

## Examining the relationship between Professional Development and Social Studies Teachers' Attitudes to Work in Upper Basic Schools in Delta State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*This study examined the relationship between professional development and Social Studies teachers' attitudes toward work in Upper Basic schools in Delta State. It was guided by three research questions and three null hypotheses. Correlation research survey design was adopted, involving a population of 1,094. A sample of 205 participants which consist of 108 male and 97 female teachers from Upper Basic schools in Ika South and Ika North East Local Government Areas were selected using purposive and accidental sampling techniques. Two instruments were employed for data collection: the "Professional Development Questionnaire (PDQ)" and the "Teachers' Attitude to Work Questionnaire (TAWQ)." Both used a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) scored 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. Data analysis was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), t-test and multiple regression at a 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed that there is no significant relationship between professional development and Social Studies teachers' attitudes to work, there is no significant influence of location on the relationship between professional development and Social Studies teachers' attitudes to work, and there is no significant difference between male and female Social Studies teachers' perceptions of how professional development influences their attitudes to work in Upper Basic schools in Delta State. The study concluded that professional development programmes strongly influence teachers' work attitudes. It recommended mandatory participation in in-service training organized by the Ministry of Education and NGOs and quarterly conferences for teachers to enhance their professional outlook.*

**Keywords:** Professional development, teacher attitude to work, gender, location, Social Studies

### INTRODUCTION

Secondary education is designed to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills required to contribute meaningfully to national development while providing foundational education for further academic pursuits (Ntuno et al., 2021). At the junior secondary level, this educational stage plays a crucial role in cultivating creative thinking and practical skills essential for personal growth and societal advancement. However, these goals are often undermined when teachers display negative

attitudes toward their responsibilities, ultimately affecting students' motivation, engagement, and academic success (Nwanyanwu et al., 2020).

Teachers are central to students' academic achievement and overall development. To fulfil this role effectively, they must demonstrate subject competence, moral integrity, professional dedication, and the pedagogical ability to deliver quality instruction. Unfortunately, a significant number of teachers in public schools in Nigeria fall short in these areas. Challenges such as absenteeism, lateness, poor lesson preparation, and conflicts with school authorities point to a decline in professionalism and commitment, threatening the realization of educational objectives (Abubakar, 2024). Addressing these issues requires robust professional development. Such development enables teachers to acquire new competencies, update their knowledge, and improve their attitudes toward work. Peretomode and Dinzei (2019), in their study on the professional development needs of secondary school principals in Delta State, found no significant differences between public and private school leaders in terms of communication, ICT, instructional supervision, and disciplinary competencies. They recommended regular professional activities such as seminars and workshops for sustained skill development, regardless of demographic factors. Abubakar (2024) emphasized the importance of enhancing pedagogical skills among teachers in Sokoto State's private schools. The study identified inadequate training as a barrier and advocated for targeted professional development to improve student engagement and educational outcomes. This aligns with the assertion by Ntuno et al. (2024) that in-service training significantly enriches teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and competencies. Shiri et al. (2023) also characterized in-service training as either on-the-job or off-the-job initiatives focused on updating teachers' skills to enhance job performance.

Empirical studies consistently highlight the benefits of professional development in shaping positive teacher attitudes. Abazie et al. (2020) found that in-service training improves work attitudes among teachers in public secondary schools, urging regular, structured training programmes. Similarly, Fejoh and Faniran (2016) reported that effective staff development enhances job satisfaction and morale, especially when it responds to technological and institutional changes. Marchie and Ntuno (2024), in a study conducted in the Ikom Education Zone, identified a positive link between participation in professional development activities and improved teacher attitudes. Their recommendations included mandatory involvement at quarterly conferences and training sessions to

boost teacher performance. Conference attendance, as noted by Ntuno et al. (2024), fosters peer learning, updates on educational trends, and increased awareness of professional responsibilities. Ahmed et al. (2021) also confirmed that such participation boosts teachers' capacity and effectiveness, leading to better student outcomes. Administrative support is a crucial factor in ensuring the success of professional development efforts. Ertürk (2021) highlighted the role of school leaders in creating an enabling environment that encourages continuous professional growth. This includes providing the necessary materials, time, and moral support. Without administrative backing, even well-designed training programs may fail to yield desired outcomes (Ali & Aynur, 2024).

Funding may be another determinant of successful professional development. Financial constraints could hinder schools, particularly those in underserved areas from organizing or accessing development opportunities. Cansoy et al. (2022) emphasized the need for adequate funding to support training, workshops, and conference participation. A lack of financial resources often leaves teachers ill-equipped to meet modern educational demands. Sustainable funding, whether from government agencies, private sectors, or partnerships, is essential for ensuring equitable access to professional development. Onyekwelu (2024) conducted a descriptive study involving 579 respondents from 263 public secondary schools in Anambra State to explore strategies for enhancing teacher professional development (TPD). The study identified ongoing workshops, mentorship, and time allocation for implementing new teaching methods as key contributors to educational quality. However, it also pointed out barriers such as ineffective leadership, poor funding, and negative school cultures. Recommendations included increased government intervention and support from educational authorities to institutionalize effective TPD strategies.

The extent to which location and gender moderate the relationship between professional development and Social Studies teachers' attitudes to work remains unclear. Gambari et al. (2017) reported that factors such as gender, years of teaching experience, school type, and area of specialization do not significantly influence teachers' attitudes toward utilizing the Internet for instructional purposes. However, disparities in professional development opportunities seem to persist, particularly between rural and urban settings. Teachers in rural areas often face limited access to training programmes, inadequate funding, and a lack of instructional resources, whereas their urban counterparts benefit from greater exposure to professional development initiatives, better

funding, and more frequent government-sponsored programmes. To promote equity and improve overall teacher effectiveness, it is imperative that the government implement targeted interventions to bridge this rural-urban divide.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Secondary education serves as a foundation for national development and individual advancement, particularly at the junior secondary level, where subjects like Social Studies play a vital role in fostering critical thinking, civic responsibility, and practical life skills. However, in Nigeria, the realization of these educational goals is increasingly threatened by negative teacher attitudes, characterized by absenteeism, poor lesson preparation, and diminished professional commitment. These issues are particularly troubling in public schools which may significantly affect student engagement, learning outcomes, and the overall quality of education. Professional development may be widely recognized as a key strategy for addressing these challenges. Through continuous training and capacity-building initiatives, teachers could update their knowledge, refine their pedagogical skills, and adopt more positive attitudes toward their work. While numerous studies have emphasized the importance of teacher professional development there seems to be a gap in understanding how contextual factors such as gender and location may influence this relationship—especially in the teaching of Social Studies at the Upper Basic level in Delta State. Teachers in rural areas may face barriers such as inadequate funding, limited access to instructional resources, and fewer opportunities for in-service training, unlike their urban counterparts who typically could benefit from better support and more structured development programmes. These imbalances may affect how teachers perceive and benefit from professional development, ultimately impacting their attitudes toward work. Hence, this study would answer the question ‘what is the relationship between professional development and teacher attitudes to work in Upper Basic schools in Delta State?’

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following objectives were stated to guide the study.

1. Examine the relationship between professional development and Social Studies teachers’ attitudes to work in Upper Basic in schools Delta State.
2. Determine the extent to which location influence the relationship between professional development and teachers’ attitudes to work in Upper Basic schools in Delta State.

3. Examine the difference between male and female Social Studies teachers' perceptions regarding the influence of professional development on their attitudes toward work in Upper Basic schools in Delta State.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What is the relationship between professional development and Social Studies teachers' attitudes to work in Upper Basic schools in Delta State?
2. To what extent does location influence the relationship between professional development and Social Studies teachers' attitudes to work in Upper Basic schools in Delta State?
3. How do male and female Social Studies teachers differ in their perceptions of how professional development influences their attitudes to work in Upper Basic schools in Delta State?

### Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between professional development and Social Studies teachers' attitudes to work in Upper Basic schools Delta State.

HO<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant influence of location on the relationship between professional development and Social Studies teachers' attitudes to work in Upper Basic schools in Delta State.

HO<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant difference between male and female Social Studies teachers' perceptions of how professional development influences their attitudes to work in Upper Basic schools in Delta State.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted correlational survey research design to investigate the relationship between professional development and Social Studies teachers’ attitudes to work in Upper Basic schools located in both rural and urban areas of Ika South and Ika North East Local Government Areas of Delta State. The design enabled the researcher to explore associations between variables without manipulating them. The population of the study comprised 1,094 participants, including 894 teachers and 200 principals across selected public secondary schools. From this population, a sample of 205 participants was drawn using a combination of purposive and accidental sampling techniques, ensuring relevance and accessibility to the research objectives. The sample consisted of 205 Social Studies teachers (comprising 108 males and 97 females, distributed across both rural and urban school settings. Data were collected using two structured questionnaires the Professional Development Questionnaire (PDQ), which measured involvement in professional development activities, and the Teachers’ Attitude to Work Questionnaire (TAWQ), which assessed work attitudes. Both instruments employed a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Questionnaires were distributed with assurances of confidentiality and voluntary participation. The questionnaires were administered in person by the researcher and trained research assistants during scheduled visits to the participating schools over a two-week period. Clear instructions were provided for all respondents, and the purpose of the study was explicitly communicated. Participants were assured of confidentiality and informed that their participation was voluntary. Efforts were made to include an equitable representation of both rural and urban teachers, as well as both male and female respondents, to ensure balanced data representation. The data collected were analyzed using the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), t-test and multiple regression at the 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between professional development and Social Studies teachers’ attitudes to work in Upper Basic Schools in Delta State.

**Table 1: Pearson Correlation analysis between Professional Development and Social Studies Teachers’ Attitudes to Work in Upper Basic schools in Delta State**

Variables	N	r-cal	r <sup>2</sup>	P-value	Decision
Professional Development and Attitude to Work	205	.720	.5184	.023	Rejected

Table 1 shows the correlation that exists between professional development and Social Studies teachers’ attitudes to work in Upper Basic Schools in Delta State. The findings indicate a significant correlation between professional development and teachers’ attitudes to work. Since the correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.720$ ) and the significance level ( $p = 0.023$ ) are both less than the threshold ( $p < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a statistically significant relationship between professional development and Social Studies teachers’ attitudes to work.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant influence of location on the relationship between professional development and Social Studies teachers’ attitudes to work in Upper Basic schools in Delta State.

**Table 2: Regression Analysis on the Influence of Location on the Relationship Between Professional Development and Social Studies Teachers’ Attitudes to Work in Upper Basic Schools in Delta State**

Model Summary	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change	Std. Error of Estimate		
	.607	.369	.328	.369	3.927		
ANOVA	Sum of Squares		df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p)	
Regression	523.897		4	130.974	8.490	.000**	
Residual	894.726		58	15.426			
Total	1418.623		62				
Coefficients			Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig. (p)
(Constant)			12.314	1.987	—	6.197	.000
Professional Development			0.426	0.118	.442	3.610	.001
Location			0.238	0.092	.274	2.587	.012
Interaction (Prof. Dev. × Location)			0.189	0.073	.256	2.589	.012

The regression model was statistically significant,  $F(4, 58) = 8.490, p < .05$ , indicating that location significantly influences the relationship between professional development and teachers’ attitudes to work. The model explained 36.9% of the variance ( $R^2 = .369$ ) in teachers’ attitudes. Both professional development ( $\beta = .442, p = .001$ ) and location ( $\beta = .274, p = .012$ ) significantly predicted teachers’ attitudes. The interaction term (Professional Development × Location) was also significant ( $\beta = .256, p = .012$ ), confirming that location moderates the relationship between professional development and teachers’ attitudes to work. This implies that the impact of professional

development on teachers’ attitudes varies across school locations — suggesting that contextual factors linked to school setting (urban or rural) influence how professional development shapes teachers’ work dispositions

**Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant difference between male and female Social Studies teachers’ perceptions of how professional development influences their attitudes to work in Upper Basic Social Studies in Delta State

**Table 3: t-test analysis difference between male and female Social Studies Teachers’ Perceptions of how Professional Development influences their Attitudes to Work in Upper Basic schools in Delta State**

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Male	108	3.85	0.45				
Female	97	3.78	0.48	203	1.12	0.263	Retain Ho

Table 3 shows the result of a t-test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference between male and female Social Studies teachers’ perceptions regarding the influence of professional development on their attitudes to work. The result reveals that the difference in means between male (M = 3.85, SD = 0.45) and female (M = 3.78, SD = 0.48) teachers is not statistically significant,  $t(203) = 1.12$ ,  $p = 0.263$ . Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is retained. This indicates that there is no significant difference between male and female teachers’ perceptions of how professional development influences their attitudes to work in Upper Basic Social Studies in Delta State.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study found a positive relationship between professional development and Social Studies teachers’ attitudes to work in Upper Basic Schools in Delta State. This means that as teachers engage more in professional development, their attitudes toward their jobs improve. Abazie et al. (2020) supports this by stating that high-quality professional development enhances teachers’ effectiveness, positively influencing their attitudes and motivation. Similarly, Ahmed et.al. (2021) observed that meaningful professional development leads to better instructional practice and increases teachers’ morale and commitment.

The study also revealed that the location of schools significantly influences the relationship between professional development and teachers’ attitudes to work. This implies that the impact of

professional development can differ depending on whether a teacher is in an urban or rural area. Şahin et al. (2024) pointed out that contextual factors like geographical location and access to resources shape how teachers perceive and benefit from professional development. Arifin et al. (2024) also noted that systemic and environmental conditions play a critical role in determining the success of professional learning.

Furthermore, the study found no significant difference between male and female teachers in their perceptions of how professional development influences their attitudes to work. This indicates that gender does not affect how teachers view the impact of professional development. Nkechi and Goodfriday (2024) asserted that professional development initiatives are generally beneficial to all teachers regardless of gender, as they focus on improving instructional practices. Gambari et al. (2017) found that gender, years of experience, school type, and area of specialization do not significantly affect teachers' attitudes toward using the Internet for teaching. This seems to imply that the effectiveness of professional development depends more on its quality and the opportunities for reflection it provides than on demographic characteristics like gender.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that professional development plays a significant role in shaping Social Studies teachers' attitudes toward their work in Upper Basic Schools in Delta State. Teachers who actively engage in continuous professional learning tend to exhibit more positive work attitudes. The study also emphasizes that while location significantly affects the relationship between professional development and teacher attitudes, suggesting a disparity in access or quality of professional learning opportunities between urban and rural settings—gender does not influence teachers' perceptions of professional development. These findings underscore the importance of investing in and tailoring professional development programs to fit the specific needs and contexts of schools.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Education authorities should regularly organize, and fund professional development programs tailored to the needs of Social Studies teachers to enhance their attitudes and instructional practices.

2. Professional development initiatives should be decentralized to ensure equitable access for teachers in both urban and rural schools.
3. Professional development opportunities should be inclusive and designed to cater to all teachers, regardless of gender, ensuring that all educators benefit equally.

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