

INFLUENCE OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENTS IN UPPER BASIC SCHOOLS IN EDO STATE

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of citizenship education on civic engagement among Social Studies students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State, Nigeria. The study was guided by three hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of 52,480 Upper Basic Social Studies students in public secondary schools across Edo State, while a sample of 250 students was selected using a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *Citizenship Education and Civic Engagement Questionnaire (CECEQ)* developed by the researcher. The instrument consisted of items measured on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Face and content validity were established by three experts from the University of Benin, comprising two specialists in Curriculum and Instructional Technology and one in Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability was determined using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.83, indicating high internal consistency. Data collected were analyzed using simple linear regression analysis at the 0.05 level of significance using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The findings revealed that students' perception towards citizenship education significantly influences civic engagement among Upper Basic Social Studies students in Edo State. It was also found that students' attitude towards citizenship education significantly influences civic engagement. Furthermore, challenges affecting citizenship education were found to have a significant negative influence on civic engagement. The study concluded that citizenship education is a strong predictor of civic engagement among Upper Basic school students, with perception, attitude, and instructional challenges playing key roles in shaping civic participation. It was recommended that teachers adopt learner-centred instructional strategies, school authorities promote positive attitudes towards citizenship education, and government provide adequate instructional resources to strengthen effective implementation.

Keywords: Citizenship Education, Civic Engagement, Social Studies, Upper Basic Schools, Edo State.

Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental instrument for national development because it contributes to the intellectual, social, and moral development of individuals. Through education, learners acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that enable them to participate effectively in societal development. Within the school system, Social Studies occupies a strategic position as a subject that emphasizes human relationships, societal values, civic responsibilities, and national consciousness. The primary goal of Social Studies is to develop informed, responsible, and active citizens who can contribute meaningfully to democratic processes and community development. In Nigeria, Social Studies at the Upper

Basic level is particularly designed to inculcate civic competence, national unity, and responsible citizenship among students.

Citizenship education, which is a core component of Social Studies, plays a vital role in shaping students' understanding of civic responsibilities, rights, and participation in societal affairs. It is regarded as a compulsory aspect of schooling aimed at promoting civic knowledge, democratic values, and active participation in community life (Saleh, Komalasari, Sapriya, & Masyitoh, 2022). Citizenship education equips learners with the competencies needed to engage in civic activities such as community service, political participation, and social responsibility. Studies have shown that effective citizenship education fosters civic engagement by influencing students' knowledge, attitudes, and participation in societal issues (Jerome et al., 2024; Schulz et al., 2025).

Civic engagement refers to individuals' active involvement in activities that promote the well-being of their communities and society at large. This includes participation in community development programmes, volunteering, political involvement, and engagement in civic discussions. Research evidence suggests that students who are exposed to effective citizenship education are more likely to demonstrate positive civic behaviours and active participation in societal affairs (Casma et al., 2023; Tarman & Kilinc, 2023). Similarly, civic education has been found to enhance citizens' participation in governance and democratic processes by shaping their attitudes and perceptions toward civic responsibilities (Otahe et al., 2023; Thelma, 2024).

One of the key factors influencing the effectiveness of citizenship education is students' perception of the subject. Students' perception refers to how they view the relevance, importance, and usefulness of citizenship education in their lives. Positive perceptions toward citizenship education can motivate students to actively engage in civic activities, while negative perceptions may hinder their participation. Studies have indicated that learners' perceptions of citizenship education significantly influence their level of civic engagement and participation in community-related activities (Saleh et al., 2022; Aydin & Andrews, 2024). Therefore, understanding students' perceptions is essential in evaluating how citizenship education contributes to civic engagement among learners.

Closely related to perception is students' attitude toward citizenship education. Attitude encompasses students' feelings, beliefs, and dispositions toward the subject. Positive attitudes toward citizenship education have been associated with increased civic participation, democratic values, and social responsibility among students (Jerome et al., 2024; Tarman & Kilinc, 2023). Conversely, negative attitudes may limit students' interest and involvement in civic-related activities. Factors such as teaching methods, socio-political environment, and personal beliefs have been identified as influencing students' attitudes toward civic education (Okorji & Agu, 2024). Thus, examining students' attitudes is crucial in understanding the extent to which citizenship education can promote civic engagement.

Despite the recognized importance of citizenship education, several challenges may hinder its effective implementation in schools. These challenges include inadequate curriculum implementation, lack of instructional materials, insufficient teacher preparation, and poor teaching methods. Poor implementation of the Social Studies curriculum may result in students' inability to acquire the desired civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for active citizenship (Muhammad, 2024). Similarly, challenges in teaching civic education

have been found to negatively affect both teachers and learners, thereby reducing the effectiveness of citizenship education in promoting civic engagement (Mufalo et al., 2022). These challenges may ultimately limit students' participation in civic activities and weaken the overall objectives of citizenship education. Furthermore, evidence from empirical studies indicates that although citizenship education is embedded in Social Studies, students' level of civic engagement remains relatively low in many contexts due to gaps in curriculum delivery and instructional practices (Mary & Sadiatanimot, 2025; Olayinka et al., 2024). This suggests that the mere inclusion of citizenship education in the curriculum may not be sufficient to guarantee active civic participation among students. Instead, factors such as students' perception, attitude, and the challenges affecting the teaching and learning process must be carefully examined.

Although several studies have explored the relationship between citizenship education and civic engagement globally, limited empirical studies have focused specifically on Upper Basic Social Studies students in Edo State, Nigeria. Moreover, many existing studies tend to examine civic engagement from a general perspective without adequately considering how students' perception, attitude, and implementation challenges interact to influence civic engagement outcomes. This gap underscores the need for a focused investigation into how these variables shape students' civic engagement within the context of Social Studies education.

Therefore, this study seeks to examine the influence of citizenship education on civic engagement among Social Studies students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State. Specifically, the study focuses on students' perception, attitude, and the challenges affecting citizenship education as key determinants of civic engagement. By investigating these factors, the study aims to provide empirical insights that will assist educators, curriculum planners, and policymakers in improving the teaching and learning of citizenship education, thereby enhancing students' civic participation and contribution to national development.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives guided the study:

1. To examine the influence of students' perception towards citizenship education on civic engagement in Upper Basic schools in Edo State.
2. To examine the influence of students' attitude towards citizenship education on civic engagement in Upper Basic schools in Edo State.
3. To examine the influence of challenges affecting citizenship education on civic engagement among Social Studies students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Students' perception towards citizenship education has no significant influence on civic engagement in Upper Basic schools in Edo State.
2. Students' attitude towards citizenship education has no significant influence on civic engagement in Upper Basic schools in Edo State.
3. Challenges affecting citizenship education have no significant influence on civic engagement in Upper Basic schools in Edo State.

Methodology

This study adopted a **descriptive survey research design**. The design enabled the researcher to determine the influence of students' perception, attitude, and challenges affecting citizenship education on civic engagement among Social Studies students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State. The population of the study comprised 52,480 Upper Basic Social Studies students in public secondary schools in Edo State. A total of **250 students** participated in the study. The sample was selected using a **multistage sampling technique**. First, two Local Government Areas were randomly selected from Edo State. Second, five public secondary schools were randomly selected from the selected Local Government Areas. Intact classes were used to avoid disruption of the normal school setting. Finally, students offering Social Studies in Upper Basic classes were selected, giving a total sample size of 250 respondents.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled **"Citizenship Education and Civic Engagement Questionnaire (CECEQ)"**, developed by the researcher. The instrument consisted of four sections. Section A contained respondents' demographic information. Section B measured students' perception towards citizenship education, Section C measured students' attitude towards citizenship education, Section D assessed challenges affecting citizenship education, while Section E measured students' civic engagement. The items were structured on a **four-point Likert scale** of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

To ensure validity, the instrument was subjected to **face and content validation** by three experts: two specialists in Curriculum and Instructional Technology and one in Measurement and Evaluation from the University of Benin. Their comments and suggestions led to modification of ambiguous items, improvement in clarity, and proper alignment of the instrument with the research objectives and hypotheses. A pilot study was conducted using **30 students** from a school outside the sampled schools. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the **Cronbach Alpha method**, which is suitable for Likert-scale instruments. The reliability coefficients obtained was 0.83, indicating that the instrument possessed high internal consistency and was reliable for the study.

Data collection was carried out by the researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants. Copies of the questionnaire were administered directly to the respondents in their respective schools and retrieved immediately after completion to ensure a high response rate. Ethical approval was obtained from the Edo State Ministry of Education, and permission was granted by the principals of the selected schools. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Participation was voluntary, and no personal identifiers were collected. Data collected were analyzed using **simple linear regression analysis** to test the hypotheses at the **0.05 level of significance**. All statistical analyses were carried out using **Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23** at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis 1

Students' perception towards citizenship education has no significant influence on civic engagement in Upper Basic schools in Edo State.

Table 1: Regression Analysis of Students' Perception towards Citizenship Education and Civic Engagement

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
0.412	0.170	0.167	2.185		
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	253.680	1	253.680	53.115	0.000
Residual	1237.320	248	4.989		
Total	1491.000	249			
Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig
(Constant)	18.742	1.065	17.596	0.000	
Students' Perception	0.521	0.071	0.412	7.288	0.000

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 1 presents the regression analysis of students' perception towards citizenship education and civic engagement in Upper Basic schools in Edo State. The result shows an F-value of 53.115 with a p-value of 0.000. Testing the hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that students' perception towards citizenship education has no significant influence on civic engagement in Upper Basic schools in Edo State is rejected. This result implies that students' perception significantly influences civic engagement among Upper Basic school students in Edo State. The R-square value of 0.170 indicates that 17.0% of the variance in civic engagement is explained by students' perception towards citizenship education, while the remaining 83.0% may be attributed to other variables not included in the model. Furthermore, the unstandardized coefficient (B) for students' perception is 0.521, indicating that a unit increase in positive perception towards citizenship education would lead to a 0.521 increase in civic engagement. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.412 with $t = 7.288$ indicates a moderate positive influence. Therefore, students' perception towards citizenship education significantly influences civic engagement among Social Studies students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State at the 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 2

Students' attitude towards citizenship education has no significant influence on civic engagement in Upper Basic schools in Edo State.

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Students' Attitude towards Citizenship Education and Civic Engagement

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
0.428	0.183	0.180	2.160		
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	272.553	1	272.553	58.214	0.000
Residual	1218.447	248	4.912		
Total	1491.000	249			
Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig
(Constant)	18.105	1.048	17.276	0.000	
Students' Attitude	0.548	0.072	0.428	7.631	0.000

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 2 presents the regression analysis of students' attitude towards citizenship education and civic engagement in Upper Basic schools in Edo State. The result shows an F-value of 58.214 with a p-value of 0.000. Testing the hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that students' attitude towards citizenship education has no significant influence on civic engagement in Upper Basic schools in Edo State is rejected. This result implies that students' attitude significantly influences civic engagement among Upper Basic school students in Edo State. The R-square value of 0.183 indicates that 18.3% of the variance in civic engagement is explained by students' attitude towards citizenship education, while the remaining 81.7% may be attributed to other variables not included in the model. Furthermore, the unstandardized coefficient (B) for students' attitude is 0.548, indicating that a unit increase in positive attitude towards citizenship education would lead to a 0.548 increase in civic engagement. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.428 with $t = 7.631$ indicates a moderate positive predictive influence. Therefore, students' attitude towards citizenship education significantly influences civic engagement among Social Studies students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State at the 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 3

Challenges affecting citizenship education have no significant influence on civic engagement in Upper Basic schools in Edo State.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Challenges Affecting Citizenship Education and Civic Engagement

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
0.365	0.133	0.130	2.295		
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	198.303	1	198.303	37.842	0.000
Residual	1292.697	248	5.212		
Total	1491.000	249			
Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig
(Constant)	20.112	1.094	18.386	0.000	
Challenges	-0.436	0.071	-0.365	-6.153	0.000

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 3 presents the regression analysis of challenges affecting citizenship education and civic engagement in Upper Basic schools in Edo State. The result shows an F-value of 37.842 with a p-value of 0.000. Testing the hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that challenges affecting citizenship education have no significant influence on civic engagement in Upper Basic schools in Edo State is rejected. This result implies that challenges affecting citizenship education significantly influence civic engagement among Upper Basic school students in Edo State. The R-square value of 0.133 indicates that 13.3% of the variance in civic engagement is explained by challenges affecting citizenship education, while the remaining 86.7% may be attributed to other variables not included in the model. Furthermore, the unstandardized coefficient (B) for challenges is -0.436, indicating that a unit increase in challenges affecting citizenship education would lead to a 0.436 decrease in civic engagement. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of -0.365 with $t = -6.153$ indicates a moderate negative influence. Therefore, challenges affecting citizenship education significantly influence civic engagement among Social Studies students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State at the 0.05 level of significance.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that students' perception towards citizenship education has a significant influence on civic engagement among Social Studies students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State. This implies that students who hold positive perceptions about citizenship education are more likely to actively participate in civic activities and demonstrate responsible citizenship behaviours. The finding is in agreement with Saleh, Komalasari, and Sapriya (2022), who reported that students' positive perceptions of citizenship education enhance their motivation to learn and translate into active civic engagement within their communities. Similarly, Aydin and Andrews (2024) found that students' perception of citizenship education significantly shapes their understanding of civic responsibilities and influences their level of participation in civic-related activities. This

finding is further supported by Schulz et al. (2025), who emphasized that students' perceptions of civic education are closely linked to their civic knowledge, attitudes, and engagement in societal issues. However, this finding contrasts with Thelma (2024), who argued that while perception is important, structural inequalities and external socio-political factors may also significantly shape civic engagement outcomes beyond students' individual views.

The study also found that students' attitude towards citizenship education has a significant influence on civic engagement among Upper Basic school students in Edo State. This indicates that students with positive attitudes towards citizenship education are more likely to participate actively in civic and community-based activities. The finding aligns with Jerome, Hyder, Hilal, and Kisby (2024), who observed that positive attitudes towards citizenship issues are strong predictors of active citizenship and civic participation. In the same vein, Tarman and Kilinc (2023) reported that students with favourable attitudes toward civic-related subjects demonstrate higher levels of civic engagement and global participation. Furthermore, Otache, Alfa, and Ali (2023) noted that civic education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' attitudes, which in turn influence their willingness to engage in civic responsibilities and democratic processes. On the contrary, Okorji and Agu (2024) argued that students' attitudes towards civic education may be influenced by external factors such as teaching methods, societal values, and political environment, which may limit the direct impact of attitude on civic engagement.

Finally, the study revealed that challenges affecting citizenship education have a significant negative influence on civic engagement among Social Studies students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State. This implies that the presence of challenges such as inadequate instructional materials, poor teaching methods, and ineffective curriculum implementation reduces students' level of civic engagement. This finding is consistent with Muhammad (2024), who reported that poor implementation of the Social Studies curriculum leads to inadequate acquisition of civic knowledge and attitudes, thereby limiting students' civic participation. Similarly, Mufalo, Muleya, and Simui (2022) found that challenges in the teaching of civic education negatively affect both teachers and learners, ultimately reducing the effectiveness of citizenship education in promoting civic engagement. In addition, Olayinka et al. (2024) observed that limited civic knowledge and skills among students contribute to low levels of civic engagement. However, this finding differs from Allaste, Beilmann, and Pirk (2022), who suggested that non-formal and informal learning environments can sometimes compensate for deficiencies in formal citizenship education and still promote civic participation among young people.

Conclusion

The study examined the influence of citizenship education on civic engagement among Social Studies students in Upper Basic schools in Edo State. The findings revealed that students' perception towards citizenship education has a significant positive influence on civic engagement. This implies that when students develop favourable perceptions of citizenship education, they are more likely to participate actively in civic duties and community-related activities. The study further established that students' attitude towards citizenship education significantly influences civic engagement, indicating that positive

attitudes strengthen students' willingness to engage in democratic and civic responsibilities. In addition, the findings showed that challenges affecting citizenship education have a significant negative influence on civic engagement, meaning that the presence of instructional, curricular, and implementation challenges reduces students' participation in civic life. Furthermore, the study concludes that citizenship education is a strong predictor of civic engagement among Upper Basic school students in Edo State, and its effectiveness is shaped by students' perceptions, attitudes, and the extent of challenges within the teaching and learning environment. Strengthening citizenship education delivery in schools is therefore essential for improving civic participation and responsible citizenship among learners.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Social Studies teachers should deliberately adopt instructional approaches that improve students' perception of citizenship education, such as participatory learning, real-life civic examples, and classroom discussions that connect lessons to community issues.
2. School administrators and teachers should work together to cultivate positive student attitudes towards citizenship education by making lessons more engaging, practical, and relevant to students' everyday experiences.
3. Government and educational stakeholders should provide adequate instructional materials and teaching resources to reduce the challenges affecting citizenship education and improve effective curriculum delivery.

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