



## Civic Knowledge, Skills and Values as Correlates of Undergraduates Civic Engagement in Kwara State

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**Abstract.** Civic Education is charged in inculcating youths with knowledge, skills and values needed efficiently to contribute to the attainment of a better, improved and civilised environment. This study investigated civic knowledge, skills and values as correlates of undergraduates' civic engagement in Kwara State. The study was a correlational survey type with the population of all undergraduates in Kwara State. 400 undergraduates constituted the sample of the study. Researchers' designed questionnaire with reliability index 0.83 was used to elicit relevant data. Percentage was used to answer the 4 research questions raised, while linear regression was used to test the hypothesis postulated at 0.05 significant level. The findings of the study revealed that the level of undergraduates' civic knowledge and values were average, while their civic skill was low. It was therefore recommended that curriculum experts should improve Civic Education curriculum to target the three domains of learning as this will bring about positive nation building.

**Keywords:** Civic Knowledge, Skills, Values, Engagement, Undergraduates

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### A. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as a democratic nation completed its electioneering process over a year ago. During that period the political climate become agog with different ways of convincing and conniving the electorates on why they should be voted for. Individuals who saw themselves as politicians or stakeholders in the political scene lobbied/sought elected offices for themselves or for others. In a bid to encourage more and better participation by youths, the Federal Government passed "the not too young to run" bill. The rationale behind the bill was to enable youths show more enthusiasm towards politics thereby performing one of their civic responsibilities. Additionally, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) also encouraged Nigerians most especially the youths to perform their civic duties such as registering to get their voters card, holding political office holders accountable, seek political offices, coming out to vote and make sure they protect their votes. All the aforementioned would enable them

become self-aware and active in the political climate, which is one of the reasons for the introduction of Civic Education into the school curriculum.

The teaching of Civic Education as a core subject in the senior secondary schools commenced in 2011. Civic Education as a subject is charged with inculcating youths with knowledge and skills, they need for the actualization of national objectives as contained in the National Policy on Education (Ujunwa, 2013). Utulu (2011) pointed out that Civic Education introduces learners to the process of democratic socialization by encouraging and supporting democratic behaviors and values among citizens. Civic Education helps youths to inculcate knowledge, skills and values which individuals need to be effective active citizens. An effective citizen is an individual who understands the obligations and undertakes the responsibility to improve, contribute and solve political problems (Tufts University, 2010). The

objectives of Civic Education in Nigeria are therefore to:

- promote the knowledge of the inter-relationship between man and woman; the government and the society.
- highlight the structure of government, its functions and responsibilities of the people to the government and vice-versa;
- to enhance the teaching and learning of emerging issues; and
- inculcate in the students, their duties and obligations to the society. (FRN, 2013).

Civic Education is not restricted to classroom-based learning, it also includes informal training, experiential learning and mass media campaigns. The classroom-based learning is expressed through Civic Education curriculum (Van Camp & Baugh, 2016). It is entrenched in respect for community-based knowledge, grounded in personal experiences through reflective teaching and learning, which promotes active participation in the nation's democracy and aligned with institutional changing efforts to improve learning (Dadvand, 2018). Civic learning has been widely considered as a field of practice which is capable of advancing civic outcomes (Finley, 2011). Generally, civic continuum encompasses outcomes related to deliberate participation in the democratic process, public policy and direct service which can be seen as a range of practice that fosters quality engagement. Civic Education is divided into Civic Knowledge, Civic Skills/Practices and Civic Values.

Civic knowledge covers the content of what citizens ought to know, that is the subject matter. Civic knowledge develops intellectual abilities to engage individuals into building democratic societies. It includes understanding the diverse forces (e.g. cultural, historical, economic, religious, sociological) that shape political systems and civic life through interactions majorly in the classroom (Tufts University, 2010). It is accumulated across a student's entire school experience through an institution's curricular and extra-curricular activities. Civic skills are part of a larger set of ideas about what is believed to be necessary for citizens in order to be engaged in public life. Civic skills do not exist in a vacuum. With the knowledge acquired, civic skills help an individual to participate effectively in public life. Civic skills are important factor in political participation thereby finding its way into other

disciplines such as political science, education, developmental psychology among others (Tufts University, 2010). The skills in civic education provide the foundation for responsible and community-minded citizens which reinforce a nations system of democracy.

In the same vein, Civic value can be said to be the nurturing of habits importance for the success of the community. Civic values are the essential and cherished behaviors that must citizens learn to respect and uphold. Without appropriate values by individuals holding political offices, the functions or duties of the government might not be achievable (Tufts University, 2010), because it builds and maintains interpersonal relationships in order to create a democratic society. Similarly, civic knowledge deepens largely on its application through civic values thereby creating a value system that can benefit the whole society. Civic knowledge, skills and values determine how an individual would involve or carry out his/her civic duties which can be termed as Civic Engagement (Gopinathan, 2012).

In every democratic society, citizens are encouraged to be actively involved in their own governance and such engagement should be based on an informed and critical reflection of political and civic issues (Van-Camp & Baugh, 2016). The importance of civic engagement in democracy cannot be over-emphasized. Democracy cannot survive without civic engagement. Civic engagement can be partly considered to be a result of knowledge about the importance of civic duties. Apart from acting as the foundation of an effective democracy and sustained future, civic engagement and knowledge influence important civic attributes such that civic knowledge promotes democratic values, political participation, trust in public life/public figures and can change attitudes on important political issues (Coley & Sum, 2012).

The political structure of Nigeria is under threat as a result of low national identity amongst the youths seen as the country's future (Okam & Lawal, 2011). The goal of schooling is not merely preparation for citizenship but citizenship itself in order to equip a citizenry with the requisite knowledge, skills and the dispositions needed for an engaged and active civic life. Many Nigerian youths derive little or no satisfaction from carrying out their civic responsibility as they see it as a waste of time. One of the objectives of Civic Education is to

allow students highlight the structure of government, its functions and the responsibilities of the people to the government among others.

However, it has been reported that the level of civic engagement among the youths estimated to account for about 60% of Nigeria population (Coley & Sum, 2012). For instance, the rate of winning votes for elected Presidents have considerably dropped since President Obasanjo was re-elected in 2003 with 24 million votes. President Buhari won the 2015 presidential election with about 15 million votes (Independent National Electoral Commission, 2016). This was as a result of steady decline in voting participation of youths between 1999-2015 with less than 30% of youths voting in the 2015 presidential election (Independent National Electoral Commission, 2016). This implies that in the last general elections in Nigeria, almost two-third of the youth populace failed to perform their civic responsibility. Thereby, they cannot hold political office holders accountable for their failure.

### Objectives

Hence, this study was intended to examine civic knowledge, skills and values as correlatess of undergraduates' civic engagement in Kwara state. This study purpose was to examine the civic knowledge, skills and values as correlates of undergraduates' civic engagement in Kwara State. By so doing, the following research questions were raised and research hypothesis was formulated for the purpose to be achieved.

- a. What is the level of civic knowledge of undergraduates in Kwara State?
- b. What is the level of civic skill of undergraduates in Kwara State?
- c. What are the civic values of undergraduates in Kwara State?
- d. What is the level of civic engagement of undergraduates in Kwara State?
- e. Is there a correlation between undergraduates' civic knowledge, skills, values and their civic engagement in Kwara State?

### Research Hypothesis

This research hypothesis was formulated to guide the purpose of the study:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant correlation between undergraduates' civic

knowledge, skills, values and their civic engagement in Kwara State.

### B. METHODS

This study was cross-sectional survey research of the descriptive design. All undergraduates in Kwara State Tertiary institutions served as the population. The target population was undergraduates of University of Ilorin who finished secondary school from 2014. Since Civic Education became a core subject in senior secondary schools from 2011, these undergraduates offered Civic Education as a compulsory subject while in secondary school. Thus, 100-300 level undergraduates served as the sample for this study. Multi-stage sampling technique was used in this study. Stratified sampling technique was employed to group undergraduates based on their Faculties. There are 15 Faculties in university of Ilorin. Random sampling technique was used to select 8 Faculties. 50 undergraduates were randomly selected from each of the sampled Faculties to make a total number of 400 respondents.

Researcher-designed questionnaire was distributed to the respondents. A researcher-designed questionnaire with a content validity was determined by Civic Education experts who scrutinised the items and made possible alteration and suggestions needed to elicit information for this study. The test-retest reliability method was used with a sample of 100 respondents within two weeks' interval. The tests' scores were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient and a reliability index of 0.83 was obtained. The questionnaire comprised of two sections. section A gathered information on the demographic characteristics of respondents, while section B elicited information on civic knowledge, skills, values and civic engagement of undergraduates. To answer the 4 research questions the mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data obtained on them, while the hypothesis was tested using multiple regression at 0.05 significant level. The data were run with a Statistical Package Sciences (SPSS 24.0) windows version.

### C. RESULTS

Given that there were 5 items each for civic knowledge, skills, values and engagement structured in a four-response-likert scale type, the minimum and maximum scores were 5 and

20 respectively while the range was 15. The range was therefore divided by 3-level of high, moderate and low (i.e.  $15/3 = 5$ ). Thus, 5 – 10, 11-15 and 16 – 20 scores signified low, average and high level respectively. The statistics of respondents were therefore used to answer the research questions

#### Research Question 1:

*What is the level of civic knowledge of undergraduates in Kwara State?*

Table 1. Level of Civic Knowledge among Undergraduates in Kwara State

| Level of Civic Knowledge | Score Range | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| High                     | 16 – 20     | 121       | 30.3       |
| Average                  | 11 – 15     | 187       | 46.7       |
| Low                      | 5 – 10      | 92        | 23.0       |
| Total                    |             | 400       | 100.0      |

As revealed in Table 1, the majority (46.7%) of undergraduates sampled in Kwara State were of average level of civic knowledge.

#### Research Question 2:

*What is the level of civic skills of undergraduates in Kwara State?*

Table 2. Level of Civic Skills among Undergraduates in Kwara State

| Level of Civic Skills | Score Range | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| High                  | 16 – 20     | 84        | 21.0       |
| Average               | 11 – 15     | 139       | 34.7       |
| Low                   | 5 – 10      | 177       | 44.3       |
| Total                 |             | 400       | 100.0      |

As indicated in Table 2, the majority (44.3%) of undergraduates sampled in Kwara State were of low level of civic skills.

#### Research Question 3: *What are the civic values of undergraduates in Kwara State?*

Table 3. Level of Civic Values among Undergraduates in Kwara State

| Level of Civic Values | Score Range | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| High                  | 16 – 20     | 152       | 38.0       |
| Average               | 11 – 15     | 169       | 42.3       |
| Low                   | 5 – 10      | 79        | 19.7       |
| Total                 |             | 400       | 100.0      |

As shown in Table 3, the majority (42.3%) of undergraduates sampled in Kwara State were of average level of civic values.

#### Research Question 4:

*What is the level of civic engagement of undergraduates in Kwara State?*

Table 4. Level of Civic Engagement among Undergraduates in Kwara State

| Level of Civic Engagement | Score Range | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| High                      | 16 – 20     | 89        | 22.3       |
| Average                   | 11 – 15     | 164       | 41.0       |
| Low                       | 5 – 10      | 147       | 36.7       |

As revealed in Table 4, the majority (41.0%) of undergraduates sampled in Kwara State were of average level of civic engagement.

#### Hypothesis Testing

The multiple regression analysis was used to test the null hypothesis postulated for this study

**Ho:** *There is no significant correlation between undergraduates' civic knowledge, skills, values and their civic engagement in Kwara State.*

Table 5. Regression Analysis Civic Knowledge, Skills and Values on Civic Engagement

| Model        | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
|--------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 Regression | 2235.746       | 3   | 745.249     | 132.564 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
| Residual     | 2226.231       | 396 | 5.622       |         |                   |
| Total        | 4461.977       | 399 |             |         |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: Civic Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Civic Knowledge, Skills and Values

The model in Table 5 indicates the linear combination of predictor variables i.e. civic knowledge, skills and values. The F-value 132.564 is obtained with p-value 0.000 when computed at 0.05 critical level of significance. Since the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the combination of the independent variables significantly predict the dependent variable ( $F_{(3, 396)} = 132.564, p < 0.05$ ). Thus, there is significant correlation between civic knowledge, skills and values **and** civic engagement **of undergraduates in Kwara State**. To establish the general contribution of the independent variables together, r-square was computed and the output is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Regression Model Summary of civic knowledge, skills and values on civic engagement

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .708 <sup>a</sup> | .461     | .497              | 2.371                      |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Civic Values, Knowledge and Skills

b. Dependent Variable: Civic Engagement

As shown in Table 6, all independent variables (civic knowledge skills and values) jointly contributed R-Square of 0.461, representing 46.1% to the dependent variable (civic engagement).

#### D. DISCUSSION

Findings of this study revealed that the level of civic knowledge was average among undergraduates in Kwara State. This means that majority of the sampled undergraduates exhibited average level of civic knowledge. This might be possible where undergraduates retained only fraction of the contents of Civic Education learnt in secondary school. This finding is in agreement with that of Owen, Soule and Chalif (2011) who found out that the exposure of Civic Education is positively associated with political knowledge gain. Also, Galston (2007) supported the findings of this study by reporting that the civic knowledge of youths in at best average because dedicate more time to sports, fashion and arts. To students, Civic Education which brings about civic knowledge is seen as a subject that they need to pass thereby not giving the subject enough and required attention. Additionally, Nicotera, Brewer and DesMarais, (2013) opined that youths show an acceptable civic knowledge and this makes them turn out to be active citizens.

Another finding of this study revealed that undergraduate's level of civic skills was low. This study found out that undergraduates' civic skills need to be improved. This result negates the earlier finding of Comber (2005) who reported that young people have the basic civic skill to function in the society because of their experience from Civic Education and they can interpret political information correctly. The result of this study however supported the work of Also, Nicotera, Brewer and DesMarais (2013) who reported that youths have the minimum

required level of civic skills needed to carry out their civic responsibility. As such, they would have the required skills to impact the political world around them. Civic skills allow young adult discuss political issues with peers and adults, to monitor news and feel confident to speak in public (Comber, 2005).

Also, it was reported that the civic value by undergraduates exhibited average level of civic value. Youths of nowadays, are more concerned with materialistic thoughts. They have the believe that with a certain level of friends and financial resources, their value can be acceptable and appropriate within any situation. During political campaigns, individuals who share or distribute money or other valuable items are more likely to get more votes than those who do not do so. The finding of this study is lieu with Boyte et al (2014) who opined that commitment to the public good, to make explicit the republican roots of an idea in the community, patriotism, and loyalty directed towards political communities, are attributes that are found wanting in young adults. They stressed further that citizen become creative agent who does not just acquiescence to the political community demands, but work to reform and improve.

Another finding in this study revealed that the level of engagement by undergraduates in Kwara State was low. There is a growing ineptitude of the youths towards participation in civic activities. In this vein, Campbell (2006), Touya (2007), and Flanagan and Levine (2010) have indicated that presently there is a drop in people's engagement towards civic and political activities especially the youths. Therefore, Touya (2007) discovered that there has been significant decline in the political participation and civic engagement of youths in developing and developed countries and Nigeria is not left out.

Finally, there was significant correlation between undergraduates' civic knowledge, skills, values and their civic engagement. Civic values, knowledge and skills jointly contributed to the level of civic engagement of undergraduates in Kwara State. It was also found out that civic value influenced civic engagement of undergraduates more, followed by civic knowledge. Civic skills had little or no influence on the engagement level of undergraduates. In support of the findings of this study, Touya (2007) reported that there was an increasing

proportion of the population of countries showing apathy toward political affairs, in the diminishing voters' turnout, in membership towards political participations, civic associations or in the involvement in civic affairs. This finding supports the notion that youths engage in certain activities as a result of their values.

## E. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Civic engagement leads to positive results only if it is driven by correct interpretation of democratic issues. Appropriateness of democratic judgement implies that people understand governance to a degree or level that is generally acceptable. As such, individuals need to obtain basic civic knowledge and adequate civic skills and interpret such information appropriately to have the right value in order to correctly understand democratic information so as to make suitable democratic judgements and, subsequently, contribute positively to decisions on public issues. In this wise, it is underscored that in an ideal situation, information should be unbiased to guarantee accuracy of democratic judgement. Manipulation of information and information sources represent a threat because it leads to assumptions that are based on incorrect information.

On the basis of this study findings, it was concluded that the out-of-school lives of the youth reveal the real value of education. Therefore, the challenge is for the school to help the youth develop attachments to their nation's values and develop a sense of kinship with all citizens within their society and the world at large. Parents and community members also have a role to play in educating the young ones with the right type of value and practices of civic responsibility. The findings of this study contribute significantly to the understanding of young people civic knowledge, skills and values as correlates of undergraduates' civic engagement in Kwara State. As the results of this finding need improvement and are anathema to the objectives of civic education and subsequently civic responsibility, the implication of this study is to awaken the consciousness of social educators and stakeholders to:

i. Government should not restrict civic knowledge to the classroom alone, they

should lead by example by fulfilling the oath of office taken during their swearing in ceremony and make governance inclusive especially for the youths.

- ii. Curriculum experts should improve Civic Education curriculum to target the three domain of learning as this will bring about positive nation building.
- iii. Teachers should endeavor to improve in the delivery of the curriculum contents by integrating instructional strategies that can assist the achievement of the objectives of Civic Education by getting the best out of students within and outside the school.
- iv. Parents, elders within a community should serve as role models and mentors by carrying out their civic duties diligently.

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