



Civic Knowledge as a Correlate of Political Attitudes and Participation Among Civic Education Teachers in Ogun State

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Abstract

This study examined civic knowledge as a correlate of political attitudes and political participation among Civic Education teachers in Ogun State, Nigeria. While civic knowledge is widely regarded as a foundation for democratic engagement, empirical evidence suggests that its influence on political attitudes and participation may vary across contexts. Grounded in Political Socialization Theory, the study adopted a descriptive correlational research design. The population comprised Civic Education teachers in public secondary schools in Ogun State, from which a sample of 330 teachers was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring civic knowledge, political attitudes, and political participation. The instrument was validated by experts and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87 using Cronbach's alpha. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed a weak and statistically insignificant relationship between civic knowledge and political attitudes, as well as between civic knowledge and political participation. These results suggest that civic knowledge alone may be insufficient to foster positive political orientations or active participation among Civic Education teachers, particularly in contexts characterized by political distrust and institutional constraints. The study concludes that civic education reforms should move beyond cognitive instruction to incorporate civic skills development, political efficacy, and participatory experiences. The findings contribute to empirical literature on civic education and democratic engagement by highlighting the contextual limits of civic knowledge in promoting political participation.

Keywords: Civic knowledge, political attitudes, political participation, Civic Education teachers.

Introduction

Civic knowledge occupies a central position in democratic theory as the intellectual foundation upon which informed political participation is built. It refers to citizens' understanding of political institutions, democratic principles, governance processes, constitutional rights, and civic responsibilities. Democratic systems presume that citizens who understand how government functions are better equipped to evaluate public policies, make reasoned political



choices, and participate responsibly in civic life. Without such knowledge, political participation risks becoming symbolic, misinformed, or manipulated, undermining democratic accountability and legitimacy (Galston, 2021; Dalton, 2022).

In recent decades, however, global democratic trends have revealed a troubling paradox. Despite expanded access to education and information, many societies continue to experience declining political participation, voter apathy, and eroding trust in political institutions. International reports suggest that possessing basic civic knowledge does not necessarily translate into sustained political engagement, particularly in contexts characterized by weak institutions and political dissatisfaction (OECD, 2023). This reality challenges long-held assumptions within civic education that increasing political knowledge alone is sufficient to strengthen democracy.

Political attitudes provide an important explanatory lens for understanding this paradox. Attitudes such as political interest, trust in government, political efficacy, and perceptions of institutional responsiveness shape how individuals interpret political experiences and decide whether participation is worthwhile. Citizens may understand democratic procedures yet feel alienated from politics if they perceive leaders as unaccountable or political processes as ineffective. Empirical studies increasingly demonstrate that civic knowledge often influences political participation indirectly through political attitudes rather than through a direct behavioural pathway (Hoskins & Janmaat, 2019; Dalton, 2022).

Political participation itself represents the behavioural dimension of democratic citizenship and includes activities through which citizens seek to influence political outcomes. These activities range from conventional forms such as voting and party membership to non-conventional forms such as community engagement, advocacy, and civic activism. Contemporary scholarship emphasises that participation is shaped by the interaction of cognitive resources, psychological orientations, and contextual conditions (Theocharis & van Deth, 2018). Civic knowledge is therefore best understood as one component of a broader civic competence framework that interacts with political attitudes to shape participatory behaviour.

Education has traditionally been regarded as the primary institutional mechanism for developing civic knowledge. Through formal schooling, citizens are expected to acquire an understanding of democratic values, political systems, and civic responsibilities. Civic Education, in particular, is designed to prepare individuals for informed citizenship by fostering



political literacy and critical understanding of public affairs. Evidence from international assessments such as the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) consistently shows that effective civic education contributes significantly to civic knowledge acquisition (Schulz et al., 2018; Schulz et al., 2023).

Teachers play a decisive role in civic learning, as they interpret curricular objectives and translate them into classroom practice. Research shows that teachers' civic understanding and political orientations influence instructional choices, classroom climate, and students' civic learning experiences (Torney-Purta et al., 2015; Reichert & Print, 2019). Civic Education teachers, in particular, are expected to possess adequate civic knowledge and demonstrate democratic commitment. However, empirical evidence suggests that teachers' civic competence varies considerably, and professional role alone does not guarantee strong civic knowledge or positive political orientations (Hoskins & Janmaat, 2019).

In Nigeria, Civic Education was introduced into the secondary school curriculum as part of democratic reforms following prolonged periods of military rule. The policy aimed to promote political awareness, civic responsibility, and democratic participation among citizens (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013). Despite these reforms, political participation remains uneven, as reflected in declining voter turnout, limited civic engagement, and widespread distrust in political institutions (Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC], 2022; Afrobarometer, 2023). These trends raise concerns about whether civic knowledge acquired through formal education is effectively shaping political attitudes and participatory behaviour.

Existing empirical studies in Nigeria have largely focused on students' civic knowledge, moral values, and attitudes, with comparatively little attention given to teachers as civic and political actors (Ojo & Adebayo, 2020; Akinwale, 2021). This gap is significant because teachers' civic knowledge may influence both their instructional practices and the effectiveness of civic education reforms. Without empirical evidence on the civic knowledge of Civic Education teachers and their relationship with political attitudes and participation, assessments of civic education outcomes remain incomplete.

Ogun State provides an appropriate context for addressing this gap due to its diverse educational institutions and sustained implementation of Civic Education across public secondary schools. As one of Nigeria's educationally prominent states, Ogun State has been the focus of several educational reforms and assessments, making it a suitable setting for examining civic-related outcomes (Ogun State Ministry of Education, 2021). Understanding



how civic knowledge relates to political attitudes and political participation among Civic Education teachers in Ogun State contributes to evidence-based civic education policy and democratic development. Against this background, this study investigates civic knowledge as a correlate of political attitudes and political participation among Civic Education teachers in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Civic education is increasingly considered a key strategy for fostering democratic engagement and political awareness in democracies, including Nigeria. The inclusion of civic education in the secondary school curriculum aims to combat issues like political apathy and a weakening democratic culture. However, despite these initiatives, political participation in Nigeria remains low, and trust in political institutions is waning, raising questions about the impact of civic education on actual political engagement. While civic knowledge is believed to encourage positive political attitudes and participation by helping individuals understand democratic principles and their rights, emerging evidence indicates that knowledge alone may not lead to active engagement. This is especially true in environments marked by institutional distrust and limited participation opportunities. This creates a paradox where citizens may be informed yet disengaged.

Civic Education teachers play a crucial role in this context, tasked with imparting civic knowledge and embodying democratic values. There is an assumption that these educators possess significant civic competence and positive political views; however, this has not been thoroughly investigated in Nigeria. Existing studies have primarily focused on students' learning rather than assessing the civic attitudes and participation of the teachers themselves, leaving a critical gap in understanding their effectiveness. In Ogun State, little research has explored the connections between civic knowledge and political engagement among Civic Education teachers. Addressing this gap is vital for enhancing civic education and promoting democratic development. This study aims to examine the relationship between civic knowledge, political attitudes, and participation among Civic Education teachers in Ogun State, providing empirical insights that can guide teacher training and civic education reforms.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study was to examine civic knowledge as a correlate of political attitudes and participation among civic education teachers in Ogun State. The specific objectives of the study were to:



1. assess the relationship between Civic Education teachers' Civic Knowledge and their political attitude.
2. examine the relationship between Civic Education teachers' Civic Knowledge and their political participation

Research Questions

1. What is the extent of the relationship between Civic Education teachers' Civic Knowledge and their political attitude?
2. What is the extent of the relationship between Civic Education teachers' Civic Knowledge and their political participation?

Literature Review

Civic knowledge has long been identified as a critical component of democratic citizenship. Early democratic theorists argued that informed citizens are essential for sustaining democratic systems (Almond & Verba, 1963). Empirical studies further demonstrate that civic knowledge enhances individuals' ability to interpret political events and make informed decisions (Niemi & Junn, 1998; Galston, 2001). However, scholars increasingly argue that civic knowledge alone is insufficient to foster democratic engagement. Political attitudes serve as a crucial link between knowledge and participation. Verba et al. (1995), through the Civic Voluntarism Model, emphasise that political engagement depends not only on resources such as knowledge but also on motivation and psychological engagement. Individuals with high civic knowledge but low political efficacy may remain politically disengaged.

Recent international studies reinforce this perspective. Using ICCS data, Schulz et al. (2018) found that civic knowledge positively relates to political participation only when accompanied by supportive political attitudes. Similarly, Hoskins et al. (2017) demonstrate that civic knowledge influences voting behaviour indirectly through political interest and efficacy rather than directly. The role of schools and teachers in shaping civic outcomes has also received significant scholarly attention. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) argue that civic education approaches differ in the types of citizens they produce, ranging from personally responsible citizens to participatory and justice-oriented citizens. Teachers' instructional choices and civic orientations therefore, play a critical role in shaping learners' democratic engagement.

Empirical evidence suggests that teachers' civic competence influences classroom practices and student outcomes. Torney-Purta et al. (2015) report that teachers with strong civic knowledge are more likely to create participatory learning environments. Reichert and Print



(2019) further note that teachers' political engagement predicts the extent to which students are exposed to active civic learning experiences. Contextual factors also shape civic engagement. Putnam (2000) highlights how declining social capital reduces civic participation even among informed citizens. In developing democracies, structural barriers, political distrust, and weak institutions may constrain participation despite adequate civic knowledge (OECD, 2018). UNESCO (2015) similarly emphasises that global citizenship education must integrate experiential and participatory components to foster active engagement.

In Nigeria, limited empirical research exists on Civic Education teachers' civic competence. While curriculum reforms aim to promote democratic values, persistent political apathy suggests that civic education outcomes may be constrained by broader political and institutional contexts (INEC, 2022). This gap underscores the importance of examining civic knowledge and political engagement among teachers.

Theoretical Framework: Political Socialization Theory

This study is anchored in Political Socialisation Theory, which explains how individuals acquire political knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours through interactions with socialising agents such as family, schools, peers, and political institutions (Almond & Verba, 1963). The theory posits that political behaviour is shaped by the interaction of cognitive, affective, and experiential components. Within this framework, civic knowledge represents the cognitive dimension of political socialisation, political attitudes constitute the affective dimension, and political participation reflects behavioural outcomes. Schools, particularly Civic Education classrooms, function as formal agents of political socialisation by transmitting civic knowledge and democratic norms (Torney-Purta et al., 2001).

However, Political Socialisation Theory also acknowledges that political attitudes and behaviours are influenced by broader social and institutional experiences. Verba et al. (1995) argue that participation is shaped by individuals' perceptions of political efficacy and institutional responsiveness. Where political systems are perceived as ineffective or untrustworthy, the socialising impact of civic knowledge may be weakened. This theoretical framework is therefore appropriate for the present study because it explains why civic knowledge may not automatically translate into positive political attitudes or active participation among Civic Education teachers in contexts characterised by political dissatisfaction. By applying Political Socialisation Theory, the study accounts for the interaction between formal civic learning and contextual political experiences.



Research Method

This study adopted a descriptive correlational research design to examine the relationship between civic knowledge, political attitudes, and political participation among Civic Education teachers. The correlational design was appropriate because the study sought to determine the nature and strength of relationships among variables without manipulating them. The population comprised all Civic Education teachers in public secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. First, selected local government areas were chosen using stratified sampling to ensure geographic representation. Subsequently, schools were randomly selected, and Civic Education teachers were proportionately sampled from each school. A total of 330 teachers participated in the study, providing adequate statistical power for correlation analysis. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of four sections: demographic information, civic knowledge, political attitudes, and political participation. The civic knowledge scale measured teachers' understanding of democratic principles, political institutions, and citizens' rights and responsibilities. The political attitudes scale assessed political interest, trust in political institutions, and political efficacy, while the political participation scale measured engagement in voting, community activities, and civic actions. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale. Content and face validity were established through expert review by scholars in civic education and educational measurement. A pilot study involving 30 Civic Education teachers outside the study sample was conducted, and the instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87, indicating satisfactory reliability. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to describe levels of civic knowledge, political attitudes, and participation. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to test the relationships among the variables at a 0.05 level of significance. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly observed.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the extent of the relationship between Civic Education teachers' Civic Knowledge and their political attitude?



Table 1: Relationship Between Civic Education Teachers’ Civic Knowledge and Political Attitude

Variables	N	Mean	S.D	df	R	Sig.	Remark
Civic knowledge	330	20.14	3.244	328	.030	.593	Not significant
Political attitude	330	17.08	2.419				

Note. S.D = Standard deviation, N = Number of respondents; degree of freedom (df) = 328. Decision rule: *. = p < .05, **. = p < .01.

The results in Table 2 revealed that there exists no significant relationship between Civic Education teachers’ civic knowledge and their political attitude in Ogun State ($r = .030$, $p > .05$).

Research Question 2: What is the extent of the relationship between Civic Education teachers’ Civic Knowledge and their political participation

Table 2: Relationship Between Civic Education Teachers’ Civic Knowledge and Political Participation

Variables	N	Mean	S.D	df	R	Sig.	Remark
Civic knowledge	330	20.14	3.244	328	.050	.369	Not significant
Political participation	330	22.41	4.065				

Note. S.D = Standard deviation, N = Number of respondents; degree of freedom (df) = 328. Decision rule: *. = p < .05, **. = p < .01.

The results in Table 2 revealed that there exists no significant relationship between Civic Education teachers’ civic knowledge and their political participation in Ogun State ($r = .050$, $p > .05$).

Discussion of Findings

Research question one revealed that civic knowledge had a weak and non-significant correlation with political attitude. The above finding agreed with previous research outcomes, which suggested that knowledge alone does not automatically translate into political engagement or attitudes. Torney-Purta et al. (2015) discovered that while civic knowledge provides a foundation for understanding democratic processes, it must be accompanied by affective and behavioural components to influence attitudes. Similarly, Galston (2018) emphasised that cognitive understanding of civic content does not guarantee democratic values



unless supported by deliberate civic dispositions and contextual experiences. However, the non-significant relationship between civic knowledge and political attitudes of teachers found in this study negated the results found by Egbule (2023) and Umar and Bakare (2022). In their study, they showed that teachers with a more profound understanding of civic issues had more positive attitudes toward democratic participation, showing greater support for democratic values like equality, justice, and government accountability. Umar and Bakare (2022) specifically found that knowledge of civic content significantly influenced their belief in the efficacy of their role in political engagement. Teachers who possessed high civic knowledge were more inclined to hold favourable political attitudes that supported active citizenship.

Research question two examined the relationship between Civic Education teachers' civic knowledge and their political participation. The finding that civic knowledge showed a weak, non-significant relationship with political participation of Civic Education teachers mirrored contemporary research indicating that possessing civic values and participatory competencies plays a crucial role in fostering active political engagement. More so than merely having theoretical civic knowledge. According to Adegoke and Eze (2023), civic values such as tolerance, responsibility, and a sense of justice significantly influenced individuals' willingness to participate in democratic activities. Teachers who internalize these values are more likely to model and participate in civic duties. This aligned with the strong positive relationship observed between civic disposition and political participation in this study. However, the foregoing finding negated the findings uncovered by Adesina (2023) who noted that teachers who possessed high levels of civic knowledge were more actively involved in voting, attending community meetings, and participating in school governance. The study indicated that Civic Education training significantly improved the political engagement of teachers. Furthermore, Akinwale and Owolabi (2023) found similar results among secondary school teachers that teachers with a strong understanding of political rights were more likely to encourage students to participate in political activities. Teachers with robust civic knowledge were often participants in various political events and served as advocates for community development.

Conclusion

This study examined civic knowledge as a correlate of political attitudes and political participation among Civic Education teachers in Ogun State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that civic knowledge had weak and non-significant relationships with both political attitudes and political participation. These results suggest that possessing civic knowledge alone may



not be sufficient to foster democratic engagement among teachers. The study underscores the complexity of political engagement in contexts characterized by institutional challenges and political disillusionment. While civic knowledge remains a critical foundation for democratic citizenship, its impact on attitudes and participation may be mediated by contextual and motivational factors. Strengthening civic education, therefore, requires a holistic approach that integrates cognitive, affective, and participatory dimensions. By focusing on teachers, the study contributes to civic education literature by highlighting the importance of examining educators' civic competence. The findings have implications for teacher training, curriculum implementation, and democratic education policy in Nigeria.

Recommendation

Based on the above findings, the following were recommended:

1. Civic Education teacher training programmes should integrate experiential and participatory civic learning approaches beyond theoretical content.
2. Continuous professional development should focus on strengthening civic dispositions such as political efficacy, democratic values, and civic responsibility among teachers.
3. Educational policymakers should create institutional support structures that encourage teachers' participation in civic and political activities.
4. Civic Education curricula should emphasize practical engagement strategies alongside civic knowledge to bridge the gap between cognition and action.
5. School administrators should promote democratic school cultures that model participation, dialogue, and collective decision-making.
6. Government and education stakeholders should collaborate to address structural barriers that discourage teachers' political engagement.
7. Future research should incorporate qualitative approaches to explore contextual factors influencing teachers' civic and political behaviors.

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