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SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND INTEREST IN SOCIAL STUDIES RELATIVE TO OTHER CORE SUBJECTS: AN ACADEMIC PROGRAMME PERSPECTIVE FROM GHANA

David Adjei¹ and David Naya Zuure²

¹School of Education, Valley View University, Kumasi Campus, Ghana
adjei.david@vvu.edu.gh

²Centre for Conflict, Human Rights and Peace Studies, University Education, Winneba, Ghana
dnzuure@uew.edu.gh

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ABSTRACT

This study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore Ghanaian Senior High School (SHS) students' interest in and motivation to study Social Studies compared to other core subjects. The study focusses on how their academic programme affiliations (General Arts, Science, Business, Visual Arts, and Home Economics) affect their subject preferences. The study employed Expectancy-Value Theory and Self-Determination Theory to poll 395 final-year SHS students in the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly and hold focused group discussions with 30 General Arts students who were chosen on purpose. The results show that students in all academic programmes are not very motivated to put Social Studies at the top of their list of subjects, even when they are offered a bonus A1 mark or a complete government scholarship to study Social Studies at the tertiary level. The survey indicates that, this is because students perceive the subject as less useful for getting forward in their careers and gaining respect in society. The study suggests that Social Studies should be rebranded by changing the curriculum, making it easier to get a job, raising public awareness, and making it a requirement for college admissions. It adds to the conversation on what motivates students in African schools and helps shape policy for Social Studies education reform.

KEYWORDS: Curriculum, Motivation, Interest, Social Studies, Core Subjects, Academic Programmes

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Research

Social Studies is a very essential part of Ghana's Senior High School (SHS) curriculum since it helps students become more conscious of their civic duties, social responsibilities, and sense of national identity (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017). The purpose is to teach children about their immediate and bigger surroundings and to help them develop the attitudes and values they need to be engaged citizens and

help their country prosper (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2010). People are nevertheless apprehensive that students are losing interest and enthusiasm in Social Studies compared to other essential disciplines like English Language, Mathematics, and Integrated Science, which are generally perceived as more "prestigious" or "career-relevant" (Kyei & Adu-Gyamfi, 2021).

Some of the interconnected factors that could explain the difference in students' interest in Social Studies are the types of academic programmes they are offering (General Arts, General Science, Business, and Technical), the orientation of their schools, how society views the subject, and how well it fits with their future academic and career paths (Oppong, 2020). For instance, students in the General Arts programme could perceive that Social Studies is more important to their academic identities than students in Science or Business programmes, where the subject is often seen as less important (Fobih, 2013).

Motivation and interest are two crucial things that impact how engaged and effective students are in school. Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (2000) suggests that pupils are more likely to work hard on items they find interesting and useful. So, how well youngsters get ready for and are interested in Social Studies could show how much they want to do well in the subject and keep studying it in college. It's really crucial to understand this dynamic, especially because there is a policy that intends to make Social Studies a fundamental subject for national development.

Some studies have looked at what subjects students in Ghanaian schools like and how well they do in school (Amoako & Essel, 2022; Adjei, 2019), but not much has been done on the complicated relationship between students' program specialisations and their desire to study Social Studies. This gap is especially crucial because the government has a free SHS policy and there are more and more calls for modifications to the curriculum to encourage national growth and skills that can be used in more than one field.

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Social Studies is a required subject in Ghana's Senior High School curriculum, but anecdotal and empirical evidence show that many students do not focus about Social Studies and instead focus on other core subjects that they think are more important for getting into college or starting a career. This occurrence makes us think about what makes students choose various topics, notably Social Studies. It is still not clear if students' interest in and preparation for the subject are strong enough to make them want to do well in school, like getting an A1 on the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) or going to college to study Social Studies, even when there are outside incentives like scholarships.

Also, it is well known that focussing on a single subject can impact how students feel about school (Quansah & Ankoma-Sey, 2019), but not enough research has been done on how this affects Ghanaian students' enthusiasm and motivation in Social Studies. Much is not known about whether students'

programme backgrounds affect how much they value Social Studies above other core subjects or how willing they are to study it at higher levels. If students do not understand these motivational factors, it could make curriculum revisions, subject orientation programmes, and career counselling services less effective at making Social Studies more important and recognised in Ghana's schools. If stakeholders do not realise this, adjustments to policies might not match up with what learners are actually doing in school and what they want to do.

The Goal of the Research

The purpose of this study was to determine how much Senior High School (SHS) students' interest in and preparation for Social Studies affects their academic motivation for the subject and their willingness to continue studying it at the tertiary level, especially after financial constraints are removed. With implications for curriculum creation and educational policy in Ghana, the study also sought to investigate how students' academic programmes affected their choice for Social Studies over other core disciplines.

Objectives Research

1. To ascertain the degree to which SHS students prioritise earning an A1 grade in Social Studies over other key subjects on the WASSCE due to their preparedness and enthusiasm in the subject.
2. To determine whether SHS students' readiness and enthusiasm for Social Studies affect their decision to enrol in tertiary when given the opportunity to receive a full government scholarship.

Questions for the Research

1. How much do SHS students prioritise an extra A1 grade in Social Studies over other core subjects in the WASSCE because of their preparedness and enthusiasm in the subject?
2. If given a full government scholarship, how would SHS students' readiness and enthusiasm for Social Studies influence their desire to continue the subject at the university level?

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H0: Based on students' preparedness and enthusiasm in the Social Studies, there is no discernible difference between their academic programmes and their willingness to give priority to a bonus A1 grade in Social Studies over other core courses.

H1: Based on the students' preparedness and interest in the Social Studies, students' academic programmes and their incentive to prioritise a bonus A1 grade in Social Studies over other core subjects varied significantly.

Hypothesis Two

H0: Even when given a full government subsidy, students' academic programmes and their desire to study Social Studies at the tertiary level do not significantly alter.

H1: Even when given a full government subsidy, students' academic programmes and their inclination to study Social Studies at the tertiary level differ significantly.

Importance of the Study

There are several significant reasons why this study is essential. First, it adds to the modest but growing body of research on why Ghanaian secondary school students are interested in certain subjects and how to motivate them to study. The focus is on Social Studies, which is a crucial subject for establishing civic competence and national unity. The study looks at how students' interest and preparedness affect their desire to achieve well in Social Studies. This gives us information based on data about how interested students are in the subject in different academic programmes. Second, the study fills a gap in educational policy and practice by looking at whether the academic programme specialisations of students have a substantial effect on how they feel about Social Studies. The results will help policy makers who plan schools, create curricula, and run schools make sure that the subjects, teaching techniques, and counselling services are all in keeping with the students' academic identities and levels of motivation.

Third, the study's look at how willing students are to pursue Social Studies in tertiary, even with full government funding, gives us significant information about how to choose a career and value a subject. These principles can help scholarship programmes be more focused and useful, especially those that aspire to get more people to study the humanities and social sciences. Lastly, this research could affect the national curriculum policy by making it more crucial to include students' interests and motivations while designing, teaching, and testing topics. It can assist make the case for changes that put students first, bridge disciplines, and make Social Studies a more important subject in Ghana's schools.

RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW**An Overview of the Literature**

Social Studies is a very essential subject in Ghana's Senior High School (SHS) curriculum because it helps students acquire a feeling of civic duty, national identity, and socio-economic awareness (Boahen, 2018). Students' opinions about a subject are often shaped by a complicated mix of things, like how interested they are, how motivated they are, what academic programme they are in, and what they want to do with their lives in the future. To improve policy and the curriculum, we need to know how students' interest and motivation in Social Studies affect their academic objectives and plans for college. This survey of the literature looks closely at older academic works that provide light on important ideas, theoretical points of view, and real-world facts that are relevant to this topic.

Conceptual Framework

This study is based on the Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). It claims that how well children do in school depends on how much they think they can do well and how much they value schoolwork. This idea suggests that students are more likely to work hard to perform well in Social Studies if they believe that doing well would help them in school or in society, and if they value the subject for its own sake or for how useful it is. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) builds on this by showing how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control can predict what people will do and what they will intend to do. This study found that students who choose to pursue Social Studies at the college level, especially when money is not an issue, do so because of how they feel about the subject, the social pressures they feel, and their belief that they can do well in school. These theories help us understand how students' choices of academic programmes, including General Arts, Business, or Science, affect their motivation and decisions about Social Studies.

Motivation and Academic Subject Prioritization

There are many various kinds of motivation at school, include interest in the subject, rewards from outside the school, and self-control (Ryan & Deci, 2000). More and more research have demonstrated that how much students like a subject and think it is important is closely linked to how motivated they are to do well in school (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). Anamuah-Mensah (2007) and Osei (2019) both completed research in Ghana that indicated that students often place subjects like Mathematics and Integrated Science ahead of Social Studies, which is sometimes considered as less marketable. But students do better in school and desire to do well when they are really interested in Social Studies and always prepare for it (Owusu-Mensah, 2020). Students often want to achieve a bonus A1 in Social Studies because of their own aspirations and the school's focus on doing well in the subject (Addo, 2021).

Even Nevertheless, the academic programmes that students are taking in school have a major impact on their motivation. For instance, students in the General Arts track can be more interested in Social Studies because it goes along with what they are learning in other classes. Business and Science students, on the other hand, may not think it is important (Asare & Obeng, 2016). This difference is what the current study is based on when it comes to differences in academic programmes.

Interest in Social Studies and Future Academic Pursuits

One of the most crucial things that will keep a student interested in school and on the right academic path is their enthusiasm in the subject (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Politics, the economics, culture, and the environment are all part of the large discipline of Social Studies. It is a good thing to learn about. But SHS students' levels of interest are very different, and this is typically because of how they are taught, how society sees them, and how useful they think the subject will be for their future careers (Nketia, 2020). Students still don't want to pursue Social Studies in college, especially those who are studying business or science. Teye (2022) notes that a lot of students see Social Studies as a route to

become a teacher, even if they do not really want to pursue it, even if they can get help with money, like scholarships.

But the fact that there is an entire government scholarship could affect how students think about these topics. Students who were not particularly enthusiastic at first might change their thoughts if the financial risk is taken away and the long-term benefits are made obvious. Ajzen (1991) said that perceived behavioural control can modify intention even when initial attitudes are mixed.

Academic Programme and Subject Focus

In Ghana, the senior high school system puts students into different programmes based on what they desire to learn. These are the subjects: General Arts, Science, Business, Visual Arts, Home Economics, and Technical Studies. Every programme has its own main goal. These programme routes organically change how students think about and prioritise subjects. According to Boakye and Ampadu (2019), the way programmes are put up affects how much and how well students learn about Social Studies, which in turn affects how well they are prepared and how motivated they are to learn.

Also, teachers and guidance counsellors typically back up these notions. When teachers are passionate about Social Studies and show students how they can make a difference in the world, students are more engaged in Social Studies (Adomako & Frempong, 2018). But when students regard the subject as a secondary core, they lose interest. It is important to remember that a student's academic programme is more than just a technique to put them in groups. It is also a cultural and institutional filter that influences how Social Studies is taught, learnt, and valued.

Gaps in Synthesis and Research

A lot of research has been done on how senior high school students in Ghana feel about Social Studies in general, but not much has been done on how financial aid affects their interest, academic programme choice, and long-term objectives. Most studies have focused at how well students do in school or how useful the subject is to their life. Not many researchers have looked closely at how willing students are to keep studying the subject if they are given a reward. This study seeks to fill in these gaps by looking into both the reasons why students are interested in Social Studies and their goals for the subject. This will help the intellectual conversation and give useful information for revising the curriculum and planning education in Ghana.

This literature review looked at theories and real-world data that have to do with students' motivation, interest, and academic programme affiliation when it comes to Social Studies in Ghanaian Senior High Schools. The review explains how personal, institutional, and societal factors all work together to shape how students think and act, using the Expectancy-Value Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour. This study tries to fill in an essential gap in our knowledge of how academic frameworks and financial incentives could affect how senior high school students in Ghana choose their topics and set their academic goals.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview

This part of the study talks about the research method used to explore *"Senior High School Students' Motivation and Interest in Social Studies Relative to the Other Core Subjects: An Academic Programme Perspective from Ghana."* The research methodology gives a clear plan for how to solve the study problem by describing the philosophical foundations, theoretical framework, methodological approach, design, population, and data gathering methods. This study uses a mixed-methods approach to look at how students' academic programmes affect their interest and motivation in Social Studies compared to other core subjects. It also looks at how these factors affect their willingness to study Social Studies at the tertiary level, even when financial challenge is not an issue.

The Research Paradigm

The study is based on the pragmatic research paradigm, which prioritises both objective and subjective knowledge and allows researchers employ different methodologies to get a full picture of an issue. Pragmatism encourages the use of mixed approaches since it focusses on "what works" to solve research challenges instead of being limited to a single philosophical view (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This paradigm fits with the goal of the current study, which is to use both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to get a better picture of students' interest and motivation in Social Studies across all academic programmes.

Theoretical Framework

Expectancy-Value Theory of Motivation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) is the main idea behind this study. This idea says that two main things affect how motivated students are to learn:

1. How likely they think they are to succeed, and
2. How much they value the work.

The theory is useful for looking into how students' interest (task value) and preparation (expectancy) for Social Studies affect their motivation to do well in school and their career choices. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) also helps us understand what intrinsic motivation and autonomy mean when it comes to making learning choices, especially when it comes to going to tertiary for Social Studies with a full scholarship.

Approach to the Research

This study uses a mixed-method technique, more especially an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. The first step in the process is to gather and analyse quantitative data. After that, focus group discussions are used to gather qualitative data that explains or adds to the quantitative findings.

Step One: The Quantitative Phase

During this phase, a structured questionnaire is given to a stratified sample of senior high school students from several academic programmes, such as General Arts, General Science, Business, Visual

Arts, and Home Economics. The questionnaire asks about their interests, motivations, levels of preparation, and topic choices.

Step Two: The Qualitative Phase (Focus Group Discussion)

Based on the numbers, students who were taking General Arts as their major and were chosen on purpose took part in focus group discussions. The researcher utilised these discussions to look more closely at how and why students' academic interests affect how they see Social Studies and their career goals. This step-by-step method lets you cross-check data and adds depth to the interpretation of results, which makes them more valid.

Designing the Research

For a study to produce valid, trustworthy, and understandable results, it needs a well-thought-out research design. Kumar (2011) indicates that research design is the complete plan and strategic framework that helps a researcher systematically answer the research questions. The study "Senior High School Students' Motivation and Interest in Social Studies Relative to Core Subjects: An Academic Programme Perspective from Ghana" used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. This design was chosen so that both the breadth and depth of student motivation and interest across different academic programmes could be explored together.

According to Creswell (2014), the explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach starts with collecting and analysing quantitative data. Then, in a second phase, it collects qualitative data that builds on the quantitative conclusions. The reason for this design is that it is strong enough to give a full grasp of the initial numerical results, especially when the quantitative results seem unclear or surprising (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The explanatory sequential design is very useful for research looking at behavioural or attitudinal dimensions like student motivation and academic choices. This is because qualitative data can give more detailed information about quantitative patterns (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006).

The initial part of this study involved collecting quantitative data from Senior High School (SHS) students in several academic programmes (such General Arts, Science, and Business) using standardised questionnaires. The main goal of this phase was to use statistics to look at the link between students' academic programme affiliations and their desire to put Social Studies ahead of other core subjects. It also looked at their willingness to study the subject at the tertiary level if financial issues were not an issue. The second phase was meant to go deeper into the reasons and motivations behind the patterns and anomalies found in the quantitative results. This was done through qualitative interviews (Focus Group Discussions) with a carefully chosen group of students.

Creswell (2014) suggests that the results of the quantitative phase not only inform but also directly influence the second qualitative phase in the explanatory sequential design. For this study, students who gave surprising or different answers on the survey, like being not very interested in Social Studies

in a General Arts Programme, were chosen for follow-up interviews on purpose. This fits with the follow-up explanation model of explanatory sequential design, which is all about making startling or unclear quantitative results clearer and more complete (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The qualitative data helped the researcher understand the statistical trends better and gave the researcher more information about what students were going through, why the students are not well interested in Social Studies, what did not motivate them, and how the programme affect the students.

Also, combining the two phases, quantitative first and then qualitative, gives a strong foundation for meeting the study's research goals and hypotheses. The mixed-methods approach also makes the results more reliable and useful, especially when it comes to changing educational policy and curriculum in Ghana. Bowen, Rose, and Pilkington (2017) indicate that explanatory sequential designs are especially useful in education research because these designs allowed the researcher understand data in layers and came up with useful insights for stakeholders.

In short, this research design was carefully chosen to find both broad trends and detailed views of SHS students' motivation and interest in Social Studies across all academic programmes. The stepwise structure, which was based on known methodological principles, gave a full knowledge of the subject matter while also making sure that the methods were sound and the interpretations were clear.

The Study's Population

The study's target audience were all Senior High School Social Studies students in their final years ($N = 29,967$) in the Ashanti Region of Ghana during the 2023/2024 school year. However, to meet the specific research goals and hypotheses, the available population is limited to the 29,967 Social Studies final year students that are enrolled in the fifty-two (52) Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly. The researcher chose these students because they come from a variety of academic programmes and have different experiences with Social Studies, making them a good group for comparing and explaining.

Sample of Students and Method of Sampling

This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods to look into Senior High School (SHS) students' motivation and interest in Social Studies compared to other core subjects, as part of their academic programmes in Ghana. To find out how SHS students' interest in and preparation for Social Studies affects their drive to do well in school and their willingness to study the subject at the tertiary level, it was important to have a well-structured and representative sample.

Quantitative Sample Size and Sampling Method

For the quantitative part of the study, the researcher took a sample of 395 final-year SHS students from a total of 29,967 students in 52 schools in the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly. The researcher got the data for this sampling frame from the Ghana Education Service (GES), which covers a wide range of school types and academic programmes, such as General Arts, Business, Science, Home Economics,

and Visual Arts. A basic random sampling method was used to make sure that there was enough representation and to reduce sampling bias. In particular, the lottery system was utilised after schools were grouped under the various sub-metros and the programmes students offered. This method is known for being fair and objective, and it gives everyone in the population an equal chance of being chosen (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher used Yamane's (1967) formula to figure out the size of the sample:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n is the number of people in the sample, N is the number of people in the population (29,967), and e is the margin of error (0.05). The sample size came out to be:

$$n = \frac{29967}{1 + 29967(0.05)^2} \quad n = 395$$

This procedure made sure that the sample size was statistically sound and met the study's demand for generalisability across a wide range of academic programmes. In addition, the sample was split up by gender and academic track so that the research hypotheses could be tested by inferential analysis.

Qualitative Sample and Sampling Technique: Focus Group Discussions

For the qualitative phase, purposive sampling was used to choose participants to take part in the focus group discussions (FGDs). Patton (2015) advises that purposive sampling is a good method for qualitative research when a researcher wants to get a deep insight from people who have certain traits that are important to the research emphasis. Thirty final-year Senior High School (SHS) students who were also offering General Arts were chosen for this aspect of the study. These students were more likely to go on to study Social Studies at a higher level. These students had already taken at least five terms or semesters of Social Studies and were getting ready to take the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE).

The focus group discussions were meant to look into the topic: "Senior High School Students' Motivation and Interest in Social Studies Compared to Core Subjects: An Academic Programme Perspective from Ghana." This fits with the study's research question and goals, which were to learn more about how students feel about and are motivated to study Social Studies. The Head of Social Studies departments at the chosen schools helped plan the FGDs. Students were put into groups by school, and conversations took place in classrooms set up to encourage everyone to participate and speak freely (Morgan, 1998). The length of each session varied from 81 to 90 minutes, depending on how big and responsive the group was.

The researcher took a number of procedures to make sure that participants felt comfortable and free to

participate. Participants were told what the study was about, how their information would be kept private, and that they might choose to take part. Starting light conversation and making jokes helped create a relaxed mood (Krueger & Casey, 2015). To keep things in order, everyone had to follow certain regulations, such as following COVID-19 protocols, speaking properly into microphones, not talking to each other on the side, and taking turns in a respectful way.

During the conversations, pre-set guiding questions were used to get answers about students' motivation, how important they thought Social Studies was, and how it compared to other key topics. The researcher used four microphones attached to a digital recorder to record the conversations so that the researcher could clearly hear what the participants said. The researcher also took field notes to record non-verbal cues and things that were going on around us during the sessions.

Using focus groups in this study worked well to get detailed points of view and find both shared and different opinions (Kitzinger, 1995). The method's interactive aspect made it easier for both common themes and outlier ideas to come to light, which added depth to the qualitative study.

Justification for Mixed Sampling Approach

The study's mixed-methods design helped the researcher decide to use both probability (simple random) and non-probability (purposive) sampling methods. The quantitative sample was broad enough to be used for hypothesis testing and generalisability, while the qualitative sample gave the researcher more information about how students felt and what they went through. This complementary method is in line with best practices in educational research, which suggest that combining numerical data with contextual meaning makes the results more valid and reliable (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009).

Data Analysis Procedure

The way the researcher analysed the data for this study was carefully planned to make sure it was clear, correct, and in line with the research goals. Kumar (2011) argues that choosing the right approach for analysing data is very important and should depend on the type of study and the level of statistical knowledge expected from the audience. He stresses that elaborate statistical methods are not needed if the people who will be reading the report are not very good at advanced statistics. Creswell (2014) also confirms that the data analysis method should depend on the study design (quantitative or qualitative) and be based on the research questions and the data's features.

The study's quantitative part used a descriptive survey approach. The raw data from structured questionnaires was first edited to find and fix mistakes, inconsistencies, and missing answers (Kumar, 2011). Next, the answers were coded, organised, and put into groups to make it easier to analyse. Items that needed to be scored in reverse were changed as needed, and composite scores for sub-scales and total scores were calculated to make it easier to understand.

The cleansed data were put into version 20.0 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

for systematic analysis. The researcher counted how many times each demographic and academic profile appeared and then used that information to figure out the percentages. The descriptive statistics provide a picture of how motivated and interested students were in Social Studies compared to core subjects, broken down by academic programme.

The researcher used the Chi-Square Test of Independence to test the hypotheses and see whether there were any links between the category variables. The researcher chose this non-parametric test because it is good for looking at frequency data and finding links between separate variables (Glennberg, 1988). The reasons for choosing the Chi-Square test were that:

1. The data was made up of numbers of how often something happened in a category.
2. The people who answered the questionnaire were put into two academic programmes (such as General Arts and Science), and the researcher thought that their levels of interest and motivation in Social Studies would not be very different.
3. The study wanted to find out if the changes in opinions that were seen were statistically significant or just happened by coincidence.

The researcher evaluated all of the hypotheses at a significance threshold of 0.05. The researcher did Chi-Square tests on each Likert-scale item to get a better idea of how the students' answers were different. This method assisted the researcher see if the academic programme had an effect on how motivated and interested students were in Social Studies compared to other core subjects.

Three focus group discussions (FGDs) with final-year General Arts students were held for the qualitative part, which was meant to give a deeper look at how students saw things. The discussions looked at how students' academic programmes affected their interest and motivation in Social Studies. There were audio recordings of the sessions, and there were also extensive field notes collected during the interviews. The recordings were typed out word for word after the interviews. The researcher used thematic analysis to look at the data. This method makes it easier to find patterns and themes in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Kumar (2011), the researcher followed a methodical process that comprised:

- Finding new topics in the transcribed data.
- Giving codes to patterns or concepts that keep coming up.
- Putting replies into groups based on the themes that were found.
- Putting the themes and quotes that support them into the story of the findings.

This method of analysis gave the researcher deep, contextualised insights into why students are interested in certain subjects and what they want to learn. By combining qualitative findings with quantitative results, the data may be fully understood. In short, the results were more reliable and valid since they used both descriptive and inferential statistics as well as theme qualitative analysis. This

two-pronged strategy also made triangulation easier, which made the study more rigorous overall (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

DATA ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATION

Quantitative Analysis

First Research Question

How much do SHS students prioritise an extra A1 grade in Social Studies over other core subjects in the WASSCE because of their preparedness and enthusiasm in the subject?

Hypothesis One

H0: Based on students' preparedness and enthusiasm in Social Studies, there is no discernible difference between their academic programmes and their willingness to give priority to a bonus A1 grade in Social Studies over other core courses.

H1: Based on their preparedness and interest in the Social Studies, students' academic programmes and their incentive to prioritise a bonus A1 grade in Social Studies over other core subjects varied significantly.

Table 4.1: Option for a Bonus Grade of A1 in Social Studies

Cat	Respondents Views			χ^2 Value	df	Prob. Value
	A	D	T			
GA	19 (12)	142 (88)	161	17.570	15	.286
GS	8 (14)	48 (86)	56			
BS	4 (6)	60 (94)	64			
VA	11 (28)	28 (72)	39			
HE	11 (15)	62 (85)	73			
OT	-	2 (100)	2			

Field Survey (2023). A=Agree, D=Disagree, df=Degree of Freedom, PV=Probability Level, GA (General Arts), G.S. (General Science), B.S. (Business), V.A. (Visual Arts), HE (Home Economics) and OT (Others).

Table 4.1 shows that a large majority (87%) of students in all academic programmes disagreed with the idea of giving an extra A1 mark in Social Studies. This included 88% of students in the General Arts programme, 86% of students in the General Science programme, 94% of students in the Business programme, 72% of students in the Visual Arts programme, and 85% of students in the Home Economics programme. It is interesting to note that all of the students in the "Other Programmes" group likewise said no to the idea.

The chi-square test gave a value of $\chi^2 = 17.570$ with a p-value of .286 (df = 15), which is higher than

the usual significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. This means that there is no statistically significant link between the academic programmes' students are offering and their desire to get a bonus A1 in Social Studies (Field Survey, 2023). The null hypothesis (H_0) is therefore kept as it is. This result is in line with what Burden and Fraser (1993) observed in their own research: that students typically put Social Studies on the back burner in favour of subjects they think are more important for getting into tertiary and getting a job.

Students may not be very interested in putting Social Studies first since they think it is less important for getting into tertiary and is easier than other subjects. This study's students see Social Studies as less academically challenging and less rewarding in the long run, which is consistent with what Hansberry and Moroz (2001) found when they looked at Social Studies Australian schools.

Research Question Two

If given a full government scholarship, how would SHS students' readiness and enthusiasm for Social Studies influence their desire to continue the subject at the university level?

Hypothesis Two

H0: Even when given a full government subsidy, students' academic programmes and their desire to study Social Studies at the tertiary level do not significantly alter.

H1: Even when given a full government subsidy, students' academic programmes and their inclination to study Social Studies at the tertiary level differ significantly.

Table 4.2: Studying Social Studies with Full Scholarship

Cat	<u>Respondents Views</u>			χ^2 Value	df	Prob. Value
	A	D	T			
GA	22 (14)	193 (86)	161	23.999	15	.065
GS	7 (13)	46 (82)	56			
BS	5 (7)	59 (88)	67			
VA	11 (28)	28 (72)	39			
HE	14 (19)	59 (81)	73			
OT	1(50)	1 (50)	2			

Field Survey (2023). Cat (Category), T=Total, D=Disagree, A=Agree df=Degree of Freedom, PL=Probability Level, GA (General Arts), G.S. (General Science), B.S. (Business), V.A. (Visual Arts), HE (Home Economics) and OT (Others).

Table 4.2 shows that 85% of students from all academic programmes said they did not want to study Social Studies at the higher level, even if they were provided a full government stipend. In particular, 86% of General Arts students, 82% of General Science students, 88% of Business students, 72% of Visual Arts students, and 81% of Home Economics students said they disagreed. The chi-square test gave a p-value of 0.065 and a chi-square value of 23.999, which is again higher than the 0.05 threshold.

There is a tendency that suggests disparities across groups of students, but the statistical data is not strong enough to prove that there is a strong link. Because of this, the null hypothesis (H0) is still true.

This unwillingness shows that learners do not think Social Studies is useful or significant, which supports Rossi's (1992) claim that students commonly say Social Studies is uninteresting. Dundar and Rapoport (2014) showed that students are less likely to study Social Studies than Science and Mathematics since there are less job opportunities and less value in society.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

Qualitative data were also obtained through focus group conversations with 30 chosen students to add to the quantitative findings. The goal was to learn more about why students made the academic choices they did in Social Studies.

Wanting a Bonus Grade in Social Studies

Most people in all of the programmes said no to the idea of getting a bonus grade of A1 in Social Studies. The main reasons given were that Social Studies do not play a big part in getting into tertiary and that it is thought to be less academically demanding. One student (SP. 22) said, *"Because Universities don't use Social Studies to decide who gets in... I'd rather get an A1 in Maths or English."*

Another student (SP. 23) said the subject was easy, which means that you might pass it with just general knowledge instead of a lot of studying. He said, *"I will choose to get my bonus grade of A1 in Core Mathematics, English Language, or Integrated Science because these core subjects are very hard for me to understand. When it comes to Social Studies, I can simply write and pass with the same grade of A1 as I cannot do in other core subjects. I am saying this because, as we all know, Social Studies is about things that happen in our environment. So even if you have not learnt it, you can still write something important on the tests and do better than the other three key subjects. Also, when I obtain an A1 in Social Studies, my parents, relatives, friends, and other people would not respect and praise me as much as when I get an A1 in core Mathematics, English Language, or Integrated Science. So, I will confidently choose the A1 in any of the other key areas, but not in Social Studies".* (SP. 22)

One female student, on the other hand, had a different opinion, she (SP. 19) stated that: *"Social Studies teaches life values... I want to study it at university and work in that field."* This was a minority opinion, but it shows that the subject could attract dedicated students if it were better positioned in the academic and professional world.

Willingness to Study Social Studies at the Tertiary Level

The qualitative data also showed that students do not have the will to study Social Studies at the tertiary level because there are not many job opportunities in that field. Most of the participants who took part thought that the only job option for Social Studies graduates was to become teachers, which they thought was less respected and less lucrative.

One student (SP. 13) said, *"Social Studies won't make me rich." "I'd rather take a subject that will help me get a job,"*. Another person (SP. 28) said, *"In Ghana, studying Social Studies is seen as a last resort. People don't value it"*. Inskeep and Rowland (1965) discovered similar results, showing that pupils often think of Social Studies as less important than Maths and Science.

DISCUSSIONS

The overall results, both quantitative and qualitative, show that SHS students, no matter what they are studying, do not seem very interested and motivated in Social Studies. Even though students are interested in the subject, they do not want to study it since they think it won't help them get into tertiary or find a job. This is in line with what Shaughnessy and Haladyna (1985) found that Social Studies typically does not get students excited because it does not have a strong connection to professional advancement.

Also, the fact that Social Studies is not given enough importance in schools and in society makes students less interested. The Ghana Education Service (2001) states that the goal of Social Studies is to teach people how to be good citizens and useful in everyday life. But its image in society is still weak, which means that its ideals do not match up with students' academic ambitions.

To fix this, teachers and policymakers need to show how important the subject is by changing tertiary admissions requirements to include Social Studies when appropriate, changing how people see the subject, and giving graduates more options for careers. The National Council for the Social Studies (2019) suggests that Social Studies should go beyond rote learning and encourage critical thinking and meaningful participation with real-world concerns.

The results of this study show that students' academic programmes do not have a big effect on how motivated they are to put Social Studies ahead of other essential topics or how interested they are to study it at the higher level, even when scholarships are offered. Structural and perceptual barriers, such as not being recognised enough in admissions and having few employment alternatives, seem to be the reasons why Social Studies is not given more importance. To make sure that Social Studies does what it is supposed to do or prepare students for informed, active citizenship and sustainable development curriculum orientation, teacher training, and policy focus all need to be changed.

A SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Research

This study looked at how motivated and interested Senior High School (SHS) students were in Social Studies compared to other core subjects, taking into account the effect of their academic programmes. The main goal was to find out how much students' interest in and preparation for Social Studies affects their willingness to put the subject first in order to get a top grade (an A1) and how much it affects their willingness to study the subject at the higher level when offered full scholarship from the

government. The researcher employed a mixed-methods approach to collect data. This meant mixing quantitative survey answers from students in different academic programmes with qualitative insights from focused group discussions.

The results of the study showed that most students did not want to take Social Studies for an extra A1 mark and did not want to study the subject at the university level, even if they were provided a full government subsidy. There were no statistically significant links between students' academic programmes and their motivation or inclination to study Social Studies. This means that both null hypotheses were kept.

CONCLUSIONS

Low Motivation Across Academic Programmes: Senior High School students, no matter what their academic programme was (General Arts, Science, Business, Visual Arts, Home Economics, or Other), did not have the willingness to put Social Studies ahead of other compulsory subjects. This was clear from both the numbers ($\chi^2 = 17.570$; $p = .286$) and the comments from students, who said that the subject was not relevant to getting into tertiary and did not have many job options.

Limited Interest in Social Studies at the Postsecondary Level: Even if money problems were solved, students still did not want to study Social Studies at the postsecondary level. The statistical analysis ($\chi^2 = 23.999$; $p = .065$) did not show a big difference between academic programmes, which suggests that there is a lack of interest in all of them because of structural and perceptual reasons.

Structural and Societal Barriers: Students' answers showed that Social Studies is not valued enough in the system. Students in Ghana think that the subject is less academically challenging, less valuable in the job market, and less recognised in society. These ideas make the subject seem less valuable, both in terms of its own value and the value it brings to others. This makes students less interested and motivated.

The results imply that there is a gap between the civic-minded ideals of the Social Studies programme and the career-focused goals of the students. The Ghana Education Service (2001) suggests that Social Studies strives to teach students how to be responsible citizens. However, students are more interested in areas that they think will help them financially and socially.

Recommendations

Change the Prerequisites for Getting into Tertiary: Policymakers and colleges should think about adding Social Studies to the list of major requirements one needs to do to get into the tertiary, especially for programmes in the humanities, education, and development studies. This will make the subject more important in school and make students take it more seriously.

Improve Career Pathways in Social Studies: People who care about Social Studies need to make sure that there are more job options available than just teaching. Students may be more interested in the subject if they may choose from career paths that cross disciplines, such as policy analysis, community development, civic education, and public administration.

Public Education Campaigns: To influence how people think about Social Studies, there is the need for a national awareness campaign. Making the subject more relevant to national growth, civic duty, and getting a job can improve its reputation in society and make it more appealing to students.

Updating the Social Studies curriculum: The curriculum should include current events, hands-on activities, and community-based projects that show how the subject is relevant to real life. Policy makers should put more emphasis on teaching methods that help students think critically and solve problems (NCSS, 2019).

Professional Development for Teachers: Teachers need to learn how to teach Social Studies in a way that is interesting and relevant to their careers. This means utilising motivational techniques that are in line with what students want to do and are interested in.

Areas for Further Studies

Longitudinal Studies: Future studies should look into how students' opinions towards Social Studies change from elementary school to high school. These kinds of investigations can assist find important times when action is needed.

Comparative Analyses Across Regions: Looking at the same issues in different parts of Sub-Saharan Africa or in other nations could help us learn more about how cultural and institutional factors affect students' interest in Social Studies.

Effect of Teacher Motivation: More research is needed to find out how teachers' attitudes and teaching approaches affect how interested students are in Social Studies. There has not been enough research on how a teacher's passion affects a student's motivation.

Evaluation of Policy Interventions: There is a need to look at pilot studies that use new curricula or admission standards that include Social Studies to see how they affect students' motivation and academic choices.

Adding to the Body of Knowledge

This study helps researchers understand how subject-based incentive works in African schools. It shows the complicated ways that academic programmes, social values, and institutional structures all work together to shape students' preferences and behaviour in school. By doing this, the study:

- Gives real-world proof that motivation for Social Studies is not mostly based on the academic programme, but on bigger structural and perceptual aspects.
- Provides useful ideas to curriculum planners, teacher educators, and lawmakers who want to make Social Studies more relevant and appealing.
- Adds to the conversation on how to find a balance between citizenship education and career-focused academic planning in emerging countries.

Theoretical Effects

1. Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002)

This idea states that two main things affect how motivated a student is: how likely they think they are to succeed and how much they value the work. The results of this investigation show that both low expectations and poor task value are true. Students think that doing well in Social Studies (such getting a bonus A1) do not help them move on in their schooling or careers. Because of this, even students who do well do not put it at the top of their list. Students also thought that studying Social Studies at the higher level would not help them in their future careers, which supports Eccles and Wigfield's claim that students are less motivated when the subject is not relevant to their future ambitions.

2. Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (2000)

According to Self-Determination Theory, three psychological requirements must be met in order for someone to be motivated: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The study shows that for many students, Social Studies does not provide these needs:

Autonomy: Students do not feel like they have a choice or can guide their own learning in Social Studies since they think it will not help them get a job.

Competence: Students think the subject is too easy or not strict enough, which makes them less likely to want to push themselves and learn more.

Relatedness: Because society do not value Social Studies, students cannot feel like they belong to a larger academic or professional group that does.

This means that schools need to make Social Studies more interesting and socially acceptable for students who want to learn it on their own and at the higher level of schooling.

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