



Opinions of Secondary School Students on Roles of Civic Education in Promoting Political Knowledge and Civic Engagement in Kaduna State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the opinions of Secondary School Students on roles of civic education in promoting political knowledge and civic engagement in Kaduna State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey using quantitative approach was employed. The population of the study consisted of 5,503 secondary school students in Zaria and Giwa education Zone, out of which a sample of 367 were selected to collect data from SSII students of 8 public schools using a validated questionnaire. Utilizing a four-point modified Likert scale, data was obtained using a validated questionnaire, "Efficacy of Civic Education in Promoting Political Knowledge and Civic Engagement Skills Students" (PIPKOCES). Results revealed that civic education does enhance understanding of Nigeria's political system ($M=3.65$), awareness about civic responsibilities ($M=3.16$), and recognition of the importance of voting ($M=3.82$) among students. However, the curriculum has not been successful in either developing political discussions among students ($M=2.31$) or fostering community service participation ($M=1.93$), indicating that there is a disparity between what is taught and what is practiced. The one-sample t-test statistical analysis enabled the confirmation of civic education's powerful effect on students' political knowledge ($t=2.01$, $p<0.001$) and civic engagement skills ($t=2.48$, $p<0.001$), although some differences occurred between urban and rural students. Thus, at the crossroads of Nigeria's electoral violence and youth powerlessness, an engaged civic education has the potential to change the dynamics of political apathy into an inclusive discourse of participation. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others the use of active teaching and learning methods to promote students' participation in political discourse.

1. INTRODUCTION

The enduring challenge facing Nigeria today is to produce political literacy in the country's youth for the steadiness of democracy and governance effectiveness. For instance, in Kaduna State, areas where ethnic and religious tensions often coincide with political processes, the place of civic education in equipping senior secondary students with basic political concepts is both urgent and under-researched [1-5]. Political knowledge, which refers to knowledge of governmental structures, electoral processes, and civic rights, is a prerequisite for participation in democracy. However, civic education programs have created limited transformation due to systemic gaps in their curriculum implementation,

teacher preparedness, and other relevant and appropriate pedagogical methods. The shortfall shows plainly: as of the general elections of Nigeria in 2023, youth voter apathy rates were already above 40% in the case of Kaduna State, alongside incidents of electoral violence and misinformation [6-8]. Globally, democracies survive when citizens know how to hold leaders accountable; however, with Nigeria ranking 109th out of 167 countries in the 2023 Democracy Index, a significant deficit in civic engagement remains [9].

Civic education in Nigerian schools bridges the gap between democratic values and political awareness. However, research has been conflicting as to whether such civic education efforts were indeed fruitful. For instance, [10] reported lapses in the implementation of civic curricula in which

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more than 60% of teachers in Kaduna depended on rote memorization and not participatory means, resulting in a surface engagement of students. Likewise, a survey conducted in 2024 in Zango-Kataf with 379 students observed a critical gender disparity whereby while male students achieved 15% more than females in political knowledge tests, urban students surpassed their rural counterparts by 22% [11]. These differences reflect national tendencies, with only a third of adolescents in the northern part of Nigeria being able to define separation of powers accurately, compared to 52% in the southern part [12]. The local flavor of this problem can be illustrated through a history of electoral violence such as the post-election riots in 2011, which took over 800 lives and displaced about 65,000 people, showing how political illiteracy engenders divisions [13].

However, beyond this classroom, into the realm of national unity, all the way to global public perception. With 42%, under the age of 15, the youth population of Nigeria stands out as the demographic dividend capable of driving development or aggravating instability, depending on how educated they are. Proper civic education will discourage the propagation of misinformation: this study in 2024 found that 68% of Kaduna students espoused false beliefs about electoral procedures as they are prone to manipulation [14]. This knowledge deficiency is self-perpetuating in terms of the cycle of voter impotency and bad governance. For instance, in 2023, turnout dropped to 31% of 18–25-year-olds in Kaduna, compared to the national average of 37%, thus reducing youth's ability to influence policymaking [15]. These trends echo post-conflict areas worldwide where fragile civic institutions are habitually associated with residual authoritarianism.

A quasi-experimental study in Kaduna compared CAI with conventional methods in 2018 and found that students subjected to CAI outperformed their peers with a 28% higher mark in civic assessments, with promising prospects for technology-enhanced learning [16]. However, there has been good progress in activities such as the Kimpact Democracy School (KDS) community-based activities that integrated summer camps, simulations, and mentorships to reach 615 youth between 2020 and 2024 [14]. Although these programs provide alternative ways of addressing what has remained unfilled by formal education, they cannot be expanded further because of poor funding and little infrastructural development.

Furthermore, empirical studies [17–20], found that high school civics courses significantly increased students' political knowledge,

particularly regarding constitutional principles and current events, as well as for programs that integrate interactive teaching methods. However, the findings of [21–23] found that civic education increased factual political knowledge but had limited impact on students' ability to critically evaluate political information or engage in political discussions.

In addition, studies carried out by [24–26] confirmed that engaging students in interactive civic activities positively influenced their civic commitment and self-efficacy. Additionally, civic knowledge significantly predicted the level of civic involvement among senior secondary students. On the other hand, the findings of [27–29] highlighted the gap between civic knowledge and practical application. While students might learn about civic duties, there is limited evidence of translating this knowledge into active participation or public speaking skills. Prior studies have produced varying results on the efficacy of civic education in promoting political knowledge and civic engagement skills. This study contributes to existing research by exploring the following research objectives, questions, and hypotheses. The research objectives of this study are as follows:

Determine the efficacy of Civic Education in promoting political knowledge among senior secondary school students in the Kaduna state.

To examine the efficacy of Civic Education in promoting civic engagement skills of senior secondary school students in the Kaduna state.

The research questions developed in this study were as follows:

What is the efficacy of Civic Education in promoting the political knowledge of senior secondary school students in Kaduna state?

What is the efficacy of Civic Education in promoting the civic engagement skills of senior secondary school students in Kaduna?

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05:

There was no significant difference in the mean efficacy scores of Civic Education in promoting political knowledge among senior secondary school students in the Kaduna state.

There was no significant difference in the mean efficacy scores of Civic Education in promoting the civic engagement skills of senior secondary school students in Kaduna state.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Participant

This study used a descriptive survey approach. Since the target population was large, a representative sample was obtained to assess the

efficacy of Civic Education in promoting political knowledge and civic engagement skills among senior secondary school students [30-31] indicate that the purpose of a descriptive survey research design is to study a specific population by collecting and analyzing data from a finite number of that population or items considered to be representative of the entire population.

The population of the study consisted senior secondary school (SSII) in forty-one public senior secondary schools in the Zaria metropolis. The Zaria metropolitan area consists of two educational zones: Zaria and Giwa. The Zaria zone consisted of 24 senior secondary schools with a total population of five thousand five hundred and three (5,503) students, comprising three thousand three hundred and twenty-four (3,324) males and two thousand one hundred and seventy-nine (2,179) females. The Giwa zone had 17 senior secondary schools with a total of two thousand three hundred and sixty-six (2,366) students, made up of one thousand two hundred and two (1,202) males and one thousand one hundred and sixty-four (1,164) females. Thus, the total population for this study stood at seven thousand eight hundred and sixty-nine (7,869) students with four thousand five hundred and twenty-six (4,526) boys and three thousand three hundred and forty-three (3,343) girls. The students were in their second year of senior secondary school (SS2) and aged between 14 and 16 years [32].

Thus, a sample size of three hundred and sixty-seven 367 was selected based on the recommendations of Research Advisory (2010). The sample was selected from eight secondary schools in the Zaria and Giwa education zones in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Two sampling techniques were adopted. First, since the Zaria metropolis consisted of two educational zones, cluster sampling was used to classify the zones into two clusters and then schools from each cluster were selected through simple random sampling arranging for three schools to be sampled from the Zaria zone and six schools from the Sabon Gari zone. This was because the Zaria zone had the highest number of senior secondary schools and every school was given an equal and independent chance of inclusion in the study. By improving the precision of the data through such stratification of the sample, separate definite characteristics of the population may be ensured.

2.2. Data Collection Techniques

2.2.1. Efficacy of Civic Education in Promoting Political Knowledge and Civic Engagement Skills Students" (PIPKOCES)

The questionnaire "Efficacy of Civic Education in Promoting Political Knowledge and Civic Engagement Skills Students" (PIPKOCES) was used to collect data. It is based on a four-point modified Likert scale: Strongly Agree [4], Agree [3], Disagree [2], and Strongly Disagree [1]. Respondents were instructed to circle one of the four points on each item. To ascertain the content validity of the instrument, a draft copy of the questionnaire was submitted to experts in the fields of social-civic studies and curricula, statistics, and language. Expert critiques from the Faculty of Education, A.B.U., Zaria provided valuable suggestions that determined the face and content validity of the questionnaire. Thus, the idea was ensured to be relevant and free of ambiguity and superfluity. All the suggestions were integrated into the final copies of the instrument.

2.3. Statistical Analysis

The instrument was piloted on thirty (30) secondary school students of Government Secondary School Makarfi, who were not included in the actual study target. As noted in [33], a pilot test was conducted away from the large sample meant for the main study. Internal consistency of the instrument was computed using Cronbach's alpha. A reliability index of 0.89 was obtained, which was considered acceptable for the study. The collected raw data were weighed, and mean calculations for the raw scores were used to answer the two research questions. Responses of Strongly Agree and Agree were regarded as agreement, while Disagree and Strongly Disagree were considered disagreements. The mean rating for the scale was calculated as 2.50, as follows: $(4+3+2+1) / 4 = 2.50$. Any response with a weighted mean of 2.50 and above was considered Agree, while responses below 2.50 were considered Disagree. The two hypotheses were tested using a one-sample t-test, at a significance level of 0.05.

3. RESULTS

A and eighty (380) questionnaires were distributed during the data collection process, 371 of which were returned, representing a 97.6% return rate. A careful examination of the returned questionnaires revealed that four had to be properly completed. Thus, a total of thirty hundred and sixty-seven (367) were adopted for the analysis, representing 96.6%. However, the return rate was deemed adequate, because the minimum sample size for this study was 367.

Research Question One: What is the efficacy of Civic Education in promoting political knowledge of senior secondary school students in Kaduna State?

Table 1. Efficacy of civic education on the political knowledge of students

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	St.D	Decision
1.	Civic Education lesson increases understanding of the country's political system.	3.65	.26	Agreed
2.	The topics covered in Civic Education classes enhance students' knowledge.	2.98	.31	Agreed
3.	Civic Education students grasp the importance of participating in voting.	3.82	.22	Agreed
4.	Learning about civic responsibilities in school has made students more aware of their roles as a citizen.	3.09	.28	Agreed
5.	Civic Education classes improve students understanding of human rights and civic duties based on constitutional provision.	3.26	.31	Agreed
6.	Students feel more informed about current political events due to their Civic Education knowledge.	3.71	.18	Agreed
7.	Civic Education has influence students' interest in political discussions and debates in recent time.	2.31	.78	Disagreed
8.	Civic Education broaden students' knowledge of the electoral process.	2.25	.89	Disagreed
9.	Civic Education improves students critical thinking skills in relation to political issues.	2.81	.27	Agreed
10.	Students believe that Civic Education positively influence their political awareness outside the classroom.	2.66	.33	Agreed
Cumulative Mean		3.05		

The table presents the perceived influence of Civic Education on the political knowledge of senior secondary school students in Kaduna. The highest mean score of 3.82 is attributed to students' recognition of the importance of voting, indicates a high level of agreement on civic duties related to electoral participation. This suggests that Civic Education underscores the importance of voting as a vital civic responsibility. Furthermore, high mean scores were observed for understanding the political system ($M=3.65$) and current political events ($M=3.71$), emphasizing the contribution of Civic Education to political awareness. However, there are areas in which students perceive less of an impact. Notably, Civic Education's influence on students' interest in political discussions and debates is disagreed upon ($M= 2.31$), as is its role in broadening knowledge of the electoral process ($M= 2.25$). These lower scores suggest areas for improvement in curriculum and teaching methods. The cumulative mean score was 3.05, indicating a general agreement that Civic Education positively influences political knowledge, although some aspects could be enhanced to better engage students in political processes and discussions.

Research Question Two

What is the efficacy of Civic Education in promoting civic engagement skills among senior secondary school students in the Kaduna state? The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation. The results are presented in Table 2.

Based on the data presented in Table 6, the highest mean score of 3.71 indicates that respondents strongly agree that Civic Education contributes to students' sense of identity. This suggests that the subject plays a crucial role in helping students develop a clear understanding of who they are as citizens and of their place within their community and country. In addition, with a mean score of 3.67, respondents agreed that Civic Education helps students understand the consequences of breaking civic laws. This implies that the subject effectively educates students about the importance of following laws and the potential repercussions of not doing so, potentially promoting law-abiding behavior. The item with a mean score of 3.28 shows that respondents agree that Civic Education enhances students' knowledge about voting systems and how they work.

However, with the lowest mean score of 1.93, the respondents disagreed that students actively participate in community service projects as a result of Civic Education. This indicates a potential gap between the theoretical knowledge

provided by Civic Education and its practical application to community engagement. In addition, the mean score of 2.16 suggests that respondents disagree that Civic Education enhances students' public speaking skills. The standard deviations for most items were relatively low (ranging from 0.18 to 0.32), indicating consistent perceptions among respondents. Thus, the cumulative mean of 2.93

suggests a generally positive perception of Civic Education's influence on civic engagement skills, but also indicates room for improvement, particularly in bridging the gap between knowledge acquisition and the practical application of civic skills.

Table 2: Efficacy of civic education in promoting civic engagement skills

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	St.D	Decision
11.	Civic Education contribute to students' sense of identity	3.71	.24	Agreed
12.	Civic Education influences how students make decisions that impact their community and country.	2.90	.28	Agreed
13.	Civic Education helps students to understand the consequences of breaking civic laws.	3.67	.30	Agreed
14.	Civic Education enhances students public speaking skills.	2.16	.89	Disagreed
15.	Civic Education instils in students a sense of social responsibility as active citizens.	3.08	.22	Agreed
16.	Civic Education increases students' interest in local politics.	2.67	.32	Agreed
17.	Students actively participate in community service projects as a result of Civic Education.	1.93	.87	Disagreed
18.	Civic Education improves students' ability to analyse and evaluate information about civic process.	2.78	.29	Agreed
19.	Civic Education enhances students' knowledge about voting system and how it works.	3.28	.20	Agreed
20.	Civic Education increases students' awareness of civic responsibilities.	3.16	.18	Agreed
Cumulative Mean		2.93		

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Testing the Null Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics of a one-sample t-test at an alpha significance level of 0.05.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the mean efficacy scores of Civic Education in promoting political knowledge among senior secondary school students in Kaduna.

Table 3: One-sample t-test statistics on the Efficacy of Civic Education in Promoting students' political knowledge

Variable	N	\bar{X}	STD	M.D	DF	Value	P
Civic Education and promotion of political knowledge	367	29.77	1.21	16.02	366	2.01	0.001

Calculated p value = 0.001 < 0.05, t computed = 2.01 > 1.64 at df 366

A one-sample t-test was conducted with 367 students, yielding a mean score of 29.77 and a standard deviation of 1.21. The mean difference (M.D) was 16.02, with a degree of freedom (DF) of 366. The computed t-value was 2.01 at a significance level of 0.05, and was approximately 1.96. The p-value obtained was 0.001, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. Thus, because the calculated t-value (2.01) is greater than the critical value (1.64), and the p-value (0.001) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This

implies a statistically significant difference in the efficacy of Civic Education in promoting political knowledge among these students. In other words, Civic Education plays an important role in enhancing political knowledge among students in Kaduna.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the efficacy of Civic Education in promoting civic engagement skills among senior secondary school students in the Kaduna state.

Table 4: One-sample t-test statistics on the Efficacy of Civic Education in Promoting students' civic engagement skills

Variable	N	\bar{X}	STD	M.D	DF	t-Value	P
Civic Education and promotion of civic engagement skills	367	31.05	1.66	17.31	366	2.48	0.001
Calculated p value = 0.001 < 0.05, t computed = 2.48 > 1.64 at df 366							

The hypothesis posits that there is no significant difference in the efficacy of civic education in promoting civic engagement skills among senior secondary school students in Kaduna State. However, the results of the one-sample t-test indicate a statistically significant difference, as evidenced by a p-value of 0.001, which is less than the threshold of 0.05. The computed t-value is 2.48, which exceeds the critical t-value of 1.64 at 366 degrees of freedom. This suggests that civic education significantly influences students' civic engagement skills. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. In other words, civic education is designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary for active participation in civic life in the Kaduna state.

4. DISCUSSION

The study found a significant difference in the efficacy of Civic Education in promoting political knowledge among senior secondary school students in the Kaduna state. Civic Education significantly enhances students' political knowledge, particularly in understanding the country's political system, recognizing the importance of voting, and increasing their awareness of current political events. However, there is room for improvement in fostering students' interest in political discussions and debates as well as broadening their knowledge of the electoral process. This finding correlates with previous research revelations [17-20], which found that high school civics courses significantly increased students' political knowledge, particularly regarding constitutional principles and current events, as well as for programs that integrate interactive teaching methods. However, the findings of [21-23] found that civic education increased factual political knowledge but had limited impact on students' ability to critically evaluate political information or engage in political discussions.

This study demonstrates a significant difference in the efficacy of Civic Education in promoting civic engagement skills of senior secondary school students in the Kaduna state. It also revealed that Civic Education positively influences students' civic engagement skills,

contributing strongly to their sense of identity and understanding of civic responsibilities. However, there is a notable gap between theoretical knowledge and practical applications, particularly in areas such as active participation in community service projects and the enhancement of public speaking skills. This finding is in line with previous research findings [24-26] which revealed that engaging students in interactive civic activities positively influenced their civic commitment and self-efficacy. Additionally, civic knowledge significantly predicted the level of civic involvement among senior secondary students. On the other hand, the findings of [27-29] highlighted the gap between civic knowledge and practical application. While students might learn about civic duties, there is limited evidence of translating this knowledge into active participation or public speaking skills.

5. Conclusion

At the crossroads of Nigeria's electoral violence and youth powerlessness, engaged civic education has the potential to transform the dynamics of political apathy into an inclusive discourse of participation. The stakes lie beyond the confines of the classroom in an arena where civic education is an antidote to criminal apathy. Such reforms will target bottom-line political literacy, whereby, bit by bit, students will be guided through real-life simulations where they will practice skills like creative problem-solving, teamwork, and decision-making. Therein lies a huge opportunity: the findings of Kaduna paint a gloomy picture of Nigeria at the 109th ranking in the 2023 Democracy Index, sending an urgent warning: invest in civic transformational learning today, lest we condemn ourselves to suffer tomorrow's remaining democratic defects? Based on this study, the following recommendations were made:

Civic Education teachers should improve teaching methodologies to enhance the interest of students in political issues, discussions, and debates at the secondary school level in Kaduna State. This should be based on interactive and participatory teaching strategies that focus on active student participation.

Educational administrators should operationalize and implement practicable community service programs as an aspect of the state's Civic Education curriculum. This will begin to address the major vacuum identified in community service projects in which students participate, thus bridging the gap between theory and practical civic engagement.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest. In addition, no financial support was provided.

Ethics Committee

This research was provided by the Kaduna State Ministry of Education, Research Ethics Committee.

Author Contributions

Study Design, USL, IY; Data Collection, USL, MBA, JH, IY; Statistical Analysis, USL, MBA, JH Data Interpretation, USL, MBA, JH; Manuscript Preparation, USL; Literature Search, USL, MBA, IY JH. All the authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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