



Research Article

Influence of Civic Education Curriculum on Secondary School Students' Attitudes Towards National Values and Political Participation in Zamfara State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study examined the influence of the Civic Education curriculum on secondary school students' attitudes toward national values and their political participation in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The study was guided by three objectives, three research questions, and three null hypotheses. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised secondary school students, while a sample of 384 respondents was selected using a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire validated by experts and tested for reliability, yielding a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.91, which indicates high internal consistency. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that the Civic Education curriculum has a significant positive influence on students' attitudes toward national values and their level of political participation. The results further showed that Civic Education teaching methods significantly affect both students' civic attitudes and their engagement in political activities. The study also established that interactive and student-centered teaching approaches strengthen the effectiveness of the curriculum in shaping civic awareness and democratic participation.

among students. The study concludes that Civic Education plays a vital role in promoting responsible citizenship and democratic values among secondary school students in Zamfara State, although its effectiveness largely depends on the quality of instructional methods used in delivery.

Keywords: Attitudes, Civic education, Curriculum, National values, Political participation

INTRODUCTION

Civic education has become an essential component of modern education systems as societies seek to nurture responsible, informed, and participatory citizens. Scholars increasingly emphasize that civic education equips students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for democratic engagement and national development. For instance, Alscher, Ludewig, and McElvany (2022) argue that effective civic education enhances students' political interest, knowledge, and willingness to participate in civic life. Similarly, Torney-Purta, Barber, and Wilkenfeld (2007) earlier established that exposure to civic-related content significantly shapes young people's civic attitudes and engagement patterns, a position that continues to guide contemporary research in the field. Silaban et al. (2024) note that civic education contributes to the development of democratic values and social responsibility among learners, although its effectiveness depends largely on implementation quality. In the same vein, Campbell (2019) observes that well-structured civic curricula can positively influence students' sense of civic duty and national identity. However, these outcomes are often moderated by contextual factors such as teaching strategies, school environment, and broader socio-political influences.

Globally, emerging research has drawn attention to the influence of globalization and digital media on students' civic orientations. Murniati and Bazla (2025) argue that while civic education aims to strengthen national identity, external cultural influences may weaken students' attachment to national values if not adequately addressed. In addition, Kahne and Bowyer (2017) emphasize that digital environments shape new forms of civic engagement, suggesting that civic education must adapt to contemporary realities to remain relevant. In Nigeria, civic education was introduced into the secondary school curriculum to address growing concerns about political apathy, weak national consciousness, and declining moral values among youths. According to Manuwa (2023), civic education serves as a vital tool for fostering political awareness and participation among Nigerian students. Despite this, empirical evidence suggests that many students still exhibit low levels of political engagement. Studies by Obiagu, Machie, and Ndubuisi (2023) and Ekundayo and Ojo (2020) reveal that although students may possess knowledge of democratic principles, their actual participation in civic and political activities remains limited, indicating a gap between knowledge acquisition and behavioural outcomes.

Further empirical evidence supports the positive relationship between civic education and political participation. Al-Ansari, Al-Fahim, and Zang (2025) found that students exposed to comprehensive civic instruction are more likely to engage in political activities such as voting and community participation. Similarly, Schulz,

Ainley, Fraillon, Losito, and Agrusti (2018) report that civic knowledge and engagement are strongly linked when students experience interactive and participatory teaching approaches. At the local level, Muhammad, Adamu, and Usman (2023) observe that in Zamfara State, the effectiveness of civic education in promoting political participation depends significantly on teaching methods and instructional delivery. Geboers, Geijssels, Admiraal, and ten Dam (2013) found that citizenship education significantly promotes students' social responsibility and value orientation. More recent evidence by Isac, Maslowski, and van der Werf (2023) shows that civic knowledge gained through school curricula is strongly associated with students' endorsement of democratic values and national identity. Similarly, Lee and Huang (2024) reported that civic-oriented subjects positively shape students' attitudes toward national cohesion and respect for societal rules.

In addition, Martens and Gainous (2023) demonstrated that classroom exposure to civic topics increases students' political awareness and strengthens their value systems, although contextual influences may moderate these outcomes. These studies collectively suggest that civic education plays a meaningful role in shaping students' attitudes towards national values. Empirical evidence also supports the effect of civic education on students' level of political participation, although findings remain mixed. Neundorff, Niemi, and Smets (2016) established that civic education has long-term effects on political engagement, particularly when introduced early in schooling. More recent findings by Keating and Janmaat (2024) indicate that civic education enhances political interest and increases the likelihood of youth participation in democratic activities such as voting and community involvement. Likewise, Hoskins and Janmaat (2019) found that civic competence developed in school significantly predicts political participation among young people. However, contrasting findings by Persson (2023) reveal that while civic education improves political knowledge, its direct effect on actual participation behaviour is sometimes limited, suggesting that other external factors also play a role. Supporting this complexity, Sloam (2024) argues that young people's political participation is increasingly shaped by informal and digital channels, which may not always be directly influenced by formal school curricula. These findings indicate that civic education contributes more strongly to political awareness and intention than to consistent political action.

Furthermore, empirical studies highlight the critical role of teaching methods in determining the effectiveness of civic education in shaping students' attitudes and participation. De Groot, Goodson, and Koot (2022) found that participatory teaching methods such as debates, simulations, and group discussions significantly enhance students' civic engagement and democratic attitudes. Similarly, Hess and McAvoy (2015) demonstrated that open classroom discussions on political and social issues improve students' critical thinking and willingness to participate in civic life. More recent work by Knowles and McCafferty-Wright (2024) confirms that interactive and student-centered pedagogies foster higher levels of civic understanding and engagement compared to traditional lecture-based approaches. In addition, Reichert and Print (2019) showed that experiential learning opportunities, including community-based activities, strengthen students' political efficacy and participation.

Complementing these findings, Zhang, Torney-Purta, and Barber (2023) revealed that teaching quality and classroom climate significantly influence students' civic attitudes and engagement outcomes across different countries.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Social Learning Theory proposed by Albert Bandura (1977), which explains that individuals learn behaviours, values, and attitudes through observation, imitation, and interaction within their social environment. The theory emphasizes that learning is not only cognitive but also socially mediated, especially through models such as teachers, peers, and instructional materials. In relation to this study, secondary school students in Zamfara State are expected to acquire civic values and democratic attitudes by observing how Civic Education is taught and practiced in the classroom. When teachers adopt participatory and student-centered teaching methods such as discussion, debate, and role-play, students are more likely to internalize national values like patriotism, unity, respect for authority, and civic responsibility. Supporting this view, Bandura (1986) argues that behaviour is shaped through continuous interaction between personal, behavioural, and environmental factors (reciprocal determinism). Similarly, Schunk (2012) notes that effective learning occurs when students actively observe and reproduce desirable behaviours demonstrated by credible models such as teachers. In the same line, Ormrod (2016) emphasizes that instructional strategies strongly influence students' moral and civic development through modelling and reinforcement.

Civic Education Curriculum provides the content base, while teaching methods serve as the medium through which values are transmitted. The effectiveness of these methods determines whether students develop positive attitudes towards national values and engage in political participation. This aligns with Adeyemi and Akindele (2018), who found that interactive civic instruction significantly improves students' civic awareness and engagement in Nigerian secondary schools. Therefore, Social Learning Theory is appropriate for this study because it explains how classroom experiences, instructional approaches, and social interactions shape secondary school students' civic attitudes and political participation in Zamfara State.

Figure 1: Drawing of Social Learning Theory

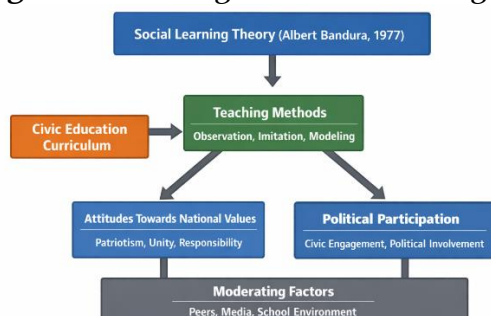


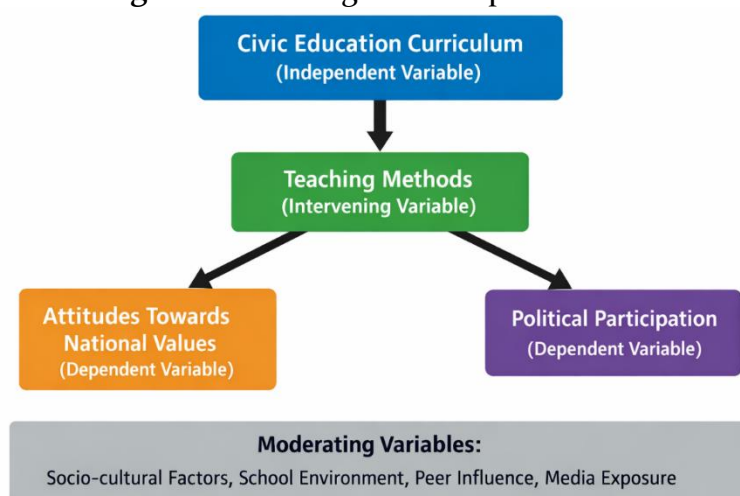
Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of the Study Based on Social Learning Theory.

The theoretical framework illustrates how the Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura (1977) explains the relationship between Civic Education Curriculum, teaching methods, and students' civic outcomes in secondary schools. It shows that the Civic Education Curriculum provides the foundational content on national values and civic responsibilities, while teaching methods serve as the channel through which this content is delivered, mainly through observation, imitation, and modeling. The framework further explains that when effective teaching strategies are used, students are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards national values such as patriotism, unity, and responsibility, as well as engage in political participation and civic activities. However, these outcomes are influenced by moderating factors such as peers, media exposure, and the school environment, which can either strengthen or weaken the learning process.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the relationship between the Civic Education curriculum and students' civic outcomes. The curriculum serves as the independent variable, providing knowledge of national values, democratic principles, and civic responsibilities. Through this exposure, students are expected to develop positive attitudes towards national values and an increased level of political participation, which are the dependent variables. The framework also recognizes teaching methods as an important intervening factor. Interactive and student-centered approaches are likely to strengthen the impact of the curriculum, while poor teaching methods may limit its effectiveness. In addition, factors such as socio-cultural background and school environment may influence how students respond to civic education. The framework suggests that the Civic Education curriculum influences students' attitudes and political participation, with teaching methods and contextual factors shaping the strength of this relationship.

Figure 2: Drawing of Conceptual Framework



The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between the Civic Education Curriculum, teaching methods, and students' civic outcomes in secondary schools. The Civic Education Curriculum serves as the independent variable, containing content on national values, democracy, and civic responsibilities, which forms the basis of instruction. This curriculum is delivered through teaching methods, which act as the intervening variable. The effectiveness of methods such as discussion, debate, and participatory learning determines how well students understand and internalize civic concepts. The expected outcomes are students' attitudes towards national values and their political participation. Effective instruction is therefore expected to promote patriotism, unity, responsibility, and active civic engagement among secondary school students. The framework also recognizes moderating factors such as socio-cultural influences, school environment, peer groups, and media exposure. These factors do not directly affect learning but can strengthen or weaken the impact of the curriculum and teaching methods.

Research Objectives

The study seeks to:

1. Examine the influence of the Civic Education curriculum on secondary school students' attitudes towards national values in Zamfara State.
2. Determine the effect of the Civic Education curriculum on students' level of political participation in Zamfara State.
3. Assess the relationship between the teaching methods used in Civic Education and students' attitudes towards national values and political participation.

Research Questions

1. How does the Civic Education curriculum influence secondary school students' attitudes towards national values in Zamfara State?
2. To what extent does the Civic Education curriculum affect students' political participation in Zamfara State?
3. What is the relationship between Civic Education teaching methods and students' attitudes towards national values and political participation?

Research Hypotheses

1. H_{01} : There is no significant influence of the Civic Education curriculum on secondary school students' attitudes towards national values in Zamfara State.
2. H_{02} : There is no significant effect of the Civic Education curriculum on students' political participation in Zamfara State.
3. H_{03} : There is no significant relationship between Civic Education teaching methods and students' attitudes towards national values and political participation in Zamfara State.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design with a quantitative approach to examine the influence of Civic Education curriculum on secondary school students' attitudes toward national values and political participation in

Zamfara State. The population comprised all senior secondary school students in public secondary schools within the state, from which a sample size of 384 respondents was selected using a multistage sampling technique to ensure adequate representation across schools and locations. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed in line with the research objectives, questions, and hypotheses. The instrument was validated by experts in educational research and measurement to ensure content relevance and clarity. A pilot study was conducted to test the reliability of the instrument, yielding a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.91, which indicates a very high level of internal consistency and confirms the reliability of the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was administered directly to respondents with the assistance of trained research assistants, and responses were retrieved and coded for analysis.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics, particularly simple and multiple regression analyses, were employed to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The choice of regression analysis was appropriate because it enabled the study to determine the predictive influence of Civic Education curriculum and teaching methods on students' attitudes toward national values and their political participation. The study ensured ethical considerations such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity of respondents. Overall, the methodological approach provided a robust framework for generating reliable and valid evidence on how Civic Education shapes civic dispositions and political engagement among secondary school students in Zamfara State.

RESULTS

Table 1: Regression Analysis of Civic Education Curriculum and Students' Attitudes toward National Values

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.	Decision
(Constant)	1.842	0.215	-	8.57	0.000	
Civic Education Curriculum	0.476	0.042	0.512	11.33	0.000	Significant

The result in Table 1 indicates that the Civic Education curriculum has a positive and statistically significant influence on secondary school students' attitudes toward national values in Zamfara State. This is shown by the beta value of 0.512 and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. The t-value of 11.33 further confirms that the relationship is strong and unlikely to have occurred by chance. With an R^2 value of 0.262, it means that about 26.2% of the variation in students' attitudes toward national values is explained by the Civic Education curriculum. This suggests that when Civic Education is properly taught, students tend to develop stronger respect

for national values such as patriotism, civic responsibility, and respect for national symbols. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Civic Education Curriculum and Students' Political Participation

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.	Decision
(Constant)	1.615	0.198	-	8.16	0.000	
Civic Education Curriculum	0.438	0.039	0.489	11.23	0.000	Significant

The findings in Table 2 also show that Civic Education curriculum has a significant effect on students' political participation. This is reflected in the beta value of 0.489 and a p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 level of significance. The t-value of 11.23 confirms a strong relationship between the variables. The R^2 value of 0.239 shows that 23.9% of the variation in students' political participation is accounted for by the Civic Education curriculum. This implies that students who are exposed to Civic Education are more likely to understand democratic processes and become interested in civic and political activities such as voting awareness, leadership participation, and political discussions. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis of Civic Education Teaching Methods on Students' Attitudes and Political Participation

Predictors	Dependent Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.	Decision
Teaching Methods	Attitude toward National Values	0.421	10.18	0.000	Significant
Teaching Methods	Political Participation	0.397	9.74	0.000	Significant

The result in Table 3 reveals that Civic Education teaching methods have a significant influence on both students' attitudes toward national values and their political participation. The beta values of 0.421 and 0.397 with p-values of 0.000 indicate that the relationships are statistically significant. This suggests that effective teaching methods such as discussion, debate, demonstration, and participatory learning play an important role in shaping students' civic understanding and engagement. The R^2 values of 0.177 and 0.158 show that the teaching methods explain a moderate level of variation in both outcomes. It also suggests that teaching methods have a slightly stronger influence on students' attitudes than on their political participation. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study clearly show that the Civic Education curriculum has a significant positive influence on secondary school students' attitudes toward

national values in Zamfara State. This outcome is consistent with the findings of Geboers et al. (2013), who reported that citizenship education significantly improves students' civic attitudes, moral reasoning, and sense of responsibility. Similarly, Lee and Huang (2024) found that Civic Education contributes strongly to the formation of national identity among secondary school students, particularly in culturally diverse societies. Murniati and Bazla (2025) also emphasized that Civic Education remains a key tool for strengthening national identity and unity in the era of globalization. In the same direction, Silaban et al. (2024) in their systematic review concluded that well-implemented civic education programs consistently promote democratic values and national consciousness among learners. The present finding therefore confirms that when Civic Education is properly implemented, it strengthens students' respect for national values such as patriotism, unity, and civic responsibility.

The study further established that Civic Education curriculum significantly affects students' political participation. This aligns with the work of Martens and Gainous (2023), who found that civic education improves political knowledge and directly increases youth engagement in democratic processes. Similarly, Neundorff, Niemi, and Smets (2016) explained that civic education has a "compensation effect" by increasing political participation among students from less politically engaged backgrounds. Persson (2023) also confirmed that civic education contributes meaningfully to students' political engagement, especially when combined with participatory learning experiences. Keating and Janmaat (2024) further emphasized that school-based civic activities have long-term effects on youth political participation beyond the classroom. Ekundayo and Ojo (2020) and Manuwa (2023) both reported that Civic Education significantly enhances students' awareness and involvement in political processes such as voting and civic discussions. These findings support the present study that Civic Education equips students with the knowledge and motivation needed for active political participation.

The result also reveals that Civic Education teaching methods significantly influence both students' attitudes toward national values and their political participation. This finding is strongly supported by De Groot, Goodson, and Koot (2022), who found that interactive and participatory teaching methods in citizenship education produce better civic outcomes compared to traditional lecture methods. Knowles and McCafferty-Wright (2024) similarly reported that student-centered civic learning strategies significantly enhance democratic engagement among learners. Hess and McAvoy (2015) emphasized that classroom discussion of political issues builds students' civic reasoning and democratic competence. Alscher et al. (2022) also found that teaching quality and participatory methods increase students' willingness to engage in civic and political life, with civic knowledge and interest acting as key mediators. Campbell (2019) further noted that effective civic education depends largely on teaching approaches that encourage dialogue, critical thinking, and active participation.

In addition, Reichert and Print (2019) found that experiential civic learning activities such as debates, simulations, and group discussions significantly improve students' civic participation levels. Zhang, Torney-Purta, and Barber (2023) also confirmed across multiple countries that student-centered civic education strongly

predicts youth engagement in civic life. Furthermore, Sloam (2024) highlighted that modern civic education must adapt to digital and participatory environments to sustain youth political involvement. These findings are also consistent with Bandura's (1977, 1986) social learning theory, which explains that students learn civic behaviours through observation, interaction, and active participation. Likewise, Schunk (2012) and Ormrod (2016) emphasized that meaningful learning occurs when learners are actively engaged in social and cognitive processes.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Civic Education curriculum and its teaching methods have a significant influence on secondary school students' attitudes toward national values and their level of political participation in Zamfara State. The findings clearly show that effective implementation of the Civic Education curriculum contributes to the development of positive civic attitudes such as patriotism, respect for national symbols, and civic responsibility. It also enhances students' understanding of democratic processes and encourages their involvement in political activities. Furthermore, the study establishes that appropriate teaching methods play a crucial role in strengthening both students' civic awareness and their willingness to participate in civic and political life. Civic Education remains a vital instrument for promoting responsible citizenship and democratic values among students.

Recommendations

1. Civic Education should be taught using more interactive and learner-centered methods such as debate, discussion, and role play to enhance students' engagement and understanding of civic values.
2. Government and education authorities should ensure full and effective implementation of the Civic Education curriculum in all secondary schools by providing adequate instructional materials and trained teachers.
3. Teachers of Civic Education should be regularly trained and retrained on modern and effective teaching strategies that promote active participation and critical thinking among students.
4. Schools should encourage students' participation in civic-related activities such as leadership clubs, debates, and community service to strengthen their political awareness and responsibility.
5. Curriculum planners should periodically review the Civic Education curriculum to ensure it remains relevant to current national issues and promotes strong democratic values among students.

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