

# Citizenship Education and University Students' Participation in Management of Election in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined citizenship education and university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated for the study. The study used ex-post facto research design. The population of study was 42,821 three hundred level undergraduate students in six federal universities in Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 400 students from the six universities because they take citizenship education as a core course. The researcher-developed instrument titled "Citizenship Education and Participation in Management of Election Questionnaire". The questionnaire was face and content validated by experts in educational management and test and measurement. The criticism and suggestions of these experts were incorporated into the final draft before the copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents. Internal consistency reliability of the instrument using Cronbach alpha resulted in a coefficient of .78. Research questions were answered, using mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using independent t-test. Results of the hypotheses showed significant influence of honesty and moral values influenced university students in management of election. It was concluded that citizenship education significantly influenced university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria. Recommendations were made that university students should be seriously taught components of citizenship education such as honesty and moral values as these would equip them with qualities of truthfulness, responsibility, compassion, positive values and attitudes to contribute positively to the affairs of the country.

**Keywords:** Citizenship education, honesty, moral values, management of election

## INTRODUCTION

Political, electoral, religious, ethnic/tribal, cultism and other forms of electoral violence are dominant in the Nigerian society at varying degrees (Olawale, 2016). Political violence manifests in various forms in different regions of the Nigerian state. In the South-South, militancy is popular, in the South-West, political violence and thuggery is intrinsic, in Northern Nigeria, religious violence and extremist attacks is peculiar, while cultism ferocity and robbery attacks are common forms of violence in the South-East. Kirwin and Cho (2009) opined that political violence jeopardizes political stability, democratic reform, the prospects of economic development, and creates human suffering and in some cases may degenerate into civil war. Various reasons have been advanced as causing political violence. Some of these include financial inducement, election management bodies breach of trust, religious and ethnic sentiment and *lack of mentoring*. *Independent National Electoral Committee (INEC) (2011) identified causes of electoral violence to include* inadequate voter education; failure of the justice system; unemployment; corruption; lack of internal democracy in political parties; inadequate security; misinterpretation of politics; poverty; lack of democratic culture; lack of integrity from electoral umpires and so on.

Elections in Nigeria have taken many forms, from assassinations to armed clashes between gangs employed by rival politicians, political assassinations, bombings, and deadly clashes between rival gangs organized by politicians and parties (Ojo, 2007). Some of these activities include gangs attacking or intimidating voters;

thugs launch of attacks on polling stations; chasing off of voters and carting away of ballot boxes; ballot papers and ballot-box stuffing; subjection of local residents to abuses including armed robbery; extortion on the roads, rape, and murder. Some students are paid to attend rallies in support of their patron candidates, others routinely attend such events armed and prepared to fight. Others attend rallies prepared with machetes, clubs and AK-47s. Students may be mobilized and openly acknowledge that they were sponsored to rig elections. They spiral out of control and contribute to the spread of violence, insecurity, and human rights abuse across the country (Rietbergen, 2014). Political violence during elections has been significant in Nigerian polity. University students have been invariably used as perpetrators of violence targeting other youth. The ability of the political agents to mobilize students and use them as political threat against their opponents may be viewed as a demonstration of violence capacity.

Over the years, Nigeria has had several electoral management bodies including Election Commission of Nigeria (ECN, 1959-1963), Federal Electoral Commission (FEC, 1963-1966), Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO, 1979-1983), National Electoral Commission (NEC, 1986-1993), National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON, 1993-1998) and Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC, 1998-date). These have all faced challenges linked to the wider problems of Nigerian politics (Agbaje and Adejumobi, 2016). However, the electoral process in Nigeria is beset with challenges that not only impinge fundamentally on the capacity of the electoral management bodies to conduct credible elections but also undermine democracy in the country. The strength and staying power of Nigerian democracy is dependent on how much the citizens, including university students build a political culture of free and fair electoral contests. Credible elections are not possible without effective electoral management (Mozaffar and Schedler, 2002).

According to Momah (2016), election management deals with the responsibility of organizing general elections into the offices of the president, national assembly, governors and state houses of assembly which implies that election is a process and not an event that involves both rules and structures; involves the participation of the people in the act of electing their leaders and their participation in governance. Election encompasses activities before, during and after elections. It includes the legal and constitutional framework of elections; the registration of political parties; party campaigns; the activities of security agencies and the government in power. INEC (2011) deposes different phases of the electoral process as delimitation of electoral constituencies, registration of voters, notice of elections, nomination of candidates, election campaigns, elections, announcement of results and completing tribunal sittings, participation of other organizations and resolution of electoral conflicts from the participation and other organizations or groups.

Elections in Nigeria even under the present democratic dispensation which began in 1999 have been characterized by ineffective administration at all stages (before, during and after elections) resulting in damagingly discredited outcomes (Omotola, 2011). Myriads of challenges compound the conduct of credible elections. Some of these as outlined by Mgba (2017) include the nature of politics and political parties; political parties play significant role(s) in shaping electoral politics; they function typically to present the electorate with a choice of candidates and programmes from which to choose and help periodically in the determination of which parties or coalition of parties will govern. Most Nigerians hardly have confidence in the manner elections are managed, organized and conducted given the appalling and disappointing experiences of the country in her attempts to institutionalize democracy. INEC (2011) observed that there is widespread negative perception of INEC and its capacity to conduct elections; the challenge of material poverty of the majority of Nigerians. Poverty makes the electorate susceptible; it subverts and disembowels democracy and corrupts the electoral process through excessive monetization of politics (Bratton, 2008). The role of money in Nigerian politics is very significant as the negative impact of vote buying is widely recognized (Jega, 2012).

Bratton (2008) further argues that Nigerian politicians or their agents usually offer money for their votes and the incidence of vote buying is more prevalent among university students. In accepting money or bribe for

their votes, university students collude in commoditizing their democratic rights and reinforce their subordination, thus turning election into bondage; the challenge of communication and logistics leading to delays in transporting election officials and materials to the voting centres. This problem is more pronounced in coastal areas where the means of transportation is relatively more troublesome. The disturbing cases of late arrival of electoral officials and materials to election centres, with voters waiting almost indefinitely resulting to weariness and frustration among voters; one of the resultant effects of this is low voter turn-out or political apathy (INEC, 2011); the use and training of ad-hoc staff; reliance on the use of ad-hoc personnel who are usually briefed or trained for a few days about their duties remains a challenge to the electoral process (Omotola, 2011).

Most of the ad-hoc staff used in conducting elections are graduates of tertiary institutions, including universities. There is need for university students to be given the right training through citizenship education as this could equip them with the right values to effectively manage elections in Nigeria. Citizenship education provides the background knowledge, necessary to create an on-going stream of new citizens participating and engaging with the creation of a civilized society (McGuire, 2018). Good and very young citizens are naturally interested in politics which is concerned with the affairs of the country, its constitution, foreign relations, national issues and other important matters. Their views on politics are very superficial and immature but their keen interest is a positive gesture towards professional politics, hence, students should be given political training in politics in the schools and colleges to positively manage elections in Nigeria.

One can establish a causal relationship between the emerging role that students play in the management of elections and broader questions about social decomposition, economic crisis and political under-representation. Ojo (2007) maintains that if students are forbidden from politics and elections, the nation cannot produce good political leaders and this will lead to shortage of political leaders. No doubt, students will be misguided. To guard against this, the issue of citizenship education needs be boldly tackled and the need to develop the right type of political consciousness in undergraduates. They should be guided to participate in the management of elections even as *ad hoc* staff rather than dissuade them from it. They may be made able to face the political problems and challenges of the country through the knowledge acquired from citizenship lessons. Citizenship education instils honesty and moral values which may be important in the management of elections.

Honesty is taught in citizenship education classes, students learn, acquire and imbibe attributes that foster unity and curb violence. It would further expose students to the dangers inherent in violence. Some of these are telling lies which may eventually destroy one's credibility; individuals sometimes lie to cover up mistakes or an offence; individuals may lie to protect the feelings of others; individuals may lie out of fear; lying might be necessary or good in some situations.

Honesty, according to Ukegbu *et al.* (2016) is the quality of being truthful, sincere and straightforward in dealing with others. An honest person is highly principled and cannot be easily influenced. In honesty, one is concerned about what is honourable and virtuous. The teaching of honesty in Citizenship Studies classes helps to inculcate these attributes in students. They are taught to be principled and not be influenced into supporting any group during elections. When students imbibe the quality of truthfulness, sincerity and straightforwardness, they become independent in their thoughts, and not prone to deception by politicians. Honesty has several characteristics and attributes associated to it. Ukegbu *et al.* (2016) identified the attributes of honesty to include respect, law abiding, courage/boldness, truthfulness, integrity, reliability, impartiality, commitment and success.

Values are principles and ideals people hold and cherish as important and worthwhile and which have positive effects. Most decisions and actions are greatly influenced by cherished conducts. In a constitutional democracy, citizenship education is supposed to involve both preservation of core concepts and values of

loyalty, honesty, discipline, courage, hard work, patriotism, respect and dedication. Alexander (2012) defines values as moral principles and standards which point to what is good or bad. He added that the observance of the code of conducts of a society plays a vital role in keeping the society in peace and harmony. Non observance causes chaos, disorder and disunity. Effective citizenship education is the primary means for teaching and learning the moral democratic values that undergird the system of ordered liberty which provides majority rule with protection of minority rights. Morals taught foster students' positive values and attitudes at elections as it provides relevant learning experiences. Students bring their knowledge to bear during elections as they identify the values imbibed, analyze objectively and critically and make reasonable judgments in different issues they may encounter during elections and take proper actions to deal with the challenges.

Improper management of election is revealed in many ways such as intimidation of candidates and voters, physical harassment, assault on journalists, imprisonment and assassinations, confrontations with security forces and attacks on local party headquarters. This type of conduct is mostly triggered by the interaction of three principal agents which are political parties, elite groups and youth groups (mostly university students). Many societies in contemporary Africa come to terms with the fact that youth questions, if not fully addressed are a ticking time bomb ready to explode as young people see violence as a last resort to create their own spaces within the political arena (Alexander, 2012). Elections are concerned with the affairs of the country, its constitution and governance as Jega (2012) opined that good and very young citizens are naturally interested in these important affairs. Their views on elections are very important and their keen interest may post positive gesture towards management of elections, hence, undergraduates should be given political training in the schools and colleges to positively shape their morals. Ajere (2006) observed that Nigerian schools serve as literacy centres where emphasis is placed on certificate acquisition rather than ethics and morals like honesty, patriotism, loyalty, modesty and obedience.

One could establish a causal relationship between university students' management of elections and broader questions about social decomposition, economic crisis and political under-representation. If university students are forbidden from elections, the nation cannot produce good political leaders which will create shortage of political leaders. No doubt, students will be misguided. To guard against this, the issue of citizenship education needs to be boldly tackled. There is need to develop the right type of political consciousness among university students. They should be guided not to participate in electoral violence and dissuade from it. They may be made able to face the political problems and challenges of the country through the knowledge acquired from citizenship education. It was issues like this that made Tafese and Desta (2014) to conduct a research on the roles of civics and ethical education in shaping attitude of the students in higher education using Mekelle University in Ethiopia as a case study. This study employed qualitative research approach as the researcher used both primary and secondary sources in terms of tools of data collection. Regarding primary sources, observation of the researcher was used. The study employed purposive sampling technique because it involved the observations and reflections of the researcher who has been teaching civics and ethical education course in different batches and departments. The information collected through qualitative data was critically analysed using explanation and interpretation. The findings of the study showed that civic education has produced rational and ethical citizens who participated in affairs of their communities in particular and Ethiopian nation in general; has prepared students for responsible citizenship and effective participation; and has also got them involved in activities that promote and demonstrate good citizenship, community service, and personal responsibility. Furthermore, students attitudinal and behaviour change has been realized as the entire university communities are concerned and committed to work for ethical and attitudinal values.

Yohannes, Tewelde and Abrha (2017) explored the role of civic and ethical education in the development of students' behaviour in Tahtay Koraro Wereda in Northern Ethiopia. To implement this purpose, case study method was explored. Data were gathered from the school principal, vice principal, teachers, education

experts and parents. The participants for the interview and focus group discussion were selected through purposive sampling in order to conduct this study based on their willingness, responsibility, and cooperation, competitiveness. Interview, observation, focus group discussion and document analysis techniques was used as data gathering techniques. The researchers prepared semi-structured questions for group discussion to investigate the views and ideas of each discussant by probing. The findings of this study showed that character education and ethical education made students develop the desired behaviour.

Improper management of elections manifests in a plethora of ways such as armed rebellion, violent political rallies, coercion of voters, thuggery, vote buying and post-election demonstrations. Majority go as far as snatching ballot boxes for politicians on the day of election. During campaigns and elections, some university students position themselves at strategic positions to inflict injury on opposition groups. The effective teaching of citizenship education as a core course in universities should go a long way in rebranding and bringing about good management of elections among students and enhance a great nation with good people living in it. It should inculcate the right values into students; teach them their rights as citizens, rights of others and also their duties to the nation and other individuals in the society. The knowledge of citizenship education should expose students to the benefits of being law abiding; train and equip them to be good and effective leaders of tomorrow and followers that will make productive contributions to nation building. Furthermore, the knowledge should create citizens that are serious in carrying out their responsibilities in making the society orderly, peaceful and stable. It is based on this background that this study examined citizenship education and university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine citizenship education and university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of this study were to:

1. Determine the extent to which honesty that is taught in citizenship education influence university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria.
2. Assess the extent to which moral values that are taught in citizenship education influence university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria.

## Research Questions

1. To what extent does honesty being taught in citizenship education influence university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria?
2. To what extent do moral values being taught in citizenship education influence university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria?

## Hypotheses

1. Honesty taught in citizenship education does not significantly influence university students' participation in the management of election in Nigeria.
2. Moral values taught in citizenship education do not significantly influence university students' participation in the management of election in Nigeria.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed ex-post facto research design. The design is suitable for conducting a study where it is not possible to manipulate the variables involved in a study. The population of the study comprised all three hundred level undergraduate students in six federal government owned universities in the six geopolitical

zones of Nigeria. The population was 42,821 three hundred level students in the six federal government owned universities in the study area based on the student statistics from the six institutions in the 2020/2021 academic session. A sample of 400 three hundred level undergraduate students was selected for use in the study. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamen’s formula.

The students were drawn from the six universities in the study area. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used in selecting the students from the six universities. A researcher-made questionnaire titled “Citizenship Education and University Students Participation in Management of Elections Questionnaire” was used in collecting data for this study. The instrument had 10 items on citizenship education and 10 items on participation in management of elections. The responses to items on the questionnaire were scored on a four-point scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

The instrument was validated by experts in educational management and test and measurement. The face and content validity were carried out. The criticism and suggestions of the experts were incorporated into the final draft before the instrument (copies of the questionnaire) were administered to the respondent. Also, the reliability was achieved with a coefficient .78, using Cronbach alpha method. Copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents in their different universities by the researcher with the assistance of five research assistants. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation and the hypotheses were tested with independent t-test. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. In order to make decisions from the results obtained, the mean responses were computed as  $4+3+2+1=10/4=2.5$ . In the light of the above computation, any mean score more than 2.5 was taken to be of high extent while the mean score of 2.5 and below was considered to be of low extent.

## RESULTS

### Research Questions One

To what extent does honesty being taught in citizenship education influence university students’ participation in management of election in Nigeria?

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the influence of honesty taught in citizenship education on university Students’ participation in management of election in Nigeria**

Items	N	Mean	SD
Citizenship education class has taught me to be truthful.	400	2.24	.74
Honesty is a value I must uphold.	400	2.93	.75
Dedication to duty is learnt in citizenship education class.	400	2.47	.86
Citizenship education class inculcates quality attributes in me	400	2.70	.87
Through citizenship education lesson, I can no longer be deceived by politicians.	400	2.57	.84
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.58</b>	

The result in Table 1 indicates the mean and standard deviation on the influence of honesty on university students’ participation in management of election in Nigeria. The mean of item 1 (citizenship education class has taught me to be truthful), which is 2.24 indicates that honesty taught in citizenship education has a low influence on students’ participation in management of election in Nigeria. The mean of item 2 (Honesty is a value I must uphold), which is 2.93 indicates that students generally agreed that they are honest. The mean of item 3 (Dedication to duty is learnt in citizenship education class), which is 2.47 indicates that students have not fully learnt to be dedicated to their duties in citizenship education. The mean of item 4 (citizenship education class inculcates quality attributes in me), which is 2.69 indicates that the study of citizenship education has highly influenced the type of attributes developed by students. The mean of item 5

(Through citizenship education lesson, I can no longer be deceived by politicians), which is 2.57 indicates that many students through citizenship education have moderately understood much about politics and not be easily deceived by politicians. With a grand mean of 2.58, it is concluded that there is a moderate influence of honesty taught in citizenship education on university students’ participation in management of election in Nigeria.

**Research Questions Two**

To what extent do moral values being taught in citizenship education influence university students’ participation in management of election in Nigeria?

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the influence of moral values taught in citizenship education on university students’ participation in management of election in Nigeria**

Items	n	Mean	S D
I have learnt the dangers of not exercising my voting rights.	400	2.88	.79
I cannot carry ballot boxes during elections.	400	2.51	.86
I cannot collect money to support politicians.	400	2.63	.91
I cannot compromise my self-discipline for electoral violence.	400	2.38	1.07
I participate in peaceful protests against unjust laws.	400	3.41	.82
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.76</b>	

The result in Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the influence of moral values taught in citizenship education on university students’ participation in management of election in Nigeria. The mean of item 1 (I have learnt the dangers of not exercising my voting rights), which is 2.88 indicates that many students after being taught moral values in citizenship education realized they should have voted for the right person. The mean of item 2 (I cannot carry ballot boxes during election), which is 2.51 indicates that many students through citizenship education have realized that carrying ballot boxes during election is a crime and are willing to desist from it. The mean of item 3 (I cannot collect money to support politicians), which is 2.63 indicates that many students have learnt in citizenship education that they should vote for the candidate of their choices and should not sell their future. The mean of item 4 (I cannot compromise my self-discipline for electoral violence), which is 2.38 indicates that many students still need further orientation on the dangers of electoral violence. The mean of item 5 (I participate in peaceful protests against unjust laws), which is 3.41 indicates that many students; through citizenship education have understood that participation in peaceful protest against unjust law is morally right. The grand mean of 2.76 is an indication that there is a strong influence of moral values taught in citizenship education on university students’ participation in management of election in Nigeria.

**Hypothesis One**

Honesty taught in citizenship education does not significantly influence university students’ participation in management of election in Nigeria.

**Table 3: Independent t-test analysis of the influence of honesty taught in citizenship education on university students’ participation in management of election in Nigeria**

Variables	n	Mean	SD	t-cal	df	t-crit	Decision
Honesty	400	12.91	2.53	177.67	398	1.96	Significant
Participation in management of election	400	47.39	6.11				

Significant at .05

The result in Table 3 indicates that the calculated t-value of 177.67 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 398 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant influence of honesty taught in citizenship education on university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria is rejected. Hence, there is significant influence of honesty taught in citizenship education on university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria.

### Hypothesis Two

Moral values taught in citizenship education do not significantly influence university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria.

**Table 4: Independent t-test analysis of the influence of moral values taught in citizenship education on university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria**

Variables	n	Mean	SD	t-cal	df	t-crit	Decision
Moral Values	400	13.49	2.83	177.31	398	1.96	Significant
Participation in management of election	400	47.39	6.11				

Significant at .05

The result in Table 4 above indicates that the calculated t-value of 177.31 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 398 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is of no significant influence of moral values taught in citizenship education on university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria is rejected. Hence, there is significant influence of moral values taught in citizenship education on university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of hypothesis one showed significant influence of honesty on university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria. An honest person possesses certain features that distinguish him from the public. Such features as commitment to duty; uncompromised support for justice and truth; trustworthiness that attracts dignity and integrity; disciplined life exhibited in reliability and dependability; courage to defend the truth; alertness to one's conscience and to the public can only be acquired in citizenship education. Many students who taught they could never be honest have realized the importance of honesty for the development of the nation. They also considered it bad to have dishonest individuals in positions of authority after election. This prompted many students to think of making the needed changes in order to maintain honesty in management of election in Nigeria.

The finding of this study is similar to that of Yohannes *et al.* (2017) who carried out a study to explore the role of civic and ethical education in the development of students' behaviour in Tahtay Koraro Wereda in Northern Ethiopia. Their findings showed the need for character education and ethical education as it makes students develop the desired behaviour. The perception of students' rights and responsibilities, influence of external environment and family's socio-economic background of the students were found to be the great challenge for development of students' behaviour. In the present study, it has been demonstrated that the teaching is of great importance in cultivating honesty among students, which in turn is of great influence on students in management of election in Nigeria. This implies that honesty taught in citizenship education has great influence on university students in management of election in Nigeria.



The result of hypothesis two showed significant influenced of moral values on university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria. The relationship between citizenship education and moral values is the fact that value development guides the citizenship development in the development of attitudes. A morally founded citizenship education would in turn encourage university students to apply their knowledge and skills to act morally and socially. Many students who initially involved in violence during election have now been taught the dangers of such actions, which in turn influences the way they relate with others during election. They sit back to re-consider the problems they have caused by involving in such behaviours. Also, reconsidering the problems they are witnessing as a result of collecting money to support politicians could influence the way they manage elections. The finding of this study is similar to that conducted by Tafese and Desta (2014) on the roles of civics and ethical education in shaping attitude of the students in higher education in Mekelle University Ethiopia.

The findings of the study indicated that civic education has produced rational and ethical citizens who participate in affairs of their community in particular and Ethiopian nation in general; has prepared students for responsible citizenship and effective participation; and has also got them involved in activities that promote and demonstrate good citizenship, community service, and personal responsibility. Furthermore, students attitudinal and behaviour change has been realized as the entire university communities are concerned and committed to work for ethical and attitudinal values. The researchers in their recommendation are of the view that promoting students' attitudinal behaviour change can be realized when the entire university communities are concerned and committed to work for ethical and attitudinal values, especially, the instructors who are primarily responsible in shaping the attitudes of the students. This implies that moral values taught in citizenship education have great influence on university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined citizenship education and university students' participation in management of election in Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that honesty and moral values significantly influenced university students' participation in management of election in because **citizenship education** teaches students' honesty and moral values needed for ensuring that the right things are done at all times including participation in management of elections.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that university students be seriously taught components of citizenship education such as honesty and moral values; as these would equip them with qualities of truthfulness, responsibility, compassion, positive values and attitudes to contribute positively to the affairs of the country.

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