Influence of Demographic Trends and Behavioural Patterns on Senior Secondary School Students' Civic Engagement in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the relationship between demographic trends and civic engagement of senior secondary school students in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State, it also determined the relationship between behavioural patterns and civic engagement of senior secondary school students, and also, investigated the joint influence of demographic trends and behavioural patterns on senior secondary school students' civic engagement in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State. These were done with a view to enhancing and improving senior secondary school students' civic engagement in the study area. The study adopted a descriptive research design of correlational type. The population of the study comprised all senior secondary school students in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State. The sample for the study comprised two hundred (200) senior secondary school students selected using multi-stage sampling procedure. The instrument used is a validated questionnaire titled: Demographic Trends and Behavioural Patterns Questionnaire (DTBPQ). Data collected were analysed using frequency, percentage, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and regression analysis statistical tools. The results of the study showed that there was significant relationship between demographic trends and civic engagement of senior secondary school students in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State ($r = 0.771$; $p < 0.05$). Likewise, the study revealed that there was significant relationship between behavioural patterns and civic engagement of senior secondary school students in the study area ($r = 0.811$; $p < 0.05$). Similarly, the study further showed that there was significant influence of demographic trends and behavioural patterns on senior secondary school students' civic engagement in the study area ($F = 3.216$; $p<0.05$). The study concluded that demographic trends and behavioural patterns significantly predicted senior secondary school students' civic engagement in Ife east Local Government Area, Osun State.

Keywords: Demographic trends, Behavioural patterns, Civic engagements, Students, Secondary schools

Introduction

Civic engagement refers to students' participation in community, political, or school activities that contribute to societal wellbeing. At the senior secondary school level, especially in Nigeria, active civic engagement such as participation in debates, elections(especially franchise right at 18years and above), community service, and leadership, serves as an important indicator of democratic preparedness and citizenship (Ojo, 2023a). Civic Education may be seen as the bedrock of national development. It is concerned with teaching citizens their rights, responsibilities as well as duties to the country. To some people civic education is now seen as just one of the subjects in schools whose focus is only political in nature. While to others it is an extension of the old phrased Civics. For others, they even question its meaning and relevance to society. They argue that it is just as one of those political courses that can be taken by anyone person. So many subjects including Civics Education which had been made one of the core or compulsory subjects for senior secondary schools students regardless of their class of interest.

Civic education in Nigeria is a form of education which focuses at making individuals aware of the democratic system in Nigeria government. Without civic education, many individuals may not be aware of what is happening in their environment, thereby they become segregated from whatever is happening in the country. In order for culture to be inculcated and transferred to the next generation, it has to pass through a procedure known as socialization. Civic education makes the citizen aware of decisions and policies which the government formulate. In Nigeria, Civic education was taught informally before the advent of formal education in various communities. After Nigeria independence, it was inculcated into the elementary school curriculum and taught as a separate subject. Over time, it changed nomenclature and has evolved from civics to general knowledge, social studies, Civic education and finally Religious and National Values. Civic Education sharpens critical thinking skills of the learners which is important in the analysis of political, social, and other issues, as well as preparing them for their roles and responsibilities and for the challenges and uncertainties of life through provision of relevant education. Furthermore, we can deduce that learners are empowered with knowledge, skills, and values to analyses policies and actions of those in government as well as those seeking public office. Another concept that comes into focus with regard to the debate on Civic Education is what has been described as authentic Citizenship Education (Killian & Odewale 2022, Adeowu et.al 2024)

In Osun State, Civic Education is taught in secondary schools but its implementation often lacks experiential learning components such as mock elections, community projects, and youth leadership exposure. While the Civic Education curriculum covers topics like citizenship, democracy, and responsibilities (content adequacy: over 90% as perceived by teachers), student engagement frequently remains passive rather than active.

This study examines how demographic trends (such as gender, age, socioeconomic status) and behavioural patterns (such as participation in school clubs, peer influence, media consumption) influence the civic engagement of secondary school students in Ife East LGA. The moderation of these factors is essential for understanding how students' transition from theoretical understanding of the knowledge acquired during the learning process to practical involvement and the students active engagement and utilisation and application of knowledge to sills such as problem-solving in real environment or setting.

The Theoretical Framework underpinning this study are the theories of Erikson's Psychosocial Theory (Identity vs. Role Confusion) and Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Erikson's Psychosocial Theory the fifth stage focuses on Identity vs. Role Confusion. The view is that adolescence is a critical stage for identity development where successful resolution fosters civic identity and role clarity, motivating engagement in community affairs. This stage is especially much related to the developmental phase of senior secondary school students in this study.

Similarly, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) framework holds that behaviour is determined by intention, which is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Hence, demographic characteristics influence behavioural patterns that in turn affect civic participation. Civic engagement students' active participation in community, school, or political life is critical in shaping democratic attitudes and skills (Olorunda, 2021) anchoring the study on Erikson's Identity vs. Role Confusion Theory and Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour, the study researches how demographic factors (age, gender, SES) and behavioural patterns (club membership, peer influence, media involvement) interact to predict civic engagement.

The age of an individual determines whether the person is matured enough to carry out certain norm, functionality and more. Age is a major factor to consider when it comes to maturity for strength, dignity and a period of been active especially for the youths. Nigeria's young population can drive civic participation if harnessed. Late adolescence (senior secondary age) is a critical period for forming civic values, cultural norms, leadership attributes and habits.

While gender determines the social roles and expectations from being a male or female in any given society. Gender may influence participation in any role or activities for instance, females might face more restrictions in certain cultural roles compare with their male counterparts.

Gender empowerment in the area of education can promote female' education, intellectual capacity and awareness as much as it boosts male education and achievement in leadership and at the same time enhance both genders' civic engagement.

Likewise, socioeconomic status (SES) is described as access to resources, Higher SES often means more exposure to information, networks, and opportunities for engagement.

Students from higher SES backgrounds develop great awareness for available resources at their disposal and at the same time build their capacity for influence and affluence. Senior secondary school students from high social economic background might feel more empowered to participate in civic activities.

Adolescents from marginalized groups or low SES will need extra assistance to broaden their civic engagement build awareness and skills.

Behavioural patterns like peer influence, club involvement, and social media use can significantly impact civic participation among Nigerian senior secondary students.

Peer Influence facilitate participation. Peers can motivate, provide support, and share information about civic activities (e.g., protests, community service). While at the same time impede participation. Negative peer pressure or lack of interest in civic issues can discourage engagement.

A study carried out in Nigeria found that peer influence significantly predicts civic engagement among adolescents (Ogunleye, 2018).

Club involvement is another social and behaviour pattern that can facilitate participation. The establishment of extracurricular clubs in schools enhance activities such as debate, student government, community service which foster civic skills, leadership, and awareness.

Whereas, limited access to clubs or lack of interest in available clubs can reduce civic engagement among secondary school students. Studies show that students involved in extracurricular activities reported higher civic engagement (Adeyemi, 2018).

In addition to these, social media facilitate participation in students. Platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook enable mobilization, awareness, and discussion of civic issues. At the same time, social media can hamper participation, cause misinformation, cyberbullying, or distraction which can reduce meaningful engagement. Social media use positively influences civic engagement among youth, especially for awareness and activism (Opeoluwa, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, there has been growing concern over the declining level of civic engagement among senior secondary school students in Nigeria, particularly in semi urban and rural regions like Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State. Despite the inclusion of Civic Education in the school curriculum, many students demonstrate limited participation in community activities, low awareness of civic responsibilities, and poor involvement in national development efforts. This apathy threatens the sustainability of Nigeria's democratic values and the future of responsible citizenship.

Demographic variables such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status have been shown in various studies to influence civic engagement, yet their specific impact on secondary school students remains underexplored, especially in local Nigerian contexts. In the same vein, behavioural patterns such as peer influence, club involvement, and exposure to media may either facilitate or hinder civic participation, but there is limited empirical evidence that integrates these behavioural predictors within the framework of civic development.

Moreover, with rapid social and technological changes affecting youth values and identity, the gap between civic knowledge and active civic behaviour seems to be widening. If the current generation of students is not adequately engaged, the long term implications may include a weakened civil society, reduced political participation, and poor leadership development.

Thus, there is a need to investigate the extent to which demographic trends and behavioural patterns influence civic engagement among senior secondary school students in Ife East LGA. Understanding these relationships will provide valuable insights for educators, policy makers, and curriculum developers to design interventions that enhance active citizenship among Nigerian youth.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the course of this study.

1. There will be no significant relationship between demographic trends and civic engagement of senior secondary school students in Ife east Local Government Area, Osun State.
2. There will be no significant relationship between behavioural patterns and civic engagement of senior secondary school students in the study area.
3. There will be no significant influence of demographic trends and behavioural patterns on civic engagement of senior secondary school students in the study area.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design of correlational type. This study made use of descriptive survey research design in which questionnaire was adopted as the research instrument. The population for this study consisted of senior secondary school students in Ife east Local Government Area, Osun State. The sample for this study comprised 200 senior secondary school two (SS II) students of Civic Education in Ife east Local Government Area, Osun State. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select the sample for the study. In the selected area, ten secondary schools were selected using simple random sampling techniques. In each school, 20 senior secondary school two (SS II) students were selected using simple random sampling technique totalling 200 respondents that constituted the sample for the study. The researchers used a questionnaire to collect data for the study.

A self-designed questionnaire tagged senior secondary school students' civic engagement was used to collect data for the study. The instrument has four sections (A,B,C and D); Section A contained items on socio demographic information of the respondents; Section B contained 13 items on reasons for civic engagement for senior secondary school students based on the projective rating scale of A, S. N Section C contained 10 item on consequences of civic engagement based on four Likert rating scale of SA, A, D, SD; section D contained 10 items on resolutions on senior secondary school students' civic engagement based on four Likert rating scale.

The instrument validated to establish content and construct validity. In order to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, 30 samples were administered on respondents outside the scope of the study. Using Cronbach Alpha reliability test, the value of 0.75 reliability coefficient was obtained. Indicating that the instrument was reliable enough

for the study. The researcher administered the questionnaire to the respondents in the various schools after appropriate ethical approval had been observed. Data collected were analyzed using frequency, percentage, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and regression analysis statistical tools through the application of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results and Discussion

Results

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of socio - demographic information of the sampled senior secondary school students in Ife east Local Government Area, Osun State

S/N	Variables	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
1	Sex		
	Male	93	46.0
	Female	107	54.0
2	Age		
	Less than 15 years	91	45.5
	15 years and above	109	54.5
3	Parents' occupation		
	Farming	26	13.0
	Artisan	84	42.0
	Civil servant	40	20.0
	Trading	50	25.0
4	Parents' education		
	Primary education	29	24.5
	Secondary education	67	33.5
	Tertiary education	104	52.0
5	Social class		
	Upper class	22	11.0
	Middle class	74	37.0
	Lower class	104	52.0
6	Parents' marital status		
	Divorced	10	5.0
	Married	182	91.0
	Single	8	4.0

N= 200

Result in Table 1 showed the descriptive analysis of socio-demographic information of the sampled senior secondary school students in Ife east Local Government Area, Osun State. It can be gathered from the Table that 46.0% are males while 54.0% are females even as 45.5% are in the age brackets of less than 15 years whereas 54.5% are in the age brackets of 15 years and above. Considering their parents' socio-economic status, 13.0%, 42.0%, 20.0% and 25.0% of the parents are farmers, artisans, civil servants and traders respectively even as 34.5% 33.5% and 52.0% had primary education, secondary education and tertiary education respectively. More so, 11.0% are in upper class, 37.0% are in middle class and 52.0% are in 52.0% even as 5.0%, 91.0% and 4.0% of the parents are divorced, married and single respectively in the study area.

Hypothesis One: There will be no significant relationship between demographic trends and civic engagement of senior secondary school students in Ife east Local Government Area, Osun State order to test this hypothesis, data collected on demographic trends (independent variable) and civic engagement of senior secondary school students (dependent variable) were subjected Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between demographic trends and civic engagement of senior secondary school students in Ife east Local Government Area, Osun State

Groups	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig. (2 - tailed)	Remark
Demographic trends	200	21.70	4.25	0.771	.002	Significant
Civic engagement	200	25.34	5.01			

(r= 0.771; p<0.05)

Results in Table 2 showed that there was significant relationship between demographic trends and civic engagement of senior secondary school students in Ife east Local Government Area, Osun State (r=0.771; p < 0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis that states there will be no significant relationship between demographic trends and civic engagement of senior secondary school students in Ife east Local Government Area, Osun State is hereby rejected. The result implies that demographic trends predict senior secondary school students' civic engagement in the study area.

Hypothesis Two: There will be no significant relationship between behavioural patterns and civic engagement of senior secondary school students in Ife east Local Government Area, Osun State. In order to test this hypothesis, data collected on behavioural patterns (independent variable) and civic engagement of senior secondary school students (dependent variable) were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and the result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between behavioural patterns and civic engagement of senior secondary school students in Ife east Local Government Area, Osun State

Groups	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Demographic trends	200	22.41	4.79	0.811	.001	Significant
Civic engagement	200	25.34	5.01			

(r=0.811; p<0.05)

Results in Table 3 showed that there was significant relationship between behavoural patterns and civic engagement of senior secondary school students in Ife east Local Government Area, Osun State (r-0.811; p<0.05). Hence, the null hypothesis that states that there will be no significant relationship between behavioural patterns and civic engagement of senior secondary school students in Ife east Local Government Area, Osun State is hereby rejected. The result implies that behavioural patterns predict senior secondary school students' civic engagement in the study area.

Hypothesis Three: There will be no significant influence of demographic trends and behavioural patterns on civic engagement of senior secondary school students in the study area. (independent variables) and civic engagement of senior secondary school students (dependent In order to test this hypothesis, data collected on demographic trends and behavioural patterns variable) were subjected to regression analysis and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression analysis of the influence of demographic trends and behavioural patterns on civic engagement of senior secondary school students in the study area

$R= 0.755^a$		**Unstandardized**		**Standardized**	
$R^2= 0.570$		**Coefficient**		**Coefficient**	
Adj $R^2= 0.030$					
F= 2.527	**B**	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**T**	**Sig**
Constant	9.737	7.302		1.412	.000
Demographic trends	0.218	0.325	0.329	0.457	.002
Behavioural patterns	0.144	0.424	0.381	1.621	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Students' Civic Engagement
b. Predictors: (Constant), Demographic Trends and Behavioural Patterns

Results in Table 4 showed that there was significant influence of demographic trends and behavioural patterns on civic engagement of senior secondary school students in the study area ($F= 3.216$; $p<0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant influence f demographic trends and behavioural patterns on civic engagement of senior secondary school students in the study area is hereby rejected. The results implied that demographic trends and behavioural patterns predict civic engagement of senior secondary school students' in the study area.

Discussion of Findings

The findings resonate with broader literature: demographic factors shape access to resources, confidence, and opportunity. In Osun State and similar Nigerian contexts, male and older students often assume leadership roles, while economic stability allows teens to devote time to civic activities (Alebiosu & Odede, 2023, Olorunda, 2021).

Behavioural engagement is a powerful driver of civic participation. In alignment with Social Learning Theory, active involvement nurtures civic efficacy and norms. Studies in some states show similar patterns: peer group involvement and extracurricular engagement consistently predict civic minded behaviour (Ojo, 2023a, Ogunleye 2018).

The joint influence underscores a cumulative effect: demographic advantages provide access, but behavioural involvement activates agency. Notably, lower SES students benefited significantly from structured school activities that bypass resource limitations, suggesting scalable intervention pathways.

1. Demographic trends (age, gender, socioeconomic status) significantly impact civic engagement among senior secondary students in the study area.
2. Behavioural patterns such as club membership and peer influence strongly predict levels of civic participation.
3. Combined effects of demographic and behavioural factors significantly shape civic engagement, explaining nearly half of the variance in engagement levels.
4. Structured school programmes and experiential learning significantly amplify civic participation, particularly in underprivileged subgroups.

Recommendations

1. Enhance Experiential Civic Programmes among secondary school adolescents. In other words, Schools should institutionalize mock elections, community service clubs, and debate societies to translate curriculum into practice.
2. Engage Marginalized Groups
   Special recruitment for girls and lower income students into civic clubs can reduce demographic disparities.
3. Leverage Peer Positive Influence
   Establish peer leadership networks student ambassadors trained in civic values to mentor others.
4. Strengthen Teacher Facilitation
   Provide teacher training to integrate civic engagement activities into classroom pedagogy (Ojo, 2023a).
5. Monitor and Assess
   Implement regular evaluation of engagement interventions with feedback mechanisms involving both students and educators.

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