**Attitude of Secondary School Students Towards Social Science**

***ABSTRACT***

*This paper aims to explore the attitude of secondary school students towards Social Science subjects with respect to gender, future opportunities and types of schools. The present study was conducted following the Descriptive Survey Method where data was collected from 208 students across eight secondary schools in Jajpur District, Odisha, India. The intended data was collected through the GRASS scale and analysed statistically. The result of the study reveals that the students of government and private schools significantly differ in respect of their attitude towards Social Science. Private school students have a better positive attitude towards Social Science as compared to Government school students. There is no difference between secondary school students in their attitude towards Social Science with respect to gender. The students show a negative attitude towards Social Science in terms of future opportunities. Additionally, many students expressed scepticism about the practical applications and career benefits of social science. These findings underscore the necessity for educational reforms that enhance the perceived value and relevance of social science, incorporating practical issues and career-oriented counselling to foster engagement and appreciation among students.*

***KEYWORDS:*** *Attitudes, Gender, Secondary School, Social Science Education, Future Opportunities*

**INTRODUCTION**

Education is the cornerstone of societal development, shaping the minds and attitudes of future generations. Among the diverse subjects offered in secondary schools, social science holds a unique place. It not only imparts knowledge about history, geography, economics, and civics but also fosters critical thinking, empathy, and a deeper understanding of societal dynamics. According to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, social science education is essential in an increasingly interconnected world to empower learners to address global issues and promote peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable societies. Social science education inculcates national identity and social responsibility among students, preparing them to work as responsible citizens in a democratic society (Foran, 2004; Chaudhari, 2014; & Gajjela et al., 2020). The National Curriculum Framework, 2005 supports this by emphasising that social sciences help to develop the necessary social, cultural, and analytical skills to navigate an interdependent world (NCF, 2005). Social sciences are integral to the curriculum, providing knowledge essential for democratic citizenship and societal functioning (Behera, 2019). In today's world, characterised by conflict, inequality, and environmental challenges, it is crucial for sustainable development and fostering critical, respectful, and knowledgeable citizens. Attitudes toward a subject can significantly influence students' interests and future academic and career choices (Dundar & Rapport, 2014; Spiel et al., 2018). However, in these contexts, the attitude of secondary school students toward social science varies significantly, influenced by numerous factors including teaching methods, curriculum design, societal perceptions, personal interest, socio-economic status and family support. Factors influencing students' attitudes towards social sciences include the subject's perceived social status, scope in higher education and professions, teacher quality, and observation of role models. Studies by Mensah (2020), Alazzi and Chiodo (2004), Byford (2002), and Sarkar et al. (2015) indicate generally positive attitudes towards science, while research by Dundar and Rapport (2014), Ahmed and Maryam (2016) and Hobbs (2000) highlight predominantly negative attitudes. Some studies, such as those by Behera (2019), Sumesh and Gafoor (2013), and Gajjela et al. (2020), suggest that students' favourable attitudes may stem from perceiving social science as easier compared to other subjects. Understanding these attitudes is crucial for fostering democratic values and preparing students as engaged global citizens (Sarkar, De, & Maiti, 2015). This understanding is crucial as it can impact students' engagement, performance, and the likelihood of pursuing social science in higher education. Positive attitudes towards social science can lead to a more informed and engaged citizenry, capable of critically analysing social issues and contributing to societal progress. Conversely, negative attitudes may result in disinterest and disengagement, limiting the potential for students to develop essential skills in social analysis and civic responsibility. Given the crucial role of social sciences in fostering democratic values and social responsibility, this study aims to explore secondary school students’ attitudes towards social sciences. This article delves into the attitudes of secondary school students towards social science, exploring the factors that shape these attitudes and the implications for educational practice and policy. By examining factors such as gender, type of school, and future opportunities, the study seeks to provide insights that can inform educational strategies and improve social science education.

**OBJECTIVES**

1. To study the attitude of secondary school students towards social science in relation to gender.
2. To study the attitude of secondary school students towards social science in relation to type of school.
3. To study the attitude of secondary school students towards social science in terms of future opportunities.

**HYPOTHESIS**

1. Male and female secondary school students have no significant difference in their attitude towards social science subjects.
2. There is no significant difference between Private and Government secondary school students’ attitudes towards social sciences.

**METHOD**

The descriptive survey method was followed to conduct this study. The population of this study was secondary school students of Jajpur District, Odisha. The sample was selected in two phases. In the first phase, 4 government and 4 private secondary schools were selected purposely i.e.; Jaraka High School, Patitapaban High School, Panchayat High School, Jenapur High School and Venkateshwara Public School, Dharmasala Public School, Gopabandhu High School and Viveka Nanda Sikhya Kendra. In the second phase, 208 students were selected using stratified random sampling from these 8 secondary schools where 104 were girls and 104 were boys students, 26 from each school. After considering criteria like validity, reliability, and practicability the GRASS scale developed by Gable and Arthur was adopted to collect the required data. The collected data was analysed with the help of statistical techniques such as Mean, Standard Deviation, and T-test.

**RESULTS**

This study explores the attitudes of secondary school students towards social science, examining variations based on gender and school type. The differences between the mean score of attitude of secondary school students with respect to gender and types of school were calculated by t-test revealing no significant gender-based differences in attitudes. However, significant differences were observed between private and government school students. Additionally, students’ perspectives on social science in relation to future opportunities were assessed, showing varied responses with a notable trend of indecision and disagreement regarding the subject’s practical application and career benefits. Detailed findings are presented in the following tables and figures along with their interpretation.

***Table 1 Attitude of Male and Female Students Towards Social Science***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Gender** | **N** | **Mean** | **SD** | **Sed** | **df** | **T-value** | **P-value** | **Remarks** |
| Male | 104 | 77.68 | 14.969 | 2.117 | 98 | .491 | .625 | Not significant |
| Female | 104 | 79.12 | 14.372 | 2.033 |

Table 1 reveals that the mean scores of male and female secondary school students regarding their attitudes towards social science are 77.68 and 79.12, respectively. The standard deviations are similar, indicating a comparable spread of scores around the mean for both groups. The T-value (.491) and the P-value (.625) suggest that the difference in mean attitudes between male and female students is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance. Since the P-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance, we retain the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between male and female secondary school students in their attitude towards social science. The analysis indicates that gender does not significantly influence the attitude formation towards social science at the secondary level. Both male and female students exhibit similar attitudes towards the subject.

***Table .2 Attitude of Government and Private School Students Towards Social Science***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **School** | **N** | **Mean** | **SD** | **Sed** | **Df** | **T-value** | **p-value** | **Remarks** |
| Government | 104 | 72.74 | 12.801 | 1.10 | 98 | 4.040 | .000 | Significant |
| Private | 104 | 84.68 | 14.238 | 2.014 |

The analysis of Table .2 indicates a significant difference in attitudes towards social science between government and private school students. The mean attitude score for government school students is 72.74, while for private school students, it is 84.68, with standard deviations of 12.801 and 14.238, respectively. The t-value of 4.040 and a p-value of .000 (less than the 0.05 level of significance) confirm that this difference is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states no significant difference in attitudes between the two groups, is rejected. This shows that private school students have a more positive and stable attitude towards social science compared to their government school counterparts.

***Table 3 Attitude of Private Secondary School Students Towards Social Science with Respect to Future Opportunity***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SL.**  **NO.** | **STATEMENT** | **SA** | **A** | **UD** | **D** | **SD** |
| 1 | The subject helps to develop civic responsibility. | 0% | 0% | 56% | 30% | 14% |
| 2 | The subject does not apply to real life. | 18% | 12% | 60% | 6% | 4% |
| 3 | Any student who takes the subject is going to be benefited. | 2% | 8% | 56% | 14% | 20% |
| 4 | The subject is not relevant to life. | 48% | 26% | 14% | 12% | 0% |
| 5 | The student who studies social science subject can get more opportunities for jobs both in the public and private sector | 4% | 14% | 16% | 26% | 40% |

Table 3 shows the attitude of private school students toward social science in terms of future opportunities. It is evident from the above table that most students responded as undecided, representing their attitude towards social science regarding future opportunities. Out of 104 students, the majority of students (56%) gave their repose as undecided on the statement that the subject helps to develop civic responsibility. The majority are unsure about the role of social science in developing civic responsibility. This may reflect a lack of direct engagement with the subject’s civic components or insufficient emphasis by educators on this aspect. 44% of students do not see social science contributing to civic responsibility, indicating a potential disconnect between the curriculum and students' perceptions of its practical impact. A substantial portion of students are unsure about the subject's applicability to real life. 18% believe it is not applicable, which, combined with the undecided group, suggests that 70% of students do not see clear real-life benefits. 30% see real-life applications, which is a minority but still significant, indicating that some students recognize its relevance. The majority (56%) are unsure if taking social science is beneficial, indicating a lack of clarity on the subject's advantages. 34% do not see benefits, suggesting a perception that the subject does not provide clear advantages. Only 10% believe it is beneficial, showing that positive perceptions are very limited. 74% of students believe the subject is irrelevant, which indicates that social science might not connect with students’ everyday experiences. A small group remains uncertain, reflecting some ambiguity about the subject’s relevance. Only a small minority viewed it as relevant. 66% of students do not believe studying social science leads to better job opportunities, reflecting a strong perception that the subject lacks practical career benefits. 16% of students are unsure, indicating mixed messages about the subject’s career potential. Only 18% see it as beneficial for job opportunities, suggesting that a small group perceives career benefits. The analysis of private secondary school students' attitudes toward social science shows that a significant portion of students are undecided about the benefits of social science, with many not perceiving it as relevant to real life or beneficial for job opportunities. This indicates a general skepticism among private school students regarding the practical value of the subject.

***Table 4 Attitude of Government Secondary School Students Towards Social Science with Respect to Future Opportunity***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SL.**  **NO.** | **STATEMENT** | **SA** | **A** | **UD** | **D** | **SD** |
| 1 | The subject helps to develop civic responsibility. | 4% | 0% | 18% | 28% | 50% |
| 2 | The subject does not apply to real life. | 10% | 14% | 14% | 20% | 42% |
| 3 | Any student who takes the subject is going to be benefited. | 12% | 12% | 16% | 26% | 34% |
| 4 | The subject is not relevant to life. | 24% | 10% | 10% | 26% | 30% |
| 5 | The student who studies social science subject can get more job opportunities both in the public and private sectors. | 6% | 10% | 20% | 22% | 42% |

Table 4 shows the attitude of government school students toward social science in terms of future opportunities. Out of 104 students, the majority of government school students are unsure about the role of social science in developing civic responsibility. 78% of students do not believe social science helps develop civic responsibility, indicating a strong negative perception. A smaller but notable portion is unsure, suggesting some ambiguity. Very few see any civic benefit. Most of the students (62%) believe the subject does not apply to real life, showing skepticism about its practical value. 24% see real-life applications reflecting a positive perception. Some uncertainty exists, indicating mixed views as 14% of students responded as undecided. 60% of respondents do not believe taking social science is beneficial, reflecting a majority negative view. Some uncertainty exists, indicating mixed messages about its benefits. A small percentage of students (24%) believe social science is beneficial. 34% of government school students viewed social science as irrelevant. 56% see it as relevant, which is higher than in private schools, indicating a more positive view. 66% of students do not believe studying social science leads to better job opportunities. 20% of students are unsure, indicating mixed messages about the subject’s career potential. Only 16% see it as beneficial for job opportunities, suggesting that a small group perceives career benefits. The above analysis depicts that most government school students hold a negative attitude towards social science, with the majority strongly disagreeing that it helps develop civic responsibility or offers practical and job-related benefits. This indicates a general skepticism about the subject's value and future opportunities among these students.

***Table 5 Attitude of Male Secondary School Students Towards Social Science with Respect to Future Opportunity***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SL.**  **NO.** | **STATEMENT** | **SA** | **A** | **UD** | **D** | **SD** |
| 1 | The subject helps to develop civic responsibility. | 2% | 0% | 36% | 38% | 24% |
| 2 | The subject does not apply to real life. | 14% | 12% | 36% | 16% | 22% |
| 3 | Any student who takes the subject is going to be benefited. | 10% | 8% | 38% | 26% | 18% |
| 4 | The subject is not relevant to life. | 34% | 14% | 16% | 20% | 16% |
| 5 | The student who studies social science subject can get more job opportunity both in the public and private sector. | 8% | 8% | 30% | 22% | 32% |

The data presented in Table 5 shows the attitudes of male secondary school students towards social science in relation to future opportunities. The majority of students are either undecided (36%) or disagree (38%) with the statement that social science helps develop civic responsibility, while 24% strongly disagree. Only a negligible 2% strongly agree. This indicates that students generally do not see social science as contributing to civic responsibility. Opinions are mixed regarding the real-life application of social science. While 26% of students believe that social science does not apply to real life, 36% are undecided. A combined 38% (22% strongly disagree and 16% disagree) think it does have real-life applications. This suggests a significant portion of students are uncertain about the subject's relevance to real life. The largest group of students (38%) are undecided about whether taking social science is beneficial. However, 44% (26% disagree and 18% strongly disagree) doubt the benefits, while only 18% see it as beneficial. A significant portion of students (48%) believe that social science is not relevant to life, while 36% feel it is relevant. This reflects a divided opinion on the subject's relevance, with a slight majority perceiving it as irrelevant. Most students (54%) believe that studying social science does not significantly enhance job opportunities in both the public and private sectors. A considerable portion (30%) are undecided, while only 16% see potential job opportunities from studying the subject. The analysis of Mssale secondary school students’ attitudes towards social science reveals general uncertainty and skepticism about the subject’s relevance, applicability to real life, and potential career benefits. Most students are undecided or negative about the subject's ability to develop civic responsibility, its real-life applications, and its career-enhancing prospects.

***Table.6. Attitude of Female Secondary School Students Towards Social Science with Respect to Future Opportunity***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SL.**  **NO.** | **STATEMENT** | **SA** | **A** | **UD** | **D** | **SD** |
| 1 | The subject helps to develop civic responsibility. | 0% | 0% | 38% | 20% | 42% |
| 2 | The subject does not apply to real life. | 14% | 14% | 38% | 10% | 24% |
| 3 | Any student who takes the subject is going to be benefited. | 4% | 12% | 34% | 14% | 36% |
| 4 | The subject is not relevant to life. | 38% | 22% | 12% | 14% | 14% |
| 5 | The student who studies social science subject can get more job opportunity both in the public and private sector. | 2% | 16% | 12% | 20% | 50% |

The data presented in Table 6 shows the attitudes of Female secondary school students towards social science in relation to future opportunities The data from the table reveals that the majority of students hold negative perceptions about the social science subject. The majority of students do not believe that the subject helps to develop civic responsibility. 42% strongly disagree, 20% disagree, and 38% are undecided. The lack of responses in the "agree" categories indicates a strong perception that the subject is not beneficial for developing civic responsibility among female students. Opinions are mixed, but a significant portion of students are undecided (38%) with the statement that the subject does not apply to real life. The disagreement categories together account for 34%, suggesting that many students see some real-life applicability. However, 28% agree that the subject does not apply to real life, indicating divided opinions. The responses are varied with the largest groups being undecided (34%) and strongly disagreeing (36%) on the statement that any student who takes the subject is going to be benefited. This suggests a lack of consensus, with a tendency towards skepticism about the benefits of the subject. A significant portion of students (60%) agreed that the subject is not relevant to life, while 28% disagreed. This indicates a prevailing perception that the subject lacks relevance to life, although there is a notable minority who believe otherwise. Most students (70%) disagree and strongly disagree with the statement, indicating a belief that studying social science does not significantly enhance job opportunities. Only 18% see it as beneficial in this regard, showing a general lack of confidence in the subject's career benefits. The data shows that students predominantly view the subject of social science as neither particularly relevant nor beneficial for developing civic responsibility or improving job prospects. There is a considerable level of undecided responses, indicating uncertainty or ambivalence among students. The majority, however, lean towards a negative perception of the subject's applicability and relevance to real-life and career opportunities.

**DISCUSSION**

Attitude significantly influences students’ motivation to study specific subjects, including Social Science. The findings of the present study revealed that secondary school students generally have a negative attitude towards Social Science, particularly regarding future opportunities. This aligns with previous research by Ahmad and Shaista (2016), Hobbs (2000), Sahin and Anatoli (2014), and Shittu and Oantie (2015), which also identified negative perceptions of Social Science among students. A notable finding is the difference in attitudes between students from different types of schools. Private school students tend to have a more positive attitude towards Social Science compared to their counterparts in government schools. This is consistent with earlier research by Evans (2017) and Sumesh and Ghafoor (2014). This suggests that private schools may offer a more engaging curriculum or better resources that enhance students’ perception of the subject. Regarding gender, the study found no significant difference in attitudes towards Social Science between male and female students. This finding is in line with the research by Sarkar et al. (2015), Praveen et al. (2018), and Behera (2019), indicating that gender does not play a crucial role in shaping students’ attitudes towards this subject. The study also highlights those students in general, view Social Science as offering limited future opportunities. This negative perception persists regardless of the type of school. Students do not see the subject as relevant to their lives or careers, which suggests a need for educational interventions that demonstrate the real-world applicability and career prospects associated with Social Science.

**CONCLUSION**

The results of the study reveal that there is no significant difference between male and female students in their attitude towards Social Science. However, there is a significant difference between private and government school students, with private school students displaying a more positive attitude towards the subject. A substantial portion of secondary school students, irrespective of school type, show a negative attitude towards Social Science in terms of future opportunities. This negative attitude indicates a broader issue of awareness and perception that needs to be addressed. Students do not perceive Social Science as offering substantial job opportunities or relevance to their lives, highlighting the need for educational strategies that enhance the perceived value and real-world applicability of Social Science. Schools and educators should focus on making Social Science more engaging and relevant to students' future careers and lives, emphasizing its importance in developing civic responsibility and understanding societal dynamics.

**SUGGESTION**

To improve students’ attitudes towards Social Science, the curriculum should be updated to include practical and contemporary issues that highlight its real-world relevance, and career counselling sessions should focus on the diverse opportunities available for Social Science graduates. Employing interactive teaching methods, leveraging technology, and promoting extracurricular activities related to Social Science can make the subject more engaging. Ongoing professional development for teachers and involving parents in the educational process can further enhance student interest. Establishing partnerships with universities and organizations for internships and hands-on experiences, implementing regular feedback mechanisms, and showcasing success stories of individuals in Social Science careers can also positively influence students' perceptions and appreciation of the subject.

The current study reveals that a significant proportion of students at the secondary stage, irrespective of their nature of affiliation e.g. government or private schools have negative attitude towards social science in terms its relevance to real life situations. The prevalent circumstances may be attributed socio-cultural, curricular, pedagogical and psychological factors. Nevertheless, the value of social science is critical and needed always, because it enables students to acquire knowledge and develops insights of human interaction with natural and social environment across time, space and institutions. There is a need of policy intervention in the form of training and orientation to the teachers on the importance of social science and need of adequate pedagogy to make it more desired and outcome centric where students enable them to experience dignity, equity amidst diversity, mutual interdependence, foster democracy as a way of life.

**Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)**

Option 1:

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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