for the student than if they choose not to cross the line. When the teacher relies on their personality, relationship building, or the fact that they share common interests with students, they could be said to be using *soft power*. Soft power can be developed through getting to know and emotionally investing in students. Soft power can also come as a result of the teacher having a personality that is perceived by the students as pleasing, such as being likeable, funny or charming. It is natural, as well as strongly encouraged by our media-driven culture, for students to want to follow and respect those that have qualities that are judged to be cool.

The instructional gains of appropriate use of hard and soft powers in the classroom are many and varied. Emotional support of the teacher enhances the student's academic performance in social studies [Fraser & Fisher, 2010]. Students' understanding of teachers' use of powers helps them to become less frustrated. When social studies teachers teach well, use appropriate teaching powers and lend support in learning to the students, they will become less frustrated. Teachers treat high and low scorer differently. Low achievers are controlled with hard powers than high achievers, and mostly face negative feedback [Weinstein, 2009]. Coordination is important between social studies teachers and students. Social studies teachers should be aware of their student's expectations and help in phase of courses. Planned use of powers during teaching of social studies can control the class. To motivate the students, social studies teachers should give directions to their students.

Teachers' use of either soft or hard powers should be effective and geared towards long-term learning and getting the feedback and positivity from students. Causes of misbehavior in social studies classes are different. Distractibility, hyperactivity, social rejection, disobedience and hostile aggression are possible factors that contribute to misbehavior among learners in social studies classes. Burnout of social studies teachers are often caused with student misbehavior [Almog & Shechtman, 2007]. Inappropriate use of powers by the teacher leads students to misbehave. Student often misbehaved because teachers often develop negative feelings and become discouraged in their ability to manage and teach their students [Casteel, 2011]. Misbehavior of the students leads towards low academic performance in social studies. Environment of the classroom plays important role in

social studies teachers' use of hard and soft powers. According to Williams (2012), the causes of misbehaviour of students in social studies are as the result of hard power traits adopted by the teacher like shouting at the students, discouraging, taunting. On several occasions, social studies teachers who victimize students in the name of discipline may contribute to student aggression and lead the students towards low academic achievement in social studies. Teacher favoritism or the personal dislike of the students can cause the low academic performance of the students in social studies. It is very important for mutualism of respect of both teacher and students for better academic performance in social studies [Ozben, 2005].

In a study by Larkin (2015), students appeared to fear hard power wielded by social studies teachers the most. In fact, in some instances students were very much intimidated by it. These fears and perceptions surrounded the fact that sanctions and punishments were mostly associated with authority power. This is especially the case in lower classes where the perception of punishment (corporal or other major sanctions) was real and always imminent. A difference was perceived in the students' perception of soft and hard power wielded by their social studies teachers. This is often observed in the case of new student teachers recently recruited to teach social studies. Students mostly appear to feel that student teachers only have soft power and that the real hard power lay in the hands of the actual class or cooperating teacher. This is reinforced since in many instances the cooperating teacher would intervene with a stern look, warning, sanction or reprimand to an individual or group or the entire class to restore order and get the lesson back on track. In such circumstances, the prospective teacher looks on helplessly and powerlessly [Almog & Shechtman, 2007].

The use of hard powers in social studies classes by teachers is to instill discipline and is meted on student who violates the agreed rules and regulations in the class. It is administered to bring about a desirable change in behaviour and therefore improving class discipline, if commensurate with the offense committed (Okumbe, 2008). However, what we experience in recent times is that there are situations where a student who commits an offence in social studies classes, can easily be handled with soft powers. Docking, (2000) in his opinion on application of hard powers by teachers in social studies classroom in the United Kingdom says hard powers in classrooms are mostly appropriate and constructive while others are not desirable, baseless and instead intended to instill fear. This idea is also in agreement with Canter, (2000) who argues that although maintaining discipline remains one of the most common problems for teachers, some hard powers should not be used because no evidence suggests that they have produced better results academically, morally or that it improves social studies class discipline.

Creswel, (2003), also argues that with a well-behaved social studies class, teaching with soft powers could be among the most wonderful jobs in the world. However what really occurs on the ground is that unwanted behaviours are on the increase despite the presence of soft powers. Teachers are worried about the aggression being directed to them by both students and their parents. This has forced most social studies teachers to resolve to the use of hard powers which has resulted into some students being expelled, others suspended, forced to do hard labour at school, and chased out of classes, all of which seem to affect their academic performance in social studies. Baumard, (2009) shared the same opinion but argued that teachers' use of hard power is a means

of controlling disruptive behaviour. He further stated that if punishment is the logical result of misconduct, the student is likely to accept it without resentment. Teachers need always realize the appropriateness of powers (soft or hard) before initiating it.

Matsoga, (2003) in his study, discovers the wide spread of misbehaviour that existed in many social studies classes due to lack of proper power communication. This lack of discipline which interferes with the teaching and learning process manifested itself in various ways including lateness, noise-making, truancy and inability or unwillingness to do class work and assignments. Teachers appropriate use of hard or soft powers are among the strategies designed to instill good conduct of students, this implies self-control, good behaviour and obedience to social studies teachers during classes (Adams, 2003).

However, the extent to which such teachers' power communication styles (hard and soft) are demonstrated in the social studies classrooms in Nigeria is not yet fully explored. Therefore, the problem of this study, posed as a question, is: what are the hard and soft powers of social studies teachers in their classrooms in any part of Nigeria? And whereas other studies have focused on hard and soft powers of prospective social studies teachers, it would be additional useful information to focus on the gender and work experience of social studies teachers in their display of hard and soft powers.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the hard and soft powers of social studies teachers. Specifically, the study sought the type and frequency of use of hard and soft powers of social studies teachers in their classroom practices. An estimation of the difference in use of hard and soft powers based on the

gender, and the teaching experience of social studies teachers was also made.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study;

1. How often do social studies teachers use hard powers in their classroom practices?
2. How often do social studies teachers use soft powers in their classroom practices?
3. Is there any difference between male and female social studies teachers in their use of hard and soft powers?
4. Is there any difference in the use of hard and soft power on the basis of years of experience of social studies teachers?

Method

This study adopts descriptive survey research design. The population for the study consists of all social studies teacher in all junior secondary schools in a Local Government Area of Ogun State. The study adopts simple random technique to select a sample of hundred and fifty (150) social studies teachers. Their characteristics are: By sex, 20 of the respondents were males representing 40.0% of the sample while the remaining 30 participants were females, representing 60.0% of the sample. By age grouping, 15(30.0%) of them were within the age bracket of 21 - 30years, 15(30.0%) fell within the age range of 31 - 40years, 16(32.0%) were within the age range of 41 - 50 years, while the remaining 4(8.0%) were 51 years and above. By qualification, 15(30.0%) of the respondents have acquired NCE certificates, 29(58.0%) of the respondents are B.Sc/B.A certificate holders while the remaining 6(12.0%) of the respondents have acquired Master's degree. By experience, 23(46.0%) of them have had work experience of 1 - 10 years, 16(32.0%) of the participants have had work experience of 11 - 20 years while the

remaining 11(22.0%) have had work experience of 21 years and above.

The instrument was a questionnaire, constructed by the researcher and given to other experts in the department for constructive criticism, content validity and suggestions. The questionnaire is in three sections. Section A consists of background information: sex, age, qualification and work experience. Sections B and C consist of hard powers and soft powers characteristics respectively. These sections involve the use of a rating scale, and participants were asked to indicate the frequency with which they use them in their classroom practices on a scale that ranges from very often (7) to (0) not at all. Test-retest reliability technique was used to obtain the reliability coefficient of 0.826.

Findings and Discussion

Research Question One: How often do social studies teachers use hard powers in their classroom practices?

Ratings in the use of hard powers of social studies teachers in their classroom practices are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Social Studies Teachers' Hard Powers

Descriptive Statistics				
HARD POWERS	N	Min.	Max.	Mean Std. Dev
Total	50	21	10148.36	18.968
Telling students their faults many times.	50	3	7	5.74 1.352
Strictness on punctuality e.g. if you come late to my class you will not have any attendance.	50	0	7	4.52 1.832
Use of authoritative power e.g stand up, shut up your mouth, get out of my class, etc.	50	1	7	4.44 1.280
Severe punishment like kneeling down, cutting of grass, numerous flogging, etc.	50	0	7	4.14 2.010

Telling students they will fail or they will be reported for misbehavior.	50	0	7	3.56	2.052
Setting very difficult questions for students.	50	0	7	3.26	1.782
Demanding little or no contribution from students	50	0	7	3.16	2.436
Leaving students to handle class works themselves.	50	0	7	3.14	2.408
Impatience with students	50	0	17	3.08	2.648
Being harsh to students at all times	50	0	7	2.74	1.957
Making jest of students in front of other teachers.	50	0	7	2.54	1.992
Asking students to come back later, all the time.	50	0	7	2.38	1.894
Marking down students.	50	0	7	2.34	2.037
Being partial when dealing with students.	50	0	7	1.86	2.090
Sending students on stressing personal errands.	50	0	7	1.84	2.074

It is observed from table 2 that three hard powers mostly used by social studies teachers are: telling students their fault many times, strictness on punctuality and use of authoritative power (stand up, shut up your mouth, get out of my class etc) which are observed to have high mean values of 5.74, 4.52 and 4.44 respectively. Closely followed are: severe punishment like kneeling down, cutting grass, numerous flogging. It is further observed from the table that telling students that they will fail or they will be reported for misbehavior; setting very difficult questions for students and demanding little or no contribution from students are three averagely used hard powers with mean values of 3.56, 3.26 and 3.16 respectively. However, looking at the bottom of the table, it is observed that marking down students; being partial when dealing with students and sending students on

stressing personal errands are three hard powers scarcely used by social studies teachers in the classroom as seen with very low means of 2.34, 1.86 and 1.84 respectively.

Research Question Two: How often do social studies teachers use soft powers in their classroom practices?

Ratings in the use of soft powers of social studies teachers in their classroom practices are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Social Studies Teachers Soft Powers

SOFT POWERS	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Total	50	53	105	85.00	14.367
Looking at students cheerfully.	50	3	7	6.40	.948
Giving room for students' to share their own view.	50	4	7	6.24	1.061
Attending to questions thrown by students.	50	4	7	6.20	1.107
Interacting with students when teaching.	50	0	7	6.18	1.438
Boosting students' confidence by praising the whole class when they get the objectives of the class.	50	3	7	6.16	1.218
Being patient with students.	50	3	7	6.02	1.286
Not being partial, always treating students the same way.	50	0	7	6.00	1.525
Instilling comfort in students' hearts e.g. telling students a particular topic is easy to learn.	50	3	7	6.00	1.195
Praising students in front of other teachers.	50	3	7	5.78	1.375
Being concerned about welfare of students outside academics	50	2	7	5.66	1.379
Praising outstanding students.	50	0	7	5.54	1.843
Welcoming students at all times	50	3	7	5.48	1.474
Giving comprehensive and easy class-works and home-works	50	1	7	5.26	1.688
Humour during class	50	1	7	4.80	1.979
Rewarding students with gifts and prizes.	50	2	7	4.62	1.563

It is observed from tables 1 and 2 that on the whole social studies teachers employ soft powers more frequently than hard powers. The total mean score for soft powers is 85.00 as

compared with that of hard powers which is 48.36. The three soft powers mostly used by social studies teachers are looking at students cheerfully, giving room for students to share their own view and attending to questions thrown by students, with high mean values of 6.40, 6.24 and 6.20 respectively. It is further observed from table 3 that not being partial, instilling comfort in students' hearts and praising students in front of other teachers are three averagely used soft powers, with mean values of 6.00, 6.00 and 5.78 respectively. However, looking at the bottom of the table, it is observed that; giving comprehensive easy class-works and home-works, humour during class and rewarding students with gifts and prizes are three soft powers slightly used by social studies teachers in the classroom as seen with very low means of 5.26, 4.80 and 4.62 respectively.

Research Question 3: Is there any difference in the use of hard and soft powers between male and female social studies teachers?

Table 3: t-test Analysis of Difference in the Use of Hard and Soft Powers Between Male and Female Social Studies Teachers.

Group Statistics							
Sex		N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error	t	Sig
Soft	Male	20	56.75	18.134	4.055	2.715	0.009
	Female	30	42.77	17.651	3.223		
Hard	Male	20	84.45	13.268	2.967	48	0.219
	Female	30	85.37	15.267	2.787		
Total	Male	20	82.75	13.545	3.029	48	0.154
	Female	30	82.20	11.577	2.114		

Table 3 shows that the probability value for the difference between male and female social studies teachers in their use of soft powers is 0.009 level of significance. Therefore, the t-calculated value of 2.715 at degree of freedom 48 is significant. Hence there is difference in the use of soft

powers between male and female social studies teachers. Male teachers employ more of soft powers than their female counterparts.

The probability value for the difference between male and female social studies teachers in the use of hard powers is 0.828, level of significance. The t-calculated value of 0.219 at degree of freedom 48 is not significant. We accept that there is no significant difference in the use of hard powers between male and female social studies teachers.

Research Question 4: Is there any difference in the use of hard and soft power on the basis of work experience of social studies teachers?

Table 4: ANOVA of Use of Hard and Soft Powers Across Work Experience of Teachers

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
HARD	Between Groups	682.284	2	341.142	.946	.396
	Within Groups	16947.236	47	360.579		
	Total	17629.520	49			
SOFT	Between Groups	1918.237	2	959.119	5.500	.007
	Within Groups	8195.763	47	174.378		
	Total	10114.000	49			
TOTAL	Between Groups	663.094	2	331.547	2.321	.109
	Within Groups	6713.086	47	142.832		
	Total	7376.180	49			

From table 4, the probability value for the difference in the use of hard powers across work experience of social studies teachers is 0.396, level of significance. The F-calculated, 0.946 is not significant. There is sufficient evidence to accept that there is no significant difference in the use of hard powers across work experience of social studies teachers in the study.

However, the probability value for the difference in the use of soft powers across teaching experience of social studies teachers is 0.007 level of significance. The F-calculated,

5.500, is significant. There is sufficient evidence to accept that there is difference in the use of soft powers across work experience of social studies teachers in the study. The difference lies between 1 - 10 years and 11 - 20 years work experience on one hand and between 11 - 20 years and 25 years above on the other hand. It is evident that teachers of 11 - 20 years of experience are those who use less soft powers compared with those below them and those above them in teaching experience, who use more soft powers than they. But on the total (Hard and Soft) no significant difference exists among the three categories of teachers on the basis of work experience in their use of hard and soft powers.

Discussion of Findings

The study assessed the frequency at which social studies teachers make use of hard and soft powers in their classroom practices. It sought differences, if any in the use of hard and soft powers on the basis of gender and years of work experience. The results of the study revealed that on the whole social studies teachers employ soft powers more frequently than hard powers. The three hard powers mostly used by social studies teachers are: telling students their fault many times, strictness on punctuality and use of authoritative power. These powers are mostly used possibly because students tend to take subtle teachers for granted and misbehave in class causing poor teaching and learning outcomes. It was further revealed that: telling students they will fail or they will be reported for misbehavior; setting very difficult questions for students and demanding little or no contribution from students are three averagely used hard powers by social studies teachers. These hard powers are averagely used possibly because setting difficult questions and demanding little contribution from students often cause poor academic

achievement on the part of the students. However, marking down students, being partial when dealing with students and sending students on stressing personal errands are three hard powers scarcely used by social studies teachers in the classroom. These powers are rarely used by teachers due to the fact that such actions could be sanctioned when reported to school administrators which may cause termination of teacher's employment. Besides, such powers run counter to the principles and objectives of social studies and code of conduct of social studies teachers.

Findings further revealed that three soft powers mostly used by social studies teachers are looking at students cheerfully, giving room for students' to share their own view and attending to questions thrown by students. These soft powers are mostly used by new social studies teachers to get on the good side of the students and foster teaching-learning productivity. It is further discovered that not being partial, instilling comfort in students' hearts and praising students in front of other teachers are three averagely used hard powers used by social studies teachers. Social studies teachers use these soft powers averagely to create a serene and comforting environment in the classroom where students can participate fully in social studies classes. However, giving comprehensive easy class works and homework, humour during class and rewarding students with gifts and prizes are three soft powers scarcely used by social studies teachers in the classroom. These soft powers are rarely used by social studies teachers possibly because students tend to take teachers exercising these powers for granted and may lose focus on the actual lessons to be taught in the class.

From the t-test analysis, it is observed that there is no difference in the use of hard powers between male

and female social studies teachers which could be explained on the grounds that both male and female teachers do use hard powers equally during social studies classes, possibly for disciplinary purposes. Furthermore, it is observed that there is no difference in the use of hard powers across work experience of social studies teachers in the study. This finding could be explained by the fact that use of hard powers in the classroom is not determined by years of experience of social studies teachers. However, there is sufficient evidence to accept that there is difference in the use of soft powers across work experience of social studies teachers. This could be explained by the fact that the use of soft powers by social studies teachers needs to be handled with care and experiences from previous classroom activities could be helpful. A teacher who has noted that hard powers do not work all the time may decide to switch to the use of soft powers to get better result.

These findings can be buttressed with the works of Quicke (1999), and Docking, (2000) who found that the hard powers in classrooms are mostly appropriate and constructive while others are not desirable, baseless and instead intended to instill fear. This idea is also in agreement with Canter, (2000) who argues that although maintaining discipline remains one of the most common problems for teachers, some hard powers (such as excessive flogging) should not be used because no evidence suggests that they have produced better results academically, morally or that it improves social studies class discipline. In contrast, Creswel, (2003), argues that with a well-behaved social studies class, teaching with soft powers could be among the most wonderful jobs in the world.

Concluding Remarks

The study sought the type and frequency of use of hard and soft

powers of social studies teachers on students. The study then went further to examine differences, if any, between hard and soft powers based on teachers' sex, and years of work experience. The results of the study revealed that on the whole social studies teachers employ soft powers more frequently than hard powers. The hard powers mostly used by social studies teachers are: telling students their fault many times, strictness on punctuality, use of authoritative power and occasionally severe punishment. It was further observed that; telling students they will fail or they will be reported for misbehavior; setting very difficult questions for students and demanding little or no contribution from students are averagely used hard powers by social studies teachers. However, marking down students, being partial when dealing with students and sending students on stressing personal errands are hard powers scarcely used by social studies teachers in the classroom.

Findings revealed that all the listed and tested soft powers are being used above average. But the mostly used ones by social studies teachers are looking at students cheerfully, giving room for students to share their own view and attending to questions thrown by students. It is further discovered that not being partial, instilling comfort in students' hearts and praising students in front of other teachers are averagely used soft powers used by social studies teachers. However, giving comprehensive easy class works and home works, humour during class and rewarding students with gifts and prizes are hardly used soft powers by social studies teachers in the classroom.

It is observed that there is no difference in the use of hard powers between male and female social studies teachers but there is difference in the use of soft powers on the basis of

sex, with male teachers exercising more soft powers than female teachers. Furthermore, it is observed that there is no difference in the use of hard powers across work experience of social studies teachers. However, there is sufficient evidence to accept that there is difference in the use of soft powers across work experience of social studies teachers in the study.

The study therefore gives the following recommendations:

1. Telling students their fault is one of the best hard powers social studies teachers can adopt in the classroom. This hard power allows the teacher to interact with students and enables them know the various weakness of their students. The students are also aware of their short-comings and in the process the students can make adequate adjustments for improved academic achievement in social studies.
2. Looking at students cheerfully is one the best soft powers social studies teachers can adopt in the classroom. This soft power is effective, as a cheerful face means a teacher is approachable and happy to render the lessons for the day. Teachers who look at students harshly tend to create fear in the hearts of their students, giving room for absenteeism and truancy among students which causes poor academic achievement among students.
3. A major way to prevent poor behaviour of students in social studies classes is to ensure efficient communication of hard and soft powers with students and to create a democratic environment in classroom. If appropriate hard powers e.g. strictness, severe punishments, use of authoritative power, etc, or soft powers like interacting with students, boosting students' confidence, etc, are

efficiently communicated to students, if students participations in all class activities are provided and if the class decisions are taken together with students, the probability of undesirable behaviors of both teacher and students could decrease. As a result, the quality and quantity of social studies teacher training should be increased to provide better communication of hard and soft powers with students while social studies teachers in training should be guided to be more conscious about those issues. Workshops, seminars and conferences should be organized from time to time for social studies teachers on application of hard and soft powers.

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