

## Students' Civic Knowledge and Attitude as Correlates of Civic Engagement in Secondary Schools in Oyo State, Nigeria

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**Abstract.** This study investigated civic knowledge and attitudes as correlates of civic engagement among secondary students in Oyo State, Nigeria. The population for the study were all public secondary school students in Oyo State and sample consisted of 600 Senior Secondary II students. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select the sample. The research instrument was a questionnaire designed by the researchers titled "Students Civic Engagement Questionnaire (SCEQ)". The validity of the instrument was ascertained by specialists in Social Studies and experts in Test and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was ensured through cronbach Alpha and the reliability coefficient 0.72 was obtained. The data collected were analyses using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The study revealed that there is no significant relationship between secondary school students' civic knowledge and civic engagement. Also, there is no positive and significant relationship between secondary school students' attitude towards civic engagement. The study further revealed that, there is no significant relationship between secondary school students' knowledge of civic duties and civic attitude. Based on the findings of this study it was recommended that students should be enlightened and encouraged to

participate in civic obligations such as community services and others in order to develop positive attitudes towards civic engagement. Non- governmental organizations should intensify efforts in campaigning and promoting civic activities and duties for better awareness among students and the citizens of the nation in general.

**Keywords:** Civic Education, Civic Knowledge, Civic Duties, Civic Attitude, Civic Engagement.

### 1. Introduction

It is generally believed that students of secondary schools are not fully engaged with community development, their attitude towards civic engagement do not support the roles of participation in community development, most of the students are not committed to community participation and it has invariably become a matter of great concern to people of Nigeria. It seems awareness of civic responsibility of students is not well defined by the society. The role of students in community development is important for national development. Part of government efforts to enlighten students about their involvement in civic duties was the introduction of Civic Education to Nigeria educational system in 2009. The search for the

school programmes that could develop in the citizens those knowledge, skills and activities that they need to be useful to themselves and the society at large led to the introduction of the Integrated Social Studies in Nigeria in the 1960s with the coming of Social Studies, Civic Education became as an integral part of Social Studies in 1971 (Ogundare, 2011).

Civic education is education given to the students to know their rights and responsibilities in the society. Civic education create awareness to students' civic engagement, such as registering as voters and vote during the election, also to engage in protecting government properties by reporting any suspicious move that can damage government properties. The need for civic knowledge and right attitudes that can enhance the civic engagement of the students is necessary in this dispensation of Nigeria, students are the leaders of tomorrow and government is making frantic efforts to engage students in order to participate and contribute to community in which they belong. Civic education including civic knowledge of the students that could form their attitude towards engagement is a collective responsibility of all and sundry. Abdu-Raheem (2018) noted that civic education is a vigorous attempt to teach morals, social and societal values skills, knowledge, legal rights, honesty and norms which are qualities expected of good and responsible citizens towards nation building.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that students are not actively participating in community development neither students show interest in engaging with democratic process in the country. In order to inculcate democratic ideas and ensure a just and egalitarian society, Nigeria needs students who are aware of characteristic of democracy and committed to it. Again, students who are aware of the irregularity associated with human ideas and their actual behaviour are also needed. The message of Civic Education is to learn, talk and listen to others and cooperate, including identification of public problems that is cognitive and ethnically demanding activities that can be learned from experience and

contribute to society development. This study therefore aims at investigating students' civic knowledge, attitudes towards the knowledge acquired and their engagement in civic activities.

### 1.2 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

- There is no significant relationship between civic knowledge and civic engagement of secondary school students in Oyo State.
- There is no significant relationship between civic attitude and civic engagement of secondary school students in Oyo State.
- There is no significant relationship between secondary school student's civic knowledge and attitude towards civic engagement in Oyo state.

### 2. Civic Education and Civic Engagement

According to Fabiyi (2009), Nigeria is currently facing the problem of incivility and immorality. Kehinde, Awoyele and Jekayinoluwa (2012), perceived that Nigeria youths had been fingered to be at the nerve centre of the social, economic and political problems facing the country. Mofoluwawo, Jarimi and Oyedele (2012), also observed that youth incivility has become the order of the day, while civic virtues in all sphere of life have totally declined. Event of the recent past have indicated that Nigeria is facing the trend of losing its much cherished sense of nationhood, cultural identity and indeed, hospitable spirit. Students should leave the schools with the understanding that they can use the knowledge and skills of their degree for a career and for the public good (Jake, 2016). However, Abdu-Raheem (2018) advocated for inculcation of the right kind of values through effective teaching of civic education as a value-oriented and value-projected subject.

According to Agu, (2009), there is need for urgent value re-orientation and engagement of

the youths in a more articulated way through Civic Education because of the far reaching impact of the negative trends on national development. Azebamwan (2010) noted that the need arises for Nigeria to seek solution to pressing problems of national importance. The solution is to create a society where there is unity, peace, tolerance, honesty, respect for human dignity and patriotism (Mofoluwawo et al, 2012). Coley and Sum (2012) posited that civic engagement varied across the educational attainment age, and income: rates of engagement were positively correlated with higher education and income levels and increases in age. Youniss (2012) found that certain school practices such as promoting classroom discussions, students to offer government and engage in extra-curricular activities and incorporating service learning into the curriculum, can build students' knowledge of history and government and encourage civic engagement.

Civic engagement, a critical outcome of civic knowledge and responsibility is defined as "working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities by developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes. In addition, civic knowledge and responsibility encompasses actions wherein individuals participate in activities of personal and public concern that are both individually life enriching and socially beneficial to the community.

However, civic engagement refers to attitudes shows that civic engagement positively relates to psycho social adjustment (Schmidt, Shumow, & Kackar (2007). Participation in everyday situation, young people can develop a picture of themselves as citizens (Identity development of, Haste, 2004). Ideally, the school is a place for young people to accumulate democratic experiences and reflect upon these in addition to experience acquired elsewhere (Daniels, 2001). Such reflection can contribute to the identify development of young people and thereby enhance the quality of their participation in society.

According to Sherrod, Torney-Purta and Flanaga, (2008), Civic engagement generally is taken to represent a larger set of activities that includes political participation but extends beyond it to include activities in civil society. Civic engagement historically has come in many sizes and shape, and review of civic engagement in the United States includes activity in politics and public affairs, engagement in community associations clubs and religious bodies, and work related organizations, such as unions and professional societies, and informal associations and activities (ranging from bowling leagues to picnics and parties).

Additionally, engagement is often distinguished from participation in that it is not restricted to physical activity; instead, civic engagement is normally defined to include psychological engagement in civic society. Common measures of civic engagement include such indicators as political interest, media consumption and political knowledge, in that these provide a measure of the degree to which citizens are mentally participating in society. On the whole, civic engagement refers to the actions, beliefs and knowledge that link citizen into their societies and that establish the basis for cooperative behaviour.

Furthermore, Civic engagement includes attitudes, behaviours, knowledge, and skills that benefit society and derive from the interest in improving the common good, indicate feelings of responsibility toward the communities in which an individual is embedded, and the idea that everyone has a central role in influencing the well-being of society. Civic behaviours include actions that based on this belief system, aim to resolve community issues and improve the welfare of the society, such as volunteer work and supporting charities. Such behaviours are generally termed civic participation. (Zarrillo, 2008).

Other organizations that generally engage adolescents in community life include youth organisation like scouts and religious organizations. These kinds of organisation supplement the education of young people and help them create a value system that underlines

their constructive role in improving society. Unlike political and voluntary association these organisation contributing to the common good is not the only aim: activities of these organisation also include playing and having fun with other boys and girls.

Finally, other clubs in which youth can participate in structured activities include sport and cultural originations, which imply a minimal engagement in improving the community (aside from e.g. organizing real events). Thus, community organizations can be placed on a continuum based on their degree of civic purpose and community improvement activity. Based on the type of organisation in which youths are involved, it is possible to assume different amount of civic engagement: maximum when young people volunteer or participate in political activity in the community, minimum when they take part in sportive or cultural organizations.

The study of Sherrod, Torney-Purta and Flannagan (2008) noted that extracurricular activities are early manifestation of civic engagement. Civic engagement in the present study was based on adolescents' club memberships. We take into account both the numbers of organizations (Vieno, Perkins, Smith and San tinello (2007). By creating an index based on the amount of engagement in community life in which the different organisation tend to engage, the focus of the present study is on adolescents' civic engagement: how much young people depending on the kind of organisation attended, participate and contribute to community life.

Empirical research has advanced the understanding of youth civic engagement. For example, by describing volunteer and political activities that youth often participate in such as tutoring, campaigning, and participating in social organizations at school and by suggesting that such activities influence the formation of beliefs about one's responsibilities and aspirations toward community (Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Alisat, 2007; Schmidt, Shumow, & Kackar, 2007). Such research focuses on the importance of early socialization processes in

contexts of families, schools, and peer groups as well as on opportunity for civic engagement during adolescence. Youniss, 2012).

There seems to be a development cycle during adolescence in which attitudes such as civic efficacy (the belief that one can impact their community) and social responsibility (a sense of duty to others) both lead to and result from ratification in community service and political activities. Pancer et al., 2007). On the downside, this definition arguably privileges traditional modes of civic action that are both increasing outdated and unrepresentative of a range of actions and behaviours that have historically been important civic tools of members of disadvantaged, oppressed or marginalized groups, or any combination of the three. For example, various web 2.0 activities such as uploading a video to YouTube and Intercepting through social networking sites such as Facebook or Ning do not obviously fit into the categories and actions described above, despite their increasingly evident civic importance.

This definition also 'seems to exclude artistic production and expression such as hip-hop music and videos, poetry slams, and graffiti-all of which have arguably been used especially by young, often poor, people of colour in the United States and elsewhere to critique contemporary power structures and civic institution. Furthermore, it fails to credit the civic intentionality and implications of everyday forms of resistance by relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so on" (Schmidt, et al, (2007).

Finally, emphasis on public and collective forms of engagement likely overlooks the ways in which especially members of historically disadvantaged groups may be "pillars of their communities" without participating collectively in public activities. A well-known community elder, for example, may extent considerable civic influence by modelling rectitude, advising youngsters about how to behave, and serving as an informal but final arbiter of community

disputes, even though he takes part in no obvious public activities.

### **3. Factors that Promote Students' Civic Engagement**

According to Fan, Usman and Yaro (2015), more active cooperative and participatory learning activities in the classroom and out of school, are needed for students in order to assist them in developing essential skills for democracy, stimulate their civic interests and improve their knowledge and skills, as well as their sense of efficacy. The factors are discussed below:

#### **3.1 Family**

Family affluence according to (Atkins and Hart 2003), seems to promote engagement in community improvement. In families with more economic resources in fact, adolescents can have easier access to organized activities because they can afford the costs of participation (e.g. membership dues transportation). Moreover family affluence is usually related to social and educational status. Increasing the like hood that affluent parents know the local organization and value adolescent's participation in them, Coulton & Irwin, 2009).

Economic security can also improve the quality of parent – child relations, it can create a family environment in which it is easier for parents to encourage youth to participate in structured activities. All these characteristic can result in a wide range of opportunities for adolescent engagement, and in higher levels of participation. Students who feel more connected to parents may come to feel connected to the community leading to greater civic engagement.

#### **3.2 School**

Regarding the role of schools, we found that a democratic climate in the classroom and elsewhere in school related to civic engagement. Student who feels free to express their points of view and participation in organizing school events tend to be more involved in organization outside of schools. As demonstrated by previous

studies (Flanagan et al. 2007: Vieno et al, 2007) schools can influence nurturing students engagement in community life.

In particular, besides the central roles of school, through civic education according to Syvertsen, Stout and Flanagan (2009), teachers can transmit civic values by establishing an open climate for learning. In a learning environment that allows students to influence school life student have the opportunity to exercise right and assume responsibilities as active members of the institution, thus improving their democratic skills. Civic Knowledge and commitment are for the common good of the community (Tourney-Purta et al 2008). A school climate that encourages students' democratic participation can foster civic values, knowledge and skills that are the basis for a higher level of engagement in community life.

#### **3.3 Neighbourhood**

Neighbourhood contexts might also influence civic engagements the feeling that one lives in a neighbourhood with high levels of social connectedness where people trust and are willingly to help each other may enable adolescents to get involved in community organisation. Alternatively, participation in such organisation may positively influence young people's perception of social capital, Independent of the actual level of neighbourhood trust and cohesion. Most likely, civic engagement and perceptions of social capital are mutually reinforcing.

Interacting with people in community organizations that are based on norms of trust and reciprocity adolescent/ students can learn civic values and develop an interest to improve the local community collective socialization" At the same time, the relations developed in the neighbourhood can be an important source of support for adolescent who may develop an emotional bond, and a commitment to give back to their local community, working to make it a better place (Brown, Perkins, and Brown, 2003) (Albanesi, Cicognani, and Zani, (2007): (Flanagan, Cumsille, Gills, & Gallay, 2007).

### 3.4 Peer Group

School mates are central in the social networks of adolescents, Vieno, Perkins, Smith, and Santinello, (2007) noted that peer group can influence students' motivation to join an organisation or participate in structured activities. Students can learn about existing opportunities for engagement for schoolmates: they can also decide to get involved in activities simply because friends are already participating or are deciding together to join a particular organisation. Family, School and Neighbourhood and peer group are crucial factors that determined student's civic engagement, these agents of socialization have contributed a lot and have greatest influence in students' lives and their involvement in community participation.

## 4. Research Design

The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted in this study. Descriptive research was considered appropriate because, the study does not require the manipulation of any variable, but seek students' response with the use of questionnaire on the civic knowledge and attitude as determinants of civic engagement. Join the population, sample and sampling technique, research instrument, validity of the instrument, reliability and administration of the instrument with research design. The population for this study consisted of all the students in all public secondary schools in Oyo State. According to the Oyo State Teaching Service Commission (TESCOM), there are 411,951 students. 204,545 are Male, while 207,406 are Female, also there are 618 public secondary schools in Oyo State as at the time of this study.

The sample of this study consisted of 600 students in SS11 selected using multistage sampling procedure. The first stage involved the use of simple random sampling technique to select two senatorial district out of three in Oyo State. Simple random sample technique was used to select two Local Government Areas from each of the two Senatorial District. The third stage involved the use of simple random

sampling technique to select five schools from each Local Government Areas selected. Last stage involved the use of stratified random sampling technique to select 30 students from each of the selected five schools.

A questionnaire designed by the researcher tagged 'Students' Civic Engagement Questionnaire' (SCEQ). The instrument is divided into four sections. Section A sought the bio-data of the respondents such as sex, class, name of school and location. Section B consists of twenty (20) structured questions that sought the respondents' civic knowledge. It measured the general understanding and familiarity of the students with Civic Education. The test adopted a 4-multiple – choice items response ranging from A-D. Section C consists of 15 items which measured respondents' civic attitude. It measured the extent to which the students react to civic education and its impact on their life in and out of the school environment. The scale adopted a 4-point scale format ranging from SA = strongly agree to SD= strongly disagree. Section D consisted of 15 questions on respondents' level of civic engagement. It measured the extent to which the students engage in civic activities and civic education. The scale adopted a 4-point scale format ranging from VO = very often to N = Never.

The validity of the instrument was ascertained by researcher's supervisor, specialists in Social Studies and expert in Tests, Measurement and Evaluation. The experts determined the face and content validity of the instrument by rejected some questions in the instrument and replaced it with appropriate one, they ensured that the items in the instrument were appropriate to measure the secondary school students' civic knowledge, attitude and civic engagement in Oyo State.

The reliability of the instrument was estimated through the use of Cronbach Alpha in a trial testing. The instrument (SCEQ) was administered on 20 Senior Secondary School (SS11) students from two schools. The students were drawn from a co-educational school but not part of the sample. Cronbach Alpha was applied on the responses of the students for the estimation of internal consistency of the items.

The formula yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.72 which was adjudged high enough to make the instrument reliable and useful for the study. Two research assistants were trained to assist in the administration of instrument to the students. The instrument was administered to the students by the researcher with the help of trained research assistants. The researcher was able to

retrieve all the questionnaire back immediately from the students.

The data collected were analysed using inferential statistics of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

## 5. Results and Discussion

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between civic knowledge and civic engagement of secondary school students in Oyo State.

**Table 1:** Pearson's Product Moment Correlation of Civic Knowledge and Civic Engagement of Secondary School Students

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	$r_{cal}$	Sig.
Knowledge of Civic Duties	10.38	3.312	600	0.057	0.167
Civic Engagement	45.28	6.720	600		

\*P < 0.05

Table 1 revealed that there is no significant relationship between secondary school students' knowledge of civic duties and engaging in civic duties ( $r_{cal} = 0.057$ ;  $p = 0.167 > 0.05$ ). The hypothesis is therefore accepted

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between civic attitude and civic engagement of secondary school students in Oyo State.

**Table 2:** Pearson's Product Moment Correlation of Civic Attitude and Civic Engagement of Secondary School Students

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	$r_{cal}$	Sig.
Civic Attitude	46.01	5.270	600	0.375*	0.000
Civic Engagement	45.28	6.720	600		

\*P < 0.05

Table 2 revealed that there is positive and significant relationship between secondary school students' attitude towards civic duties and civic engagement ( $r_{cal} = 0.375$ ;  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship between secondary school students' civic knowledge and attitude towards civic engagement in Oyo State.

**Table 3:** Pearson's Product Moment Correlation of Secondary School Students' Civic Knowledge and Civic Attitude

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	$r_{cal}$	Sig.
Knowledge of Civic Duties	10.38	3.312	600	0.014	0.728
Civic Attitude	46.01	5.270	600		

\*P < 0.05

Table 3 revealed that there is no significant relationship between secondary school students' knowledge of civic duties and civic attitude ( $r_{cal} = 0.014$ ;  $p = 0.728 > 0.05$ ). The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

## 6. Discussion

The finding revealed that there is no significant relationship between secondary school student's knowledge of civic duties and engaging in civic duties. This may be possible because of re-introduction of civic education to Nigeria Educational system. Cite an author that which your study supports or against under each finding. The study is in line with Zaff, Kawa, Lin and Lerner (2011) who submitted that the ability to become a developed citizen is dependent on knowing one's right and responsibility.

The finding further showed that there is positive and significant relationship between secondary school students' attitude towards civic duties and civic engagement. This finding can be possible because secondary school students have the ability to improve their school, neighbourhoods and the broader society by volunteering in community based organization and through engagement in community life can promote psychological, social and intellectual growth for young citizen. Secondary school students' civic engagement can provide services to the local community, thus promoting the effective functioning of society. The finding agreed with the study of Okam and Lawal (2011) who submitted that problems of negative citizenship value have gravely militated against Nigerians' march towards effective and sustainable socio-economic and political development since her independence which she obtained about fifty years ago.

The finding further revealed that there is no significant relationship between secondary school student's knowledge of civic duties and civic attitudes. This findings collaborate with position of Jake, (2016) he opined that students should leave the school with the understanding that they can use the knowledge and skills of their degree for a career and for the public good.

## 7. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the relationship between students' civic knowledge and civic engagement was not significant, also relationship between students' civic knowledge and civic attitude was not significant. However, the relationship between students' civic engagement and civic attitude was significant.

## 8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made:

- Students should be enlightened and encouraged to participate in civic engagement such as community service and others, in order to develop positive attitudes towards civic activities.
- Government should frequently organise seminar and workshop for the teachers of civic education in order to refresh their brain and learn new methods and techniques of impacting knowledge, this could complement efforts of the government for re-introducing the civic education to Nigeria educational system in 2009.
- Parents and Guardians should encourage their children/wards to fully participate in community development.
- Non- governmental organizations should intensify efforts in campaigning and promoting civic duties, this could create awareness for the citizens.

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