



EFFECTS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTITUDE IN BIOLOGY IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of cooperative learning on secondary school students' attitude in Biology in Aguata LGA of Anambra State. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of cooperative learning on students' attitude in Biology and the study had two specific objectives. The concept of cooperative learning, attitude gender was explained. Two research questions guided the study as well as two null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. The quasi-experimental research design was used, specifically the pre-test posttest non-randomized control group design. A sample of 118 Senior Secondary School two (SS2) Biology students from Aguata LGA was used in the study. The instrument for data collection was Biology Attitude Scale (BAS) and was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Crombach Alpha which yielded coefficient of internal consistency of 0.94. Teachers were trained as research assistants and they administered the treatment on the students using the designed lesson plans. The method of data collection was by administering the Biology Attitude Scale (BAS) as pretest and posttest. The data obtained were analyzed using mean gain for answering the research questions and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) for testing the null hypotheses. The results revealed among others that there was a significant difference between the mean attitude of students in biology in the cooperative learning group and conventional method in favour of cooperative learning. There was no significant difference in the mean attitude scores of male and female students both in the cooperative learning among other findings. The study recommended among others that biology teachers should adopt cooperative learning to involve students in the learning process actively and make them take more responsibility for their own learning.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Cooperative Learning, Attitude and Biology

Introduction

Education is the bedrock of any nation's development and is central to all aspect of any nation's science. It is the most powerful instrument devised by man for his own improvement (Iloka & Nwakoby, 2025; Okaforcha & Okeke, 2019; Ojimba, 2020). Education, according to Chukwuma and Aniekwe (2011) can be regarded as instrument for effecting human learning, transformation and capacity development. It is the total process of human learning by which knowledge is impacted, faculties trained and skills developed (Okeke, Okaforcha & Ekwesianya, 2019; Osegbue, 2019). Thus, it is a means through which man acquires learning and is molded to fit into the society. Okoye (2021) noted that the major aim of education is to provide individuals with the



relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes and ideas to enable them live as effective citizens in the society.

Every educational system is developed and structured according to many diverse and distinct needs and demands of the society that established it (Anthony, 2019; Onyekwelu & Adinna, 2022). However, education is constantly changing and adapting itself to new demands and circumstances. In the National Policy on Education, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 2013) had continued to update her educational system to meet up with various educational challenges. The FGN properly placed a significant emphasis on the importance of students acquiring and developing of appropriate skills as equipment for them to live in and contribute positively to the society (Anushiem & Anushiem, 2023). Moreover, senior secondary education in Nigeria, on its part, aims at equipping students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology, hence the inclusion of biology education in the secondary school curriculum in Nigeria (Onyekwelu, 2024; Ofozoba & Ofozoba, 2022).

The importance of biology in the society are many and cannot be over-emphasized. This has been buttressed by Adu (2012) who stated that the study of biology serves a useful purpose in modern life. It helps in the right type of treatment to choose for many diseases and ailment. FRN (2013) emphasized the teaching of biology in Nigerian schools as it is linked to the philosophy of education aimed at; Inculcating national consciousness and national unity; inculcating the right type of attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.

Important reasons for studying biology are to understand how cells and organisms work (Enwezor & Chukwunonye, 2021; Ugwaka & Igbokwe, 2023). It involves the study of life and it is very important as it tells us about the natural world. Biology tells us about our body, helping us to develop cures and treatments for many diseases (Anushiem, 2023; Azubuike, 2024). It also tells us about the bodies of other animals and it can provide clinical treatment for farm animals and also pets (Ogbaga, 2016). In addition to this, Okoro (2011) opined that biology also tells us about plants and how they can be beneficial to human life. He went further to buttress that biology gives us a method to classify animals and help us understand animals. It also tells us do's and don'ts for our planet. It gives us a thorough picture of human body and the organisms inside us, also about the metabolism and other processes inside the human body. Biology also tells us about the behavioral acts of humans and animals (Ekwesianya, 2022; Okeke, Okaforcha & Ekwesianya, 2019). Biology, as a science, helps human life in many ways. It helps in increasing production of food, combating diseases and also aids in protecting and conserving our environment (Adinna & Onyekwelu, 2021; Okaforcha, 2021). The advances in the field of biology have resulted in high standard of living in the field of food and health. Production of plants has been increased by improving the varieties and development of high-yield and diseases resistant varieties of plants and animals that are used as food (Umar, 2011).

Biology is a natural science that studies the living world. It is a prerequisite subject for many fields of learning that contributes immensely to the technological growth of the nation. A lot of reasons are borne in mind while studying biology. These include among others, the understanding of oneself and the environment surrounding us, appreciation of nature as well as pollution control. Sound theoretical and practical knowledge of biology according to Johnson (2005) is very necessary for proper management of natural resources and maintenance of good



healthy living habits. Thus, biology and its study are necessary not only for students but the whole of human populace (Okeke, 2015).

Despite the importance and popularity of biology among Nigerian students, it is very disappointing to note that students' performance in the subject at both internal and external examinations has remained consistently poor (Osuafor & Okonkwo, 2013). Okoro (2011) asserted that for some years the percentage of students who obtained credit pass in biology at West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) in Nigeria has been low and their performance is poor. In Aguata Education Zone in Anambra State, statistics from May/June 2014-2018 for senior secondary certificate examination showed the percentage of candidates who passed WASSCE at credit level and above in biology as follows; 59.7% in 2014, 32.9% in 2015, 47.3% in 2016, 70.8% in 2017 and 44.6% in 2018 (Source: Planning, Research, and Statistics Department, Post-primary Education Board, Aguata, 2018). The trend although showed some improvement in the subject, but the performance of students fluctuates with a decline in 2015, 2016 and 2018.

This evidence indicates that secondary school students' performance in Biology is still not at its best. If the grades that students get at the end of a course of study continue to either fluctuate or sometimes decline, the implication is that Nigeria may have inconsistent supply of manpower or facility for teaching science and technology related disciplines. This may affect Nigeria's vision to become one of the 20 industrialized nations in the world by year 2025. These have raised research interest in order to understand the factors responsible for fluctuations and decline in students' performance as well as poor students' performance and proffer solutions to them.

Many factors have been identified by researchers (Ekwesianya, 2025; Ezeaku & Okoye, 2025; Okechukwu, 2025; Osegbue, 2021) as being responsible for the decline and poor performance of students in biology. Some of these include; lack of teachers, lack of educational facilities like laboratories, overloaded syllabuses, laziness, poor attitude and lack of interest on the part of the students, large class size, family/home background of the students (Osuafor & Okonkwo, 2013). Apart from these factors, poor teaching methods adopted by teachers at senior secondary school level in Nigeria have also been identified as one of the major factors contributing to poor performance of students in biology (Ahmed & Abimbola, 2011; Umar, 2011; Wanbugu, Changeiywo & Ndritu, 2013). If students are not happy with the way biology is taught, they may show disinterest and negative attitudes in and towards biology and its teaching and this would affect their performances in biology.

Students' performance in biology could be affected by their attitude. Attitude is a favourable or unfavourable evaluative reaction towards something, events, programmes exhibited in an individual's beliefs, feelings, emotions or intended behaviors (Ezeamama & Ofozoba, 2023; Ibe, 2022; Rosemund, 2009). Attitude means the individual prevailing tendency to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object (person or a group of people, institutions, and events) Salta and Tzougraki (2014). Okoye and Ezeaku, (2025) defined attitude as a way a person views something or tends to behave towards it, often in an evaluative way. Attitude can be positive (values) or negative (prejudice) (Azubuike, 2025; Onyekwelu, 2021). Okechukwu, (2025) noted that when



attitude is positive, it is a value to a learner but when it is negative, it is bigotry to a learner and the course learnt. However, positive and negative attitude have strong immeasurable effect on the outcome of a learning process. Negative attitude has the tendency to build a kind of repulsion in a learner to instruction which affects knowledge acquisition and prowess in a particular area of study (Enwezor & Obi, 2022; Ezeaku, 2025).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013), in the National Policy on Education stipulates that, biology education should develop in the child well defined abilities and values such as the spirit of inquiry, creativity, objectivity, the courage to question, and an aesthetic sensibility. The policy further stated that biology is designed to enable the learner to acquire problem-solving and decision-making skills and to discover the relationship of science with health, agriculture, industry and other aspects of daily life (FRN, 2013). To be able to achieve these objectives requires proper conceptualization of biology concepts. This would require teaching and learning approaches that could make students practice biology knowledge gained, achieve good grades in biology and apply the learned concepts in their daily lives as scientists to be. Two methods that come to mind of the researcher at this point are cooperative and individualized methods since they are student centred.

Cooperative learning is an aspect of learning which represents a shift away from the typical teacher-centred learning (Ucheagwu-Okoye, 2025). Onyekwelu, (2024) and Osegbue, and Nnubia, (2020) reported that teachers who use cooperative learning approaches tend to think of themselves less as expert transmitters of knowledge to students, and more as expert designers of intellectual experiences for students- as coaches or midwives of a more emergent learning process. It is defined as the instructional use of small groups so that students' work together to maximize their own and each other's learning (Rose, 2014). Techniques involved in cooperative learning include: Think-pair-share, Jigsaw, Jigsaw II, Reserve jigsaw, Inside-outside circle and Reciprocal teaching (Schul, 2011). Of all these strategies, studies indicate that the use of Jigsaw strategy increases positive educational outcomes (Mengudo & Xaolong 2010; Sahin, 2010; Al-Salkhi, 2015; Azmin, 2016). This study will make use of think-pair-share strategy. According to Aronson (2000), Jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy that enables each student of a "home" group to specialize in one aspect of a learning unit. Students meet with members from other groups who are assigned the same task and after mastering the materials, return to the "home" group to teach this material to the group members. Jigsaw can be used whenever materials are segmented into separate components. Each group member becomes an expert on a different concept or procedure and teaches it to the group (Reys, 2010). Just like jigsaw puzzle, each piece (student part) is essential for the completion and full understanding of the final product (Abonyi, 2021; Izuchukwu, Ugwaka, Arazu and Ezechi, 2023). Therefore, each student is essential for the understanding of the whole concept being taught.

According to Aronson (2000), one of the advantages of jigsaw strategy is that students perform the challenging and engaging tasks in their experts' groups with enthusiasm since they know they are the only ones with that piece of information when they move to their respective groups. Students who tutor each other must develop a clear idea of the concept they are presenting



and orally communicate it to their partners (Sahin, 2010). Research-based evidence seem to show that cooperative learning improves students' learning outcome and educators have recognized cooperative learning as a beneficial teaching-learning technique for different subjects (Zakaria, Solfitri, Daud & Abidin, 2013). Cooperative learning was reported by Wayne (2013) to have positive effects on academic achievement when students are accountable only to themselves, when they are accountable to both themselves and their group, and when students are solely accountable to their group. Rose (2014) further revealed that cooperative learning had positive effect on students' mathematics achievement.

The conventional method involves other methods used by the teacher in lesson delivery which are teacher-centered. Ucheagwu-Okoye (2025) and Obumse and Egenti (2021) stated that typical examples are the lecture method and chalk talk method. Lecture method is a teacher-centred approach to teaching and learning in which the teacher is seen as an authority, dispensing knowledge to students who contribute little or nothing to the instruction (Ekwesianya, Okaforcha and Okeke, 2020; Enwezor, 2021; Ojimba, 2024). Lecture method has been criticized by Adegoke (2011) who posited that only hardworking students can benefit from it. The classrooms in Nigeria are predominantly dominated by conventional method like the lecture method of instruction which does not encourage students-students interaction (Nwakoby, 2025). In their studies, Nwakoby and Iloka (2025) and Enwezor and Obi (2022) opined that the common use of conventional method is obviously due to the fact that it is suitable for teaching a large number of students and saves a lot of time. It also requires lesser skill on the part of the teachers who use the approach. Conventional method as a teacher-centred approach makes for students' passivity and therefore leads often times to negative attitude in school subjects (Enwezor, 2021; Okeke 2022; Okeke & Okaforcha, 2025).

Cooperative learning strategy have been reported in a number of studies to bear characteristics that could improve on the students' achievement (Neboh, 2009; Rose, 2014; Zakaria, Solfitri, Daud & Abidin, 2013), they are however, not without limitations. For teachers, stepping out of the teacher-centred method and engaging students in group activity is hard work, especially when doing it for the first time (Nwankwo, and Ezeibe, 2021; Okaforcha & Okeke, 2020). Similarly, Iloka (2025) noted that designing group work requires a demanding yet important rethinking of the syllabus, in terms of course content and time allocation. Cooperative learning strategy hold many benefits for the students due to the nature of students' involvement. These benefits of cooperative learning strategy, according to Ethelmary, Nwankwo and Aroh, (2019) and Ezeaku (2019), are accessible to both genders of the students.

The findings of Muhammad (2014) and Okpala and Onocha as cited in Offiah and Okonkwo (2011), indicated that achievement in biology of students towards the subject could be influenced by some learner characteristics such as gender. Gender is an important variable in educational research and it has continued to be an issue of concern to educators and researchers. Ezirim (2006); Longe and Adedeji (2003); Yoloye (2004), noted in their studies that gender has impact on biology. Gender can be considered to be sexual classification into male and female. Gender issues in the context of education is referred to as the differences, both real and perceived between boys and girls and their relative achievements and opportunities (West Minister Institute



of Education, 2006). Gender-related issues have attracted the attention of many researchers in biology for male and female in secondary schools. Agommush and Nzewi (2003); Babajide (2010); Danladi (2003), found that gender has no influence on students' achievement in biology and their attitude. Also, Sema, Seda and Nilda (2014), Nwankwo (2022), and Obumse (2022), in their study found no significant difference between male and female students' achievement. The influence of gender on attitude is therefore still a controversial issue among biology researchers.

The reports on gender as a group factor in students' attitude in sciences are mixed. While some findings indicated no significant effect of gender in biology attitude (Adekoya, 2010; Olatoye, 2009), some researchers reported significant influence of gender on attitude with boys having better scores than girls in the study. This study therefore sought to examine the influence of gender on the attitude of students. These contradictive evidences in attitude and lack of clear trend on gender influence in the study of biology has resulted in the need to carry out a study with a view to determine the effect of cooperative learning strategy on secondary school male and female biology students' attitude. To this background, it is imperative to investigate effects of cooperative learning strategy on students' attitude in Biology in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What are the mean attitude scores of students taught Biology using cooperative learning method and those taught with conventional lecture method?
2. What are the mean attitude scores of male and female students taught Biology using cooperative learning method?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at significant level of 0.05:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean attitude scores of students taught Biology using cooperative learning method and those taught with conventional lecture method.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean attitude scores of male and female students taught Biology using cooperative learning method.

Methods

The quasi-experimental design was used, specifically the pre-test posttest non-randomized control group design. A sample of 118 Senior Secondary School two (SS2) Biology students from Aguata LGA was used in the study. The instrument for data collection which is Biology Attitude Scale (BAS) was validated by one lecturer in science education, one lecturer in measurement and evaluation, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and one experienced biology teacher in British Spring College, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha which yielded coefficient of internal consistency of 0.94. Teachers were trained as research assistants and they administered the treatment on the students using the designed lesson plans. The



method of data collection was by administering the BAS as pretest and posttest. The data obtained were analyzed using mean gain to answer the research questions and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

This chapter focuses on the analysis of data generated from the pretest and posttest. The results of the analysis are presented in tables followed by interpretations.

Research Questions 1: What is the mean attitude scores of students taught Biology using cooperative learning method and those taught with conventional lecture method?

Table 1: The Mean Attitude Scores of Students taught Biology using Cooperative Learning Method and those taught with Conventional Lecture Method

Source of variation	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest mean	Gain Mean	Pretest SD	Posttest SD	Remark
Cooperative Learning	38	31.14	82.14	51.00	10.21	11.26	Effective
Conventional method	41	27.62	51.71	24.09	12.32	13.14	

Table 1 reveals that the students taught Biology with cooperative learning method had pretest mean score of 31.14 and posttest mean score of 82.14 with gained mean 51.00 in biology, while those in the control group taught with conventional lecture method had pretest mean score of 27.62 and posttest mean score of 51.71 with gained mean 24.09. With posttest mean gain score of 51.00, cooperative learning method was effective in enhancing students' attitude in biology. Table 1 showed from the standard deviation scores that the spread of scores increased in both groups in moving from the pretest to the posttest with the conventional method group having the highest standard deviation.

Research Questions 2: What is the mean attitude scores of male and female students taught Biology using cooperative learning method and those taught with conventional lecture method?

Table 2: The Mean Attitude Scores of Male and Female Students taught Biology using Cooperative Learning Method and those taught with Conventional Lecture Method

Source of variation	Gender	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest mean	Gain Mean	Pretest SD	Posttest SD	Remark
Cooperative Learning	Male	18	30.14	81.04	50.90	13.69	11.22	Effective
	Female	20	31.18	80.12	48.94	13.82	13.80	Effective

Table 2 indicates that cooperative learning method is effective in enhancing both male and female students' attitudes in biology. Table 2 shows from the standard deviation scores that the



spread of scores increased in both male and female in moving from the pretest to the posttest with the females having the highest spread of scores.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: Mean attitude scores of secondary school students taught biology using cooperative learning method and those taught with conventional lecture method do not differ significantly.

Table 3: ANCOVA on test of Mean Attitude Scores of Secondary School Students Taught Biology Using Cooperative Learning Method and Those Taught with Conventional Lecture Method

Source of Variation	SS	Df	Mean Square	F	Pvalue	Decision
Corrected Model	12373.874 ^a	4	3093.469	19.903	.000	
Intercept	81060.507	1	81060.507	521.530	.000	
Pretest	168.097	1	168.097	1.082	.301	
Method	11998.303	1	11998.303	77.195	.000	S
Gender	29.871	1	29.871	.192	.662	NS
Method * Gender	15.545	1	15.545	.100	.752	NS
Error	17874.251	113	155.428			
Total	641575.000	118				
Corrected Total	30248.125	117				

Table 3 shows that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 117df denominator, the calculated F is 77.195 with P-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis six was rejected. Thus, there is a significant difference in the mean attitude scores of students taught biology using cooperative learning method and those taught using conventional lecture method in favour of cooperative learning method.

Hypothesis 2: Mean attitude scores of secondary school male and female students taught biology using cooperative learning method and those taught with conventional lecture method do not differ significantly.

Data relating to hypothesis 2 is contained in Table 3.

From table 3, it can be seen that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 117df denominator, the calculated F is .192 with P-value of 0.662 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis nine was not rejected. Thus, there is no significant difference between the mean attitude scores of male and female biology students.



Discussion of Findings

Effects of Cooperative learning on Students' Attitude in Biology

The results from this study has revealed that students taught biology using Cooperative learning achieved significantly better than students taught using conventional lecture method. The trend of higher achievement by the experimental group could be as a result of group learning and remedial activities provided which helped the students to master the biology concepts better than the control group who were not exposed to cooperative learning. The pictorial illustrations were considered effective in enhancing achievement in science for both concrete operational and formal students (Ajayu, 2009; Nonyem & Chimaa, 2020). Furthermore, these pictorial illustrations provide a concrete basis for conceptual linking and therefore facilitate a better and proper understanding of biology concepts. This situation enhanced learning since students tend to learn more and better when more of the senses are involved than when one sense is involved (Ratner, 2008; Abonyi, 2020; Nwabachili, Iloka & Ucheagwu-Okoye, 2022).

The finding of this study is line with those of Okebukola and Ogunniyi (2004), Abonyi (2022) and Onyekwelu (2024), who reported that cooperative learning significantly improved attitude of students in physics. The finding of the study also supported that of Nwoye (2005), and Obumse and Chinwe, (2021) who reported that instruction was more effective than traditional instruction in improving physics achievement of participant students. The finding of the study also lends credence to that of Alebiosu, Michael, and Onabanjo (2011), Okaforcha and Iloka, (2025), and Osegbue, (2022) who revealed that using Cooperative learning was more effective in improving students' attitude.

Effects of Cooperative learning relative to Gender

The findings of this study revealed no significant differences in the mean attitude scores of male and female students taught using cooperative learning. These findings further consolidate the positive effect of cooperative learning on as it tends to improve students' attitude uniformly. This finding of the study is supported by the findings of Neboh (2009), Ugwaka, and Igbokwe (2020), and Okaforcha and Okeke, (2025) who reported that there was no significant difference in the attitude of males and females cooperative learning approach was used. The finding of the study is also supported by Awofala and Nneji (2013), and Enwezor and Chukwunonye, (2022) when they concluded that there was no significant difference between the mathematics attitude of male and female students taught with framing and team assisted cooperative learning approach. Nnamani and Oyibe (2016) as well as Ucheagwu-Okoye, (2025) further supported this finding of the study when they noted that, although, the female students had a higher score variation, they performed no better than the males when cooperative learning was used.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed a significant positive effect of cooperative learning on students' attitude in biology. This led to the conclusion that cooperative learning method significantly and positively enhanced the students' attitude in biology. Also, there was no



significant differences in the mean attitude of male and female students taught using cooperative learning method. Thus, the method significantly improved the students' biology attitude uniformly regardless of their gender. More so, there are no significant interaction effects of gender and teaching method as measured from the Biology attitude test.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in the light of the above findings:

1. Biology teachers should adopt Cooperative learning strategies to involve students in the learning process actively and make them take more responsibility for their own learning.
2. The school administrators should provide facilities such as internets, library materials and well-equipped laboratories so that Biology students could have enough educational resources in the course of cooperative learning.
3. Frequent training on how to use Cooperative learning effectively in teaching and learning biology should be organized for Biology teachers by the government and stakeholders in education. Such training should be supervised and evaluated to make sure that Biology teachers have mastered the strategies for use in the classroom.

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