

## Level of Civic Knowledge and Attitude as Antidotes of Civic Engagement among Secondary School Students in Oyo State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The study investigated the level of civic knowledge and attitude as antidotes of civic engagement of secondary institution students in Oyo State. It also examined their attitude towards civic engagement. The research design is descriptive of the survey type. Population comprised all 411,912 public schools in urban and rural areas in Oyo State. Sample was 600 public school students selected using multistage sampling procedure. The instrument used was titled 'Students' Civic Engagement Questionnaire' (SCEQ). The instrument was validated through face and content validity while reliability of the tool was established using Cronbach's alpha method and a coefficient of 0.72 was obtained. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics for the research questions raised. It was found that the level of secondary school students' civic knowledge and engagement was moderate, while their attitude towards civic engagement was negative. Based on the results it is suggested that students be enlightened to take part in civic obligations in order to develop positive attitudes towards civic engagement. Additionally, non-governmental organisations should intensify efforts in campaigning and promoting civic duties as this could increase the awareness of the citizens.

**Key words:** Civic Attitude, Civic Education, Civic Engagement, Civic Knowledge

### INTRODUCTION

It has been observed that there are some delinquent behaviours exhibited by secondary school students in Oyo State, such as fighting, disobedient, truancy among others. Students in secondary schools are supposed to actively participate, involve and engage in community development. Critical to this is that social institutions such as family, religious, school and community-based organisations where civic dispositions and skills for action can be nurtured are up to the task (Adeyi, 2017). Students are supposed to realise their civic right and responsibilities which include to register as voters and to vote during elections. It is also to encourage them to join press club, literary and debating societies, including civic societies and engage with them in social activities, such as Girls Guide, Man O' War, Peace Corps, Civic Defence and others.

Again, students do not realise their duty to participate in community development which include clearing, digging, planting of flowers to beautify the environment and other community service that can promote unity and peaceful co-existence in the nation. It seems students are being used in negative ways by desperate politicians in the name of democracy, for example, by destroying electioneering processes or ballot snatching and rigging by over-voting

among others. However, Jake (2016) posited that students should graduate from schools with the realisation that the knowledge and skills gained from their institutions are to be used for a career and development of their society. Adediran and Ajiboye (2017) also observed that Civic Education is a subject which provides knowledge and skills for the youth to enable them to perform their expected roles and participate in the process of democratization.

Obasanho (2017) reported that only 34% of 1,200 students in Nigeria were aware of civic education, the other 66% did not know anything about the subject. This is an indication that not a sufficient number of schools provide their students with knowledge of this crucial subject, or perhaps, teachers just do not know what to teach students about the subject, despite the importance of civic education in Nigerian schools.

Civic Education has been defined differently by different scholar, but in most definitions, it encompasses the activities of learning or gaining knowledge of government, its functions and the morally acceptable duties and responsibilities of citizenship (Collins English Dictionary, 2012). Civic Education aims at promoting participation in democratisation of government. It also focuses on promotion of good governance and dramatic change of attitudes and actions towards

good governance. Kayode-Olawoyin (2017) agreed that Civic Education teaches democracy and pillars of democracy that provides important social and political structures for survival of democracy. It addresses issues like corruption, civic apathy and important social issues such as domestic violence, examination malpractices, child and women abuse and trafficking, truancy, child labour and other issues relating to civic engagement; such as, community development and nation building. Bello, Daramola, Yusuf, Uyanne and Sodiq (2017) submitted that Civic Education could impart positive values and attitudes in youths to enable them become responsible citizens in the future.

The Nation Newspaper reported on Saturday July 28, 2007 that the categories of those found to be culpable in crime of recent are young people between the ages 14 – 40. This age bracket constitutes the work force of the society adding that about 90.5% of the potentials adults in Nigeria were not engaged. Attitude of the students towards engagement on the activities in the community or society is a barrier to the country. Students have been influenced by the acts of adults and politicians that engage them in various ways in order to achieve their political ambition, especially in the area of money politics, embezzlement, stealing of public funds, ballot snatching, rigging and corruption. Ayoola, Adeyemi and Jabaru (as cited in Osalusi & Oparinde, 2018) asserted that the politicians in their target to get into power hire thugs or pay assassins to commit crimes and create fears in their political opponents.

For promotion of students' civic engagement, the society needs to work together across venues, programmes and sectors to create a climate in which students have not just opportunities to learn, but also the skills and efficacy to do so and cultivate the positive attitude toward the progress and unity of the nation. Civic Education focuses on modification of the attitude and engagement of the secondary school students in fulfilment of their civic rights and their responsibility to be useful for their country.

Attitudes, like many other components of behaviour are abstractions although they are real enough to the individuals who hold them. Attitude is an ill-defined area which embraces interest, opinions, values, beliefs and personality. Idowu (2017) noted that Civic Education was introduced in schools to develop knowledge and skills which could assist young learners to face social, political, economic and personal challenges in future.

Civic Education is major aspect of school syllabus which gives students ability to learn the values associated with being a good citizen. Kayode-Olawoyin (2017) noted that the re-introduction of Civic Education in schools cannot be underestimated as the knowledge will give room for election of credible and responsible people into positions of authority. Kayode-Olawoyin stressed further that knowledge of Civic Education in the aspect of political apathy and participation which enable citizen to be involved in political discussion could change the courses of action of government. Solomon and Alhasan (2017) defined Civic Education as education given to people in a country to enable them to become active and functional citizens. However, Abdu-Raheem (2018) saw Civic Education as a vigorous attempt to teach morals,

social, and societal values skills, knowledge, legal right, honesty, norms, and qualities expected of good and responsible citizens towards nation building.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this research is based on Ecological System Theory (EST)/Social Capital Theory (SCT) and Social Cognitive Theory (STC).

#### ***Ecological system theory (EST)/Social capital theory (SCT)***

Ecological System Theory, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), and Social Capital Theory propounded by Coleman (1988) have to do with human development. The goal of the two theories based on influence of neighbourhood, family and social characteristics on civic involvement in adulthood. The two theories highlighted the functions of physical and social environments on human development.

Ecological System Theory (EST) further highlighted the relationships between person at developmental stage and the multiple environments he or she interacts with, while the Social Capital Theory (SCT) was based on how individuals interact with and contribute to the larger societies. Ecological theory posits that individuals learn and develop as a result of multiple interaction influence. That is, learning and development based on interaction of the adolescent with the home, school, school environment, peer group and the community are related to his or her outcomes including civic attitudes and behaviour (Winkelfield, 2009).

#### ***Social cognitive theory (SCT)***

This theory was developed by Albert Bandura in 1986. The theory emphasises on the roles of observation learning, values and expectancies in determining behaviour. Bandura (1995) posits that people influence their environments and their environments influence them in returns. This theory is useful in determining the youth civic engagement as concepts like self-efficacy and observational learning in this theory are equally relevant to youth civic engagement. Bandura (1997) posits that self-efficacy which has to do with confidence in one's ability to control and execute the actions is the most significant factor that influences human behaviour.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Observation shows that there are some indices of civil disobedience exhibited by secondary school students in Oyo State which impede national development and nation building. Students are not actively participating in community development or show interest in engaging with civil society organisation.

### **Research Questions**

The below questions have been raised for the study:

1. What is the level of students' civic knowledge in Oyo State?

2. What is the attitude of Oyo State secondary school students towards civic engagement?
3. What is the level of students' civic engagement in Oyo State?

## METHODOLOGY

The design is descriptive of the survey type. It was considered appropriate because the study does not require manipulation of variables, but seeks students' response to questionnaire on the level of civic knowledge and attitudes as antidotes of civic engagement.

The population for this were 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. 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 SS II were chosen through multi-stage sampling procedure. The first stage involved the use of simple random sampling technique to select two senatorial districts out of the three in Oyo State. Simple random sampling was used to select two Local Government Areas each from each of the two Senatorial Districts. The third stage involved the use of simple random sampling technique to select five schools from each Local Government Area selected. The fourth stage involved the use of stratified random sampling technique to select 30 students from each of the selected five schools.

The instrument used for the study was self-designed questionnaires tagged Students Civic Engagement Questionnaire (SCEQ), the instrument was validated and Cronbach's alpha was used for reliability and 0.72 coefficient was obtained. Three research questions were generated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data were analysed using descriptive statistic of percentage, mean and standard deviation.

## RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the level of students' civic knowledge in Oyo State of Nigeria?

Table 1 shows that out of 600 respondents sampled, 127 representing 21.17 percent had low level of civic knowledge.

**Table 1.** Level of secondary school students' civic knowledge in Oyo state of Nigeria

Level of civic knowledge	Mean score	Standard deviation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low (0 – 7.07)	10.38	3.312	127	21.17
Moderate (7.08 – 13.68)			359	59.83
High (13.69 – 20.00)			114	19
<b>Total</b>			<b>600</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 2.** Attitude of secondary school students to civic engagement in Oyo state

Attitude towards civic engagement	Mean score	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Negative (15.00 – 46.00)	46.01	327	54.5
Positive (46.01 – 60.00)		273	45.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>600</b>	<b>100.0</b>

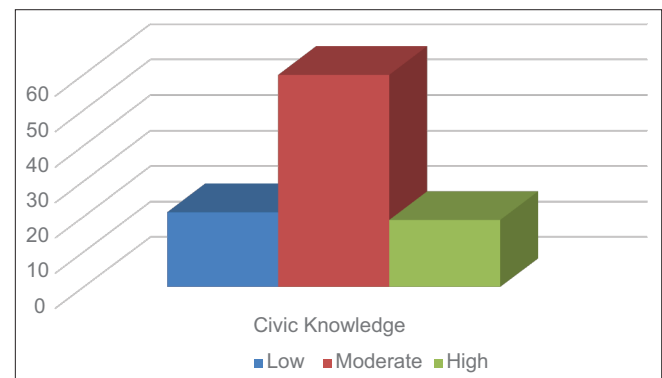
Those who had moderate level were 359 representing 59.83 percent while those with high level were 114 representing 19 percent. This showed that the level of students' civic knowledge in Oyo State of Nigeria was moderate. Figure 1 further reveal the levels of secondary school students' civic knowledge in Oyo State.

Research Question 2: What is the attitude of secondary school students to civic engagement in Oyo State?

Table 2 shows that out of 600 respondents sampled, 327 representing 54.5 percent had negative attitude towards civic engagement while those who had positive attitude towards civic engagement were 273 representing 45.5 percent. This showed that the attitude of students to civic engagement in Oyo State was negative. Figure 2 further reveals the attitude of students to civic engagement in Oyo State.

Research Question 3: What is the level of secondary school students' civic engagement in Oyo State?

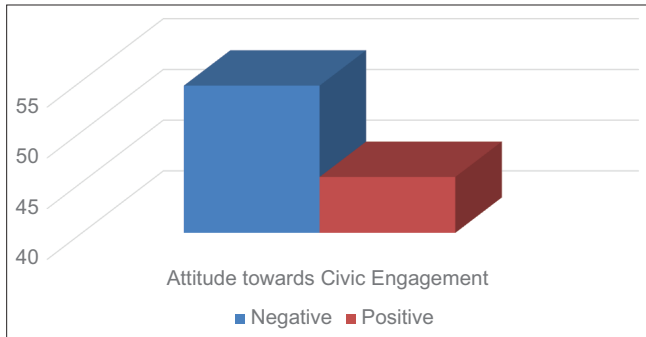
Table 3 shows that out of 600 respondents sampled, 100 representing 16.67 percent had low level of civic engagement. Those who had moderate level were 388 representing 64.67 percent while those with high level were 112 representing 18.66 percent. This showed that the level of secondary school students' civic engagement in Oyo State was moderate. In answering the question, scores on Civic Engagement Scale were used. Mean score, frequency counts and percentages have been used to illustrate the responses of students to items 1-15 in Section D of "Students' Civic



**Figure 1.** Level of secondary school students' civic knowledge in Oyo State of Nigeria

**Table 3.** Level of secondary school students’ civic engagement in Oyo state of Nigeria

Civic engagement	Mean score	Standard deviation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low (15 – 38.56)	45.28	6.720	100	16.67
Moderate (38.57 – 51.99)			388	64.67
High (52 – 60.00)			112	18.66
<b>Total</b>			<b>600</b>	<b>100.0</b>



**Figure 2.** Attitude of Secondary School Students towards Civic Engagement in Oyo State of Nigeria

Engagement Questionnaire (SCEQ)”. Measuring levels of secondary school students’ civic engagement in Oyo State (low, moderate and high), the mean score of the responses on civic engagement scale were used.

The low level of secondary school students’ civic engagement was determined by subtracting the standard deviation score from the mean score ( $45.28 - 6.720 = 38.56$ ). The moderate level of secondary school students’ civic engagement was determined by the mean score of the students’ responses (45.28) while the high level of secondary school students’ civic engagement was determined by adding the mean score and the standard deviation score of the responses on civic engagement scale ( $45.28 + 6.720 = 52.00$ ). Therefore, the low level of secondary school students’ civic engagement starts from 15 to 38.56; the moderate level of secondary school students’ civic engagement starts from 38.57 to 51.99 and the high level of secondary school students’ civic engagement is from 52.00 to 60.00.

**DISCUSSION**

The findings revealed that civic knowledge of secondary school students was moderate. This findings collaborated that of Zaff, Kawa, Lin, and Lerner (2011) who submitted that the ability to develop one’s legal right and responsibilities as a citizen of a country is a sign of knowing about what is right by the citizen. This knowledge represent another components of civic capacity and motivation to development. Knowledge gain by the students through civic education could determine their level of engagement.

Result from the findings also showed that secondary school students had negative attitude towards civic engagement, this was in line with the submission of Okan and Lawal (2011), who submitted that problems of harmful citizenship value have immensely militated against Nigerians march towards success socially, politically and economically. The

findings also revealed that the level of student’s civic engagement was moderate. This was in agreement with Falade and Falade (2013) noted that Nigeria failed to succeed in getting nation cohesion that could make it grow and expand physically, socially, culturally and economically.

**CONCLUSION**

It was concluded in the study that the level of senior secondary school students’ civic knowledge and civic engagement was moderate. It was also concluded that attitude of senior secondary school students towards civic engagement was negative. Based on the findings, the below suggestions were identified:

1. Students should be enlightened and advised to participate in civic engagement such as community service and others, in order to develop positive attitudes towards civic engagement.
2. 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.
3. Parents and Guardians should encourage their children/wards to fully participate in community development.
4. Parents and Guardians should allow their children/wards to join civil society organisations in order to engage in nation building.
5. Non-governmental organisations should intensify efforts in campaign and promoting civic duties, this could create awareness for the citizens.
6. Curriculum developers should include more topics that could bring about desirable positive changes in attitudes of young learners so as to become patriotic and responsible citizens in future.
7. Experts in Social Studies and Civic Education should produce more textbooks that can promote civic attitudes and engagement of students to become better citizens.

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