

**VIEWS OF STUDENTS ON THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM  
CONTENT IN REDUCING ONLINE THEFT AMONG STUDENTS IN COLLEGE OF  
EDUCATION, TARABA STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

This study investigates students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Social Studies curriculum in mitigating online theft among students in the College of Education, Taraba State. Employed a descriptive survey design, the research targeted all 816 NCE II and III Social Studies students at Taraba State College of Education, with a sample size of 279 selected through proportionate and simple random sampling methods. Data collection was conducted using a structured, researcher-developed questionnaire titled "Social Studies Curriculum in Curbing Cyber-Crime among Students" (SSCUCCAS), which was validated and pilot-tested. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations to address research questions, alongside inferential statistics, including one-sample t-tests, to test hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The findings reveal that students perceive the curriculum as significantly enhancing their awareness and capacity to prevent online theft, although deficiencies in resource availability and practical activities persist. The results imply that incorporating comprehensive digital ethics and online safety content could improve curriculum impact. The study concludes that the Social Studies curriculum plays a crucial role in curbing online thefts and recommends curriculum revisions, enhanced teacher training, and collaboration with cybersecurity professionals to bolster online safety education.

**Keywords:** Social Studies, Online theft, Curriculum effectiveness and Digital ethics.

**Introduction**

The rapid expansion of internet access and digital technology has transformed how students interact, communicate, and learn. While these advancements offer numerous benefits for educational engagement, they also expose students to various forms of online crime, including cyber theft, fraud, identity theft, and other digital offenses that can undermine academic integrity and personal security. Online theft, broadly defined as illegal activities conducted using computers or the internet, has become increasingly prevalent among youths and students in Nigeria and other contexts, driven by factors such as peer influence, economic pressures, and limited awareness of online safety practices. (Oladehin, 2025; Sani et al., 2024).

Online theft, a specific form of online theft, involves unauthorized access to personal or financial information with the intent to steal assets or data and can include actions such as phishing, hacking, and online fraud. Studies on Nigerian student populations have highlighted that more students are perpetrators and victims of various cyber offenses, often due to gaps in awareness and responsible online behaviour (Oladehin, 2025). Such online deviant behaviours not only pose personal risk to students but also negatively impact educational outcomes, contribute to reputational damage, and distort valid academic pursuits.

The Social Studies curriculum is an interdisciplinary school subject designed to help learners understand human society, ethical values, civic responsibilities, and societal norms. In the Nigerian

educational policy, Social Studies is intended to provide knowledge and skills that enable students to function effectively as informed citizens capable of contributing positively to societal development and social order. Although much research on Social Studies has examined its role in promoting social cohesion, conflict management, and responsible citizenship, less attention has been given to its content related to promoting ethical behaviour in digital contexts. Importantly, Social Studies is theoretically positioned to address societal problems including crime by inculcating values, attitudes, and behaviours that discourage norm-violating behaviours (Onwuasoanya, 2025).

Previous research suggests that educational curricula that integrate cyber-awareness, ethical use of technology, and digital citizenship can help students develop safer online practices and reduce the likelihood of engaging in or falling prey to cyber offenses. For example, studies on digital citizenship education indicate that curriculum-infused digital security and ethical communication skills are associated with higher levels of online safety behaviour and lower engagement in Online theft (Althibyani & Al-Zahrani, 2023). Despite this evidence, there remains a gap in understanding how the specific content of the Social Studies curriculum as perceived by students affects online theft reduction among students in Colleges of Education. Considering that Social Studies address values, societal norms, and problem-solving approaches, investigating students' views on its impact in this emerging area is critical. Exploring student perceptions of the Social Studies curriculum's effectiveness in reducing online theft, this study aims to contribute to knowledge on curriculum relevance, students' online behaviour, and the broader educational strategies needed to mitigate Online theft within tertiary educational settings. The findings are intended to inform educators, curriculum planners, and policymakers on practical ways to strengthen Social Studies teaching to address contemporary digital challenges facing students today.

### **Statement of the problem**

The increasing rate of online theft and related online thefts among students in tertiary institutions has become a serious moral and educational concern (e.g., "undermining students' ethical development and academic integrity"). Despite the moral and civic objectives of Social Studies education, as outlined by the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education incidents of internet fraud. The other forms of digital misconduct continue to be associated with young people, as reported by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (2026). This situation raises questions about whether the values and ethical principles embedded in the Social Studies curriculum are effectively influencing students' attitudes and behaviours toward online activities as a result of their exposure on online activities.

Although Social Studies is intended to promote responsible citizenship and discourage unethical online behaviour, there is limited empirical evidence on students' perceptions of its effectiveness in addressing online theft. The persistence of such behaviour suggests a possible gap between curriculum intentions and actual behavioural outcomes. Therefore, there is a need to investigate students' views on the impact of Social Studies curriculum content in reducing online theft among students in Colleges of Education to determine whether the curriculum adequately addresses contemporary digital challenges.

### **Objective of the study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the views of students on the impact of Social Studies curriculum content in reducing online theft among students in College of Education, Taraba State, Nigeria.

## **Research Questions**

To what extent does Social Studies curriculum content help in reducing online theft among students in College of Education, Taraba State, Nigeria?

## **Research Hypotheses**

There is no significant difference in students' views regarding the effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum content in reducing online theft in the College of Education, Taraba State, Nigeria;

## **Methodology**

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all eight hundred and sixteen (816) Social Studies students in NCE II and NCE III at Taraba State College of Education, Zing. From this population, a sample size of 279 Social Studies students was selected from the study area. The selection of the sample respondents was guided by the Research Advisors' (2008) table for sample size determination.

The study employed two sampling techniques, namely proportionate sampling and simple random sampling techniques. As noted by Salihu, Mohammed, and Bayero (2018), proportionate sampling technique is appropriate when the population consists of different subgroups that vary significantly in number.

For data collection, the study utilized a researcher-developed structured questionnaire titled "Social Studies Curriculum in Curbing Cyber-Crime among Students (SSCUCCAS)". The questionnaire was carefully examined and validated by supervisors from the Department of Arts and Social Science Education, as well as experts from the Departments of English and Literary Studies and Science Education.

To ensure reliability, the questionnaire was subjected to trial testing involving 23 NCE Social Studies students from the Federal College of Education, Zaria. This procedure followed the recommendation of Connelly (2008) and Treece and Treece (1982), who proposed that 10% of the sample size intended for the main study is sufficient for pilot testing. Percentage and frequency counts were used to present the demographic information of the respondents. The research questions were addressed using arithmetic mean and standard deviation to determine the overall average scores. In addition, a one-sample t-test was applied to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

## **Results and Discussion**

This section provides an analysis of the findings gathered during this study. The research questions were examined through descriptive statistics, and the null hypotheses were tested using one-sample t-tests at a significance level of 0.05.

## **Answer to Research Question**

**To what extent does Social Studies curriculum content help in reducing online theft among students in College of Education, Taraba State, Nigeria?**

This research question was answered using descriptive statistics, specifically mean and standard deviation. The result of the analysis is shown in the table below.

**The extent to which Social Studies curriculum content help in reducing online theft among students in College of Education, Taraba State, Nigeria**

Decision/benchmark mean = 2.50

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Social Studies curriculum content effectively educates students about the dangers of phishing.	3.89	0.38
2	Students are better equipped to identify suspicious emails and websites after learning about phishing in social studies.	3.89	0.31
3	The Social Studies curriculum content provides adequate resources and activities to practice recognizing and avoiding phishing attempts.	1.87	0.77
4	Discussing real-world examples of phishing scams in Social Studies classes raises awareness and encourages caution among students.	3.55	0.64
5	Social Studies curriculum helps students develop critical thinking skills that enable them to analyze online information and recognize phishing tactics.	2.34	0.74
6	Learning about online privacy and security in Social Studies encourages students to protect their personal information and avoid phishing traps.	3.92	0.27
7	Social Studies curriculum content helps students develop healthy online habits that make them less susceptible to phishing attacks.	3.34	0.53
8	The emphasis on digital citizenship in the current Social Studies curriculum is sufficient to prevent students from falling victim to phishing.	3.89	0.38
9	Social Studies teachers need additional training and resources to effectively teach students about phishing and online safety.	3.34	0.53
10	Collaboration with cybersecurity experts is valuable in developing and implementing effective anti-phishing education in Social Studies.	2.00	0.89
	Cumulative mean	3.20	0.54

The table present assesses to the role of Social Studies curriculum content in reducing phishing among college students in Taraba State. The data collected through survey items provide insights into various aspects related to the effectiveness of Social Studies curriculum in addressing phishing threats. Item (1), Effectiveness of Education; The majority of respondents (mean score 3.89) perceive that Social Studies curriculum effectively educates students about the dangers of phishing. This indicates a positive perception regarding the educational impact of the curriculum on raising awareness about phishing threats. Item (2), Improvement in Identification Skills; Similarly, students feel that they are better equipped to identify suspicious emails and websites after learning about phishing in Social Studies (mean score 3.89). This suggests that the curriculum contributes to enhancing students' abilities to recognize potential phishing attempts. Item (3), Availability of Resources and Activities; However, there seems to be a perception of inadequacy regarding the

provision of resources and activities to practice recognizing and avoiding phishing attempts within the Social Studies curriculum (mean score 1.87). This indicates a potential area for improvement in curriculum design and implementation. Item (4), Real-world Examples and Awareness; Discussing real-world examples of phishing scams in Social Studies classes is perceived as beneficial in raising awareness and encouraging caution among students (mean score 3.55).

This highlights the importance of incorporating practical examples into the curriculum to enhance understanding and engagement. Item (5), Development of Critical Thinking Skills; While the curriculum is expected to help students develop critical thinking skills to analyze online information and recognize phishing tactics, the perceived effectiveness in this aspect is relatively lower (mean score 2.34). This suggests a potential need for enhancement in teaching methodologies or content delivery methods. Item (6), Encouragement of Privacy Protection; Learning about online privacy and security in Social Studies is perceived to encourage students to protect their personal information and avoid phishing traps (mean score 3.92). This indicates a strong positive impact of the curriculum on promoting proactive behaviour among students regarding online safety. Item (7), Promotion of Healthy Online Habits; Social Studies curriculum content is seen as contributing to the development of healthy online habits, which makes students less susceptible to phishing attacks (mean score 3.34). This underscores the importance of integrating online safety practices into the broader context of digital citizenship education. Item (8), Sufficiency of Emphasis on Digital Citizenship; There's a positive perception (mean score 3.89) regarding the sufficiency of emphasis on digital citizenship in the current social studies curriculum to prevent students from falling victim to phishing. This suggests that the curriculum adequately addresses the broader aspects of responsible online behaviour. Item (9), Need for Teacher Training and Collaboration; However, respondents also indicate a need for additional training and resources for Social Studies teachers to effectively teach students about phishing and online safety (mean score 3.34). Item (10), collaboration with cybersecurity experts is seen as valuable in developing and implementing effective anti-phishing education in Social Studies (mean score 2.00).

The findings suggest that while the Social Studies curriculum in Taraba State appears to have a positive impact on raising awareness about phishing and promoting online safety behaviours among students, there are areas for improvement, particularly in resource provision, teaching methodologies, and collaboration with external experts. Addressing these areas could enhance the effectiveness of anti-phishing education within the curriculum.

### **Hypothesis Testing**

**There is no significant difference in the views of students on Social Studies curriculum content in reducing online theft in College of Education, Taraba State, Nigeria;**

This null hypothesis was tested using the inferential statistics of one sample t-test. The result of the analysis is presented in Table below.

**One sample t-test on the extent to which views of students on Social Studies curriculum content in reducing online theft in College of Education, Taraba State, Nigeria;**

Variable	N	Mean	Std. deviation	t-value	df	p-value
Social studies curriculum contents	279	3.58	0.56	44.846	278	0.000
Test mean	279	2.50	0.00			

$$t(278) = 3.315, p < 0.05$$

The observed mean score of students' views on Social Studies curriculum content in reducing online theft in the College of Education, Taraba State, Nigeria, as shown in Table 10, is higher than the test mean (2.50). The observed t-value calculated at 278 degrees of freedom (DF) is 44.846, which exceeds the critical value (3.315) indicated in the table. The level of significance (0.000) is lower than the fixed level of 0.05 ( $P < 0.05$ ).

Based on these results, there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that respondents strongly believe that Social Studies curriculum content contributes to reducing online theft in the College of Education, Taraba State, Nigeria. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference in the views of students on Social Studies curriculum content in reducing online theft, is rejected.

### Summary of Major Findings

The study revealed that Social Studies curriculum content has positive impact in reducing online theft among student. P Value 0.000

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that the Social Studies curriculum content has a significant positive impact on reducing online theft among students, as evidenced by the p-value of 0.000. This statistically significant result suggests that the curriculum effectively raises awareness and imparts critical skills necessary for students to recognize and avoid online theft behaviors such as phishing and other cybercrimes. Supporting this, scholars like Akinwale and Adeyemo (2020) emphasize that curriculum content that integrates digital citizenship and online safety can substantially influence students' online behaviors, fostering responsible digital practices. The strong positive correlation found in this study aligns with their assertion that educational interventions targeting online safety are crucial in mitigating cybercrimes among young learners.

Furthermore, the study's results underscore the importance of incorporating comprehensive digital safety education within the Social Studies curriculum. According to UNESCO (2018), integrating digital literacy into school curricula enhances students' capacity to navigate online environments securely and responsibly. This aligns with the findings that students exposed to targeted online safety content are better equipped to identify threats and adopt protective online habits. Therefore, the evidence from this study reinforces the call by scholars such as Livingstone et al. (2019), who advocate for curriculum reforms that emphasize digital citizenship to combat the rising incidence of

online theft and cybercrime. Overall, the findings affirm that a well-structured Social Studies curriculum can serve as a vital tool in promoting online safety and reducing cyber-related crimes among students.

### Conclusion

The findings of the study show clear evidence that the integration of cybersecurity and online ethics education into the Social Studies curriculum has helped in reducing Online theft such as online theft, phishing, cyberbullying, and credit card fraud among students in Colleges of Education in Taraba State, Nigeria. The results further reveal that Social Studies curriculum content plays an important role in providing students with the knowledge and skills needed to use the digital world in a safe, responsible, and crime-free manner

### Recommendations

Social Studies curriculum developers should incorporate more comprehensive content on digital ethics, online security, and the legal consequences of Online theft in order to strengthen students' understanding of online theft prevention.

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