
**INCIVILITY AS A CLOG OF NIGERIAN YOUTHS'
SOCIO-CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: SOCIO-CIVIC
EDUCATION TO THE RESCUE**

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Abstract

Nigeria is blessed with population dynamics with a significant segment of her population structure, youths belonging to the active population that can drive the Nigerian nation resources in achieving economic and sustainable development. Thus, much is being expected from youths. It is however disheartening the situation analysis of youths presently with a good number of them identified as perpetrators of illicit behaviours, immorality, gangsterism, thuggery, arm conflict banditry, insurgency, instrument in the hands of political juggernauts, drug abuse and trafficking, kidnapping, 419, cybercrime, yahoo plus, disrespect for elders, others and constituted authorities among others which amount to incivility. In an effort to restore civility among children and youths, the federal government re-introduced Citizenship/Civic education in Nigerian schools charged with training the youths in civic engagements to entrench in them, civility and ethos of a responsible citizen. This paper premiers the proclivity of

socio-civic education in entrenching civic values and engagement in the youths. The study involved 129 Social Studies undergraduates of Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo. Results shows more female (89, 68.99%) than male (40, 31.00%) participation; youth incivility operates in different forms under the guise of modernization with concomitant effects on the youth and nation; Socio-civic education has the proclivity of restoring civility in the youths through civic value and engagements. It therefore behooves government and other stakeholders to hold the bull of youth incivility by the horns through concerted efforts at promoting Socio-civic education by giving necessary supports and infrastructures that can drive the course of the subject in schools and the society.

Keywords: Socio-civic education; Incivility; Nigerian youths; Socio-civic engagement.

Introduction

The place of education programmes as a prominent socialization agent cannot be over-emphasized. This is because education shapes a society, nation and continents altogether through provision of programmes of instruction capable of meeting societal needs at every point in time, hence, society constitutes the basis of education curriculum, objectives and contents. Little wonder, education has been canvassed as the magic wand of unlocking the Nigeria's potentials in the 21st century. This has been captured in the National Policy on Education, NPE that education is the instrument par excellence in achieving national objectives. In realization of the above and in coping with the exigencies of time characterizing human beings, society and nations of the world, the Federal government of Nigeria through her agency charged with education matters affirmed that that the revision of the National Policy on Education is to ensure that the nation attains the best that education offers and to find lasting solution to emerging problems threatening the survival of the nation as well as her sustainable development Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013).

Prominent in the efforts to actualize the foregoing and for the promotion of national and global citizens capable of competing favourably with their counterparts in the global community was the review of some extant school subjects and educational programmes' content as well as introduction of new school subjects. Among such subjects was Civic Education/ Citizenship education which was disengaged from the initial Social Studies curriculum, Security education and of late, the re-introduction of History as a school subject at both primary and secondary level. All these are being done to ensure sustainable development and nationhood at large (Oladiti, 2019). For instance, it was the contention of Abdu-Raheem (2018) that Civic education is a vigorous attempt at teaching those qualities expected of a good and responsible citizens such as morals, social and societal values, skills, knowledge, legal rights, honesty, norms, to mention but few which are antidotes of effective and efficient nation building. This buttresses the earlier submissions such as Adetoro and Omiyefa (2011) that the teaching of Citizenship education or civic education is capable of promoting right kind of values. Civic training and citizenship has also been canvassed in producing good and responsible citizens (Falade, 2008).

As rightly observed by Abdu-Raheem (2018), the place of Civic education cannot be over-emphasized for its immense contributions especially towards entrenching a civil society as well as training of the youths in the knowledge and discharging of their civic responsibilities. This perhaps explains the submission of Ayedun (2019) that it is not the constitution that works but those that implement its content (Ayedun, B. A. February 17 Personal Communication). Youths of today are significant parts of those expected to make the constitution work, howbeit, when such are engrossed in an enduring socio-civic trainings that Social Studies and Civic education offers. The reality of the foregoing is captured in a seemingly word of knowledge hoisted on a whatsapp blog thus: 'Your mind is a magnet, if you think of blessings, you attract blessings and if you think of problems, you attracts problems. Always cultivate good thoughts and claims. Remain positive and optimistic' (Author unknown). This speaks volume regarding the

need for effective socialization of the youths into socio-civic engagements in the present time.

Thus, it is imperative for the nation and the stakeholders to explore ways of curbing such bastardly acts among the youths by entrenching in them, necessary trainings capable of socializing them in the right direction for them to be productive and lift the nation to her desired status. Borrowing a leaf from the words of a great philosopher, Albert Einstein (n.d) who stated that ‘the world will not be destroyed by those who do evil but by those who watch them without doing anything’, it is imperative especially for academics and stakeholders in the nation’s education to employ the instrument of education in surmounting the youth incivility plaguing the nation in the present dispensation. Doing this requires putting round peg in the round hole with regards to effective school subjects capable of transforming the youths. Social Studies and Civic education stand tall in this regard (Ekwonwa, 2010; Mezeobi, 2011; Oladiti & Wahab, 2013).

Nigeria’s plural society which supposed to be a rallying point for the country’s corporate existence, is presently the source of the countries many woes especially in an efforts towards nationhood. While such diversities as these have been positively harnessed for greatness by developed nations of the world, the case has however been quite different in Nigeria. This is because at present, civic disorientation especially among the youths has been the bane of the social, economic and political developments in Nigeria, limiting the country’s capacity for social, economic and political development, expansion and nationhood. Buttressing the above, Ogunyemi as quoted by Yusuf (2019) adduced that the concerns which the said challenges have generated since the late 90s border on the quality of civic competence and this has resulted in major regional and international conferences. Such conferences include International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994), the Beijing Women Conference (1995) and the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development (1996). All these conferences were part of the effort to refocus human development concerns for the actualization of appropriate civic knowledge, civic values and civic skills among citizens of all countries.

It is instructive to state that civic training has become fundamental machinery for nation building and the creation of a civil society in various parts of the world. However, Fabiyi (2009) observed that there is a general neglect of civic duties by citizens and public officers, dishonesty, unpatriotic and disloyal practices among the rank and file of Nigerians. He further states that Nigerian citizens demonstrate intolerance and disrespect to the rule of law, not law abiding, dishonesty and not dedicated to their duties, hence, Nigeria is currently facing the problem of incivility and immorality. To this, Falade (2008) earlier concluded that civic virtues and political qualities that make a good and responsible citizen are fast declining especially among Nigerian youths. Suggesting a plausible for the spate of incivility among youths in Nigeria, Ogundare (2000) submitted that the abandonment of the sacred citizenship responsibilities by the leaders and the followers are responsible for the spate of economic and political ills in the country. Subscribing in the same vein, Yusuf (2019) quoting Adeyemi was of the view that there are no more moral values in Nigeria, noting that a person of immoral standard sees little or nothing bad in his/her action which may cause chaos in the society.

Civic engagements, civic participation and civic involvement are usually used interchangeably to reflect citizens' performance of their duties as enshrined in a country's constitution. In the word of Clieb and Robinson (2006) cited in Yusuf (2019), civic involvement has to do with "active participation in the public life of a community in an informed, committed and constructive manner, with a focus on the common good" (p. 16). Similarly, the Coalition for Civic Involvement and Leadership at the University of Maryland defines civic involvement as "acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one's communities, which can involve a wide range of activities, such as developing civic sensitivity, participation in building civic society, and benefiting the common good".

Subscribing in the same vein, Ogunjemilua (2018) cited in Yusuf (2019) advanced civic indicators to include community problem solving, regular volunteering for non-electoral organizations, active membership in a group, and participation in fund-raising; electoral indicators include voting, persuading others, contributing to

campaigns, volunteering for candidates or political organizations, and displaying buttons, signs, and stickers; indicators of political voice include protesting, signing e-mail petitions or written petitions, boycotting or buy cotton, canvassing, and contacting officials through print media or the broadcast media; and attentiveness indicators include following government and public affairs, talking about current events or politics with friends or family, watching televised news, listening to the news on the radio, and reading the news in a newspaper, in a news magazine, or on the Internet.

Despite the differences in the definition of civic activities and behaviours, the research of the last few decades overwhelmingly suggests a decline in the civic involvement of the American citizenry, and many fear that this downward trend will have far-reaching and devastating consequences. For example, a 1988 report authored by the National Commission on Civic Renewal articulated this fear thus: ‘Too many of us have become passive and disengaged. Too many of us lack confidence in our capacity to make basic moral and civic judgments, to join with our neighbors to do the work of community, to make a difference. By implication, neglect of civic duties translating to youth incivility is a global phenomenon, the earlier it is address, the better for the nations of the world, Nigeria inclusive. The general social vices within the democratic system in Nigeria call for urgent attention and concerted effort at mitigating their effects on the civic engagement of the Nigerian youths. It is in the light of the foregoing that this study premiers Civic Education (as an appendage of Social Studies) as a catalyst of promoting socio-civic engagement in curbing incivility among Nigerian youths.

Research Questions

This study is out to seek answers to a number of mind-bulging questions pertaining to youth’s incivility. These are:

- i. Of what effect is incivility on the Nigerian youths and the Nigerian nation?
- ii. How can Civic Education as an appendage of Social Studies serve as a driver of socio-civic engagements among Nigerian youths to engender civil society?

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was employed for this study with the entire undergraduates of Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo, Oyo State constituting the study population out of which those undergoing degree programme were randomly selected. In all, a total of 129 Social Studies undergraduates were sampled through stratified random sampling technique comprising 200 level (34 male and female); 300 level (37 male and female); and 400 level (58 male and female) who have been exposed to elements of citizenship and civic-related issues. A structured questionnaire titled Youth Incivility and Civic Engagement Questionnaire (YICEQ) comprising 10 items relating to youths incivility and its attendant effects, and Civic education and civic engagements with response rubrics fashioned after modified Likert four point rating scale of Very Necessary (VN), Often Necessary (ON), Seldom Necessary (SN), Not Necessary (NN). The validation of the instrument was carried out with reliability co-efficient of 0.68 obtained. Data analysis was carried out using Tables, Frequency counts, and Simple percentages statistical test.

Results

Results presented here are based on the two research questions generated for the study.

Research Question 1: Of what effect is incivility on the Nigerian youths and the Nigerian nation?

Table 1: Analysis of the Effects of Incivility on the Nigerian youths and the Nigerian nation by Participants

S/N	Statements	Responses	
		F	%
1.	Avarice, get-rich-quick syndrome by youths of today do dent their image.	33	25.58
2.	Youth refusal to be instrument in the hands of politicians and money bags are needed to make them useful citizens.	16	12.40
3.	Unruly behaviour, disrespect for elders and constituted authorities in the name of modernization among youths is an index of incivility and should be curbed.	23	17.83
4.	Staying clear of all sorts of gangsterism will go a long way in redeeming youth's mage in Nigeria.	18	13.95
5.	Engagement in brigandage, arm conflict and banditry by youths needs to be tackled headlong to preserve their lives.	39	30.23
	Total	129	100.00

Source: Authors' Fieldwork, 2021

From Table 1, the multiplier effects of youth incivility to the youths and the nation is enormous as dastardly acts being perpetrated by the youths spells doom for their future and that of the nation at large. For instance, items 5, 1 and 3 with highest frequencies (39, 30.23%; 33, 25.58% and 23, 17.83%) respectively representing level of incivility and its untold effects on both the youths and the nation speaks volume about the effects of youth incivility generally while items 4 and 2 (18, 13.95% and 16, 12.40%) presented other side effects of youths' incivility.

Research Question 2: How can Civic Education as an appendage of Social Studies serve as a driver of socio-civic engagements among Nigerian youths to engender civil society?

Table 2: Analysis of the Ways by which Civic Education can Promote Civic Engagements among Nigerian Youths by Participants

S/N	Statements	Responses	
		F	%
1.	Embarking on awareness campaign to sensitize the community about government programmes is one of the noble tasks offered through civic education.	41	31.78
2.	I do organize coaching for the secondary school students in our community as my own contribution to youth development.	10	7.75
3.	It is necessary to call the attention of government to the needs of the community as part of civility.	19	14.73
4.	Campaign against crimes and criminal tendencies through Civic education among youths is a noble idea.	47	36.43
5.	Police-community relation meetings hold in my area to sensitize youths on how to relate within the ambit of law.	12	9.30
	Total	129	100.00

Source: Authors' Fieldwork, 2021

Table III revealed that through Civic education, youths can be exposed to a number of values, norms, moral and all forms of civic engagements expected of a responsible citizen as reflected from items 4, 1 and 3 with highest acceptability (47, 36.43%; 41, 31.78% and 19, 14.73%) respectively with items 5 and 2 having moderate acceptability (12, 9.30% and 10, 7.75%) respectively.

Discussions

Findings obtained from Table 1 in line with some previous studies (Ogunyemi, 2011; Omiyefa & Adetoro, 2012; Oladiti, 2019)

revealed that there exists a number of several effects of incivility on the youths and the Nigerian society requiring urgent redress for the nation to move forward. Similarly, results obtained from table II indicated that through the machinery of Civic education, a number of values and civic engagements can be infused into the live of the youths and by so doing, turn them around for the progress and development of their personality as well as that of the Nigerian nation. This finding further buttressed the views of some authorities (Falade, 2008; Ekwonwa, 2010; Adetoro & Omiyefa, 2011; Mezeobi, 2011; Oladiti, 2011; Oladiti & Wahab, 2013; FRN, 2014; Abdu-Raheem, 2018; Oladiti, 2019).

Conclusion

As revealed from this study, the youths of today are so engrossed in all sorts of incivility that are inimical to their personal development and contributions to the nation generally. This might not be unconnected with the spate of unwholesome attitudes and behaviours of the youths nowadays under the pretence of civilization, modernization and development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) which ordinarily supposed to be utilized for the benefits of the active population and thereby, promoting the image of the country as well as contributing to her development and sustainable nationhood. It has been established that the needed civic values and engagements capable of producing civil youths are imbued in Civic education and all forms of civic trainings that can equip youths with the needed socio-civic competencies that will enable them to participate effectively in the affairs of the country and by so doing, contribute their quotas to the nation.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings from this study, it is incumbent on the government and all stakeholders to ensure that youths are exposed to civic engagements at whatever level they find themselves. Necessary facilities and enabling environments are also to be

provided to aid promotion of responsible citizens and thereby, reduce incivility among Nigerian youths in the 21st century.

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