The Impact of Civic Instructional Goals on the Character Formation of students in Benue State, Nigeria West Africa

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Abstract	Review Article

The study examined the impact of civic instructional goals on the character formation of students in Benue State, Nigeria. The study explored three primary questions and subjected three null hypotheses to empirical testing. This study utilised a correlational survey to examine the relationships between the identified variables. A total of 8,864 SS2 students from 99 government grant-aided secondary schools in Benue Education Zone C constituted the study's target population. A sample size of 215 (116 male and 99 female) students was selected from 4 co-educational schools using multi-stage approach. The study employed two instruments: Moral Development Scale (reliability = .95) and Civic Education Objective Inventory (reliability = .93). The research questions while answered via multiple regression analysis while the hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Variance ($\alpha = 0.05$). The study demonstrated that: There was significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of students in senior secondary schools in Benue State $F(1,214) = 0.162$; $p = 0.038 < 0.05$. There was significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of male students in senior secondary schools in Benue State $F(1,115) = 0.902$; $p = 0.011 < 0.05$. There was significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of female students in senior secondary schools in Benue State $F(1,98) = 30.806$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. Drawing from the result, the following recommendations were advanced among others that curriculum designers should modernise the civic instruction to focus on the social and moral needs of male and female students. Civic Education curriculum developers should enhance instructional materials by integrating a greater emphasis on students' moral development. Recognising the distinct nuances in how different genders approach moral growth, schools should invest in dedicated facilities and tailored programming to support comprehensive moral development for all students.

Keywords: Civic Education, Objectives, Moral development, Relationship, Character formation.

Introduction

A primary concern for Nigerians regarding education is the declining quality and standard of instruction provided to students. Ideally, high-quality education should result in clear improvements in students' knowledge, skills, values and overall behaviour; however, the society is currently experiencing an overwhelming increase in students' disciplinary issues. Ugwu (2023) buttressed the above

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observation by expressing that public concern has intensified regarding the rising frequency of behavioural issues and indiscipline in secondary schools. Various stakeholders in education including parents, government official and NGOs have noted a troubling decline in the conduct of children and wards, even within their own homes. The disappointment stems from the realisation that education is failing to produce the expected transformation in students' character and core belief.

Civic Education is designed to address character and behavioural challenges within the students' population and the broader community by fostering discipline and a sense of civic duty. Despite these objectives, recent data shows that societal standards continue to face significant strain. Its core purpose is to help curb incidence of cultism in the school, wonton destruction of school facilities and equipment by students, lack of respect for elders and teachers in the society and school respectively by people who should be learned, taking of illegal substances, poor dress code noticed from products of secondary schools, sexual promiscuity among others. Ezeanolue and Nnorom (2020) also add that indiscipline persons refuse to accept realities of life, they continue to daydream of a fantastic and fulfilled life without any attempt on their part to struggle to improve their conducts positively. Acts of indiscipline among students include cheating, exam malpractice, dishonesty, lateness to school, stealing, shabby dressing, intake of substances, absenteeism and sexual promiscuity. Students have demonstrated instances of insubordination and persistent non-compliance regarding academic assignments, assaulting teachers for taking disciplinary actions against them or a colleague, drug abuse, excessive intake of alcohol and smoking marijuana (Freeks, 2015).

Morality stems from the Latin word 'moralis' which means 'customs or habits'. Morality is a developmental process that evolves throughout an individual's lifetime. It is shaped by an individual's unique experience and their responses to moral challenges across the various stages of physical and cognitive development. Morals are standard units of certain behaviours that are agreed upon in certain communities of which the right is distinguished from the wrong. When values collide, a moral crisis inevitably follows (Al-Smadi, 2017). Morality consists of the normative expectation and codes of conduct that defines right and wrong within the society.

Moral development is the lifelong process by which individuals, starting in childhood align their thoughts, emotions and actions with ethical standards of their community. It involves internalising cultural norms, societal expectations and legal framework to guide interactions with others. The process of moral development encompasses the longitudinal shifts in an individual's ethical reasoning, emotional responses and behavioural choices (Chowdbury, 2016). Children internalise moral values by modeling the behaviour of responsible adults and adjusting their actions in response to socially mediated rewards and sanctions (Otuu & Eneasator, 2020). A child's moral development is not a random occurrence; it is the product of systematic discipline and the conscious, collaborative efforts of both parents and the wider community. Evidence suggests that parental guidance is the foundational factor in a child's ethical development.

Moral acquisition is a developmental process initiated in infancy and reinforced throughout formal education. Since morality is not an innate trait, social standards must be culturally transmitted by community to ensure the eventual formation of an individual conscience and independent ethical decision making. Research indicates that a child's level of education shapes their moral and social development by influencing how they interact and build relationship with society (Fadli, Sumardi & Wahyudiati, 2025). The emphasis is that, like all learned behaviour, morality can be shaped and directed to ensure individuals align with societal expectations. When a child's personal and social responsibilities are fostered through appropriate experiences, they typically develop the adult capacity to cooperate with others and take ownership of their actions rather than retreating into fantasy (Gunawan & Fatma, 2022).

Beyond academic knowledge, education cultivates the social competencies necessary for communal living. This includes the development of public decorum, mutual respect and the self-governance required for collaborative exchange. According to Lawrence Kohlberg, if children engage in enough independent thinking they will eventually begin to formulate conceptions of rights, values and principles by which they evaluate existing social arrangement. Moral development tracks how individuals acquire and apply ethical principles from infancy through adulthood. This lifelong process is shaped by personal experiences and the evolving ways people navigate moral dilemmas as their physical cognitive abilities mature (Killen & Rizzo, 2014).

The moral formation of students is significantly shaped by their interpersonal relationship within the family and school community. Consequently, students with robust moral upbringing exhibit greater adaptability and maintain a standard of civility across diverse environment. The capacity for harmonious social interaction and avoidance of misconduct serves as the fundamental prerequisite for academic engagement and coachability (Purba, 2024).

The repercussions of unethical behaviours have proven more severe than students anticipated. Britwum, Adjei, Nyamekye and Britwum (2020), support the observation of Ezeanolue and Nnorom that immoral behaviours ranges from cultism, sexual assault, substance abuse, improper dressing, examination malpractice, stealing, sexual promiscuity, insubordination and disrespect for the rule of law. These behaviours possibly contribute to the moral decay being experienced in the society. Addressing current behavioural trends requires the Nigerian education sector to integrate comprehensive moral instruction and character-building programmes into its curriculum. There is no better moment than now to steer our youth away from moral collapse and toward a path of national progress.

Omojemite and Adanikin (2018) assert that Civic instruction shapes students' behaviours, which in turn dictates the quality of their social interactions. Students exhibit better behavioural outcomes when they emulate responsible role model and experience a system of rewards for appropriate social interactions and sanction for unacceptable ones. As outlined in the Civic Education curriculum, improvements in students' affective and behavioural domains are mirrored in their cognitive progress.

Moral development involves the capacity to navigate ethical conflicts through authentic conduct that remains consistent with established ethical values. It represents the developmental journey wherein children adopt pre-social behaviours and attitudes aligned with established social norms and cultural values. The primary objective of moral education is to foster the capacity for autonomous moral reasoning, enabling individuals to engage in purely voluntary, self-determined ethical decision-making.

Moral development parallels cognitive growth, with each stage of reasoning building upon newly acquired intellectual capacities (Wuryani & Yamtinah, 2018). Educational environment serve as a primary setting for children to acquire social competencies and core values, though research indicates that moral development often follows distinct trajectories for male and female students. The study by Izzati, Bachri, Sahid and Indriani (2019) found that female students exhibit higher level of character education components, specifically in moral feeling and moral action, compared to their male counterpart. Female students may employ more effective cognitive and affective learning strategies, leading to faster information mastery in certain subjects. Studies suggest that girls frequently employ more sophisticated relational strategies, including active listening and verbal expressiveness, than their male peers.

The core objective of Civic instruction is to equip learners with a deep understanding of governance, the ability to participate and a commitment to democratic values (Muleya, 2020). Learners will acquire knowledge, skills and attitude that enable them to be contributing members of society who champion peace, tolerance and positive values (Chidozie & Virtua, 2018). Despite the emphasis of Civic Education on fostering proper conduct within the

school and broader society, there is a rising trend of students' misconduct like truancy, absenteeism, violence, cultism, bullying, stealing, sexual promiscuity and other forms of social vices. As Britwum, Adjei, Nyamekye and Britwum (2020) express that these behaviours of students have domino effects on the level of students' overall performance in school as well as their moral development which manifest in their behaviour both at school and at home. This study seeks to establish that the attainment of civic instructional goals is a determinant, as well as accounts for moral development of students in Benue State, Nigeria

Research Design

The present study utilises a correlational design to explore the relationship between the variables. This was used to measure the relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of students in Education Zone C of Benue State. Denga (2019) explains that correlational studies are appropriate where variables are complex and do not tend themselves to experimental method.

The total population from which the sample was drawn consisted of 8,864 SS2 students from 99 government grant-aided secondary schools in Education Zone C that offer Civic Education as one of the core subjects during the 2021/2022 academic session. The participants consisted of 215 (116 male and 99 females) senior secondary school students selected from 4 co-educational schools. Participants were selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure. Emaikwu (2015) explains that multistage sampling occurs when different sampling techniques are applied at different stages of the research study. In the first stage the researcher randomly sampled 4 local government areas from Benue Education Zone C using simple random sampling technique through the use of slip of paper or lucky dip with replacement. In the second stage, the researcher used purposive sampling technique to select 4 co-educational schools in the 4 local government areas used for the study. The choice of purposive sampling technique was to enable the selection of schools that are certified by the researcher to

have qualified and reasonably experienced Civic Education teachers in the selected areas. In the third stage, the population was stratified along students' gender and the researcher used proportionate stratified random sampling to select 215 SS2 students that offer Civic Education as a school subject in the 4 local government areas in Benue Education Zone C.

Moral Development Scales (MDS) and Civic Education Objective Inventory (CEOI) were used for the collection of data. MDS is a 12-item rating instrument. The instrument has two parts. Part A is for demographic information while Part B elicits information on students' moral development. It has 6 positive and 6 negative items. Its response mode was the researcher's designed 4 point scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. Respondents will be required to tick appropriately. Civic Education Objective Inventory (CEOI) has two parts. Part A is for demographic information while Part B was used to find out the extent of attainment of the objectives of Civic Education or determine how Civic Education has helped the students in life. The Civic Education Objective Inventory is a 30-item instrument with very high extent, high extent, low extent and very low extent continuum. The instrument was validated by three experts, one expert in the Department of Arts and Social Science Education, one in measurement and evaluation, and one expert from the Department of Sociology, Benue State, University, Makurdi.

To ensure instrument reliability, a trial test was administered to 35 subjects across 2 senior secondary schools. These schools provided the necessary Civic Education context, but were not part of the final study population. Thirty-eight (38) copies of Moral Development Scale (MDS) and Civic Education Objective Inventory (CEOI) were administered to the respondents. A period of 4 days was used for the trial test. The responses were used to establish the reliability index of the instruments. The responses obtained were analysed using Cronbach Alpha to establish the internal consistency of the instruments. The reliability

coefficients of Moral Development Scale (MDS) and Civic Education Objective Inventory (CEOI) were found to be 0.95 for to be 0.93 respectively.

Data were collected by the researcher and two research assistants (Civic Education teachers with Bachelor Degree with 2-3 years of experience). The researcher gave the research assistants one hour training on what to do. A total of two weeks was used for the administration of the instruments. The research questions were answered using multiple regression analysis and the hypotheses for the study were tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of regression at 0.05 level of significance to investigate the extent to which Civic Education objectives determine students' moral development.

Results

The results of the data analysis and interpretation are presented according to the research questions and hypotheses formulated for the study as follow:

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of students in senior secondary schools in Benue State?

Table 1: Regression Analysis of Relationship between Civic Education Objectives and Moral Development of Students in Senior Secondary Schools in Benue State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.380[a]	.144	.144	.52495

Table 1 shows the relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. The table reveals the linear regression model of Civic Education objectives and moral development of students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. The analysis further indicates that there was a significant positive correlation between Civic Education objectives and moral development ($r=$ .380), with Civic Education objectives accounting for 14.4% of the variance in moral development ($r^2=$ .144). This implies that 14.4 percent of moral development of students in senior secondary schools can be attributed to Civic Education objectives. Thus, the relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of students in senior secondary schools in Benue State is 0.38.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of male students in senior secondary schools in Benue State?

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Relationship between Civic Education Objectives and Moral Development of Male Students in Senior Secondary Schools in Benue State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.600[a]	.360	.360	.10237

Table 2 shows the relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of male students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. The table reveals the linear regression model of Civic Education objectives and moral development of male students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. The data further indicates a moderate-to-strong relationship (r= 0.600) between Civic Education objectives and moral development; specifically, the coefficient of determination (r^2= 0.360) suggests that Civic Education explains 36% of the moral development observed in male students. This implies that 36.0 percent of moral development of male students in senior secondary schools can be accounted for by Civic Education objectives. Thus, the relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of male students in senior secondary schools in Benue State is 0.60.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of female students in senior secondary schools in Benue State?

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Relationship between Civic Education Objectives and Moral Development of Female Students in Senior Secondary Schools

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.491[a]	.241	.233	.44385

Table 3 shows the relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of female students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. The table reveals the linear regression model of Civic Education objectives and moral development of female students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. The analysis further revealed a moderate positive correlation between Civic Education objectives and female students' moral development (r= .491). The coefficient of determination ((r^2= .241) indicates that Civic Education objectives account for 24.1% of the variance in their moral development. This implies that 24.1 percent of moral development of female students in senior secondary schools can be attributed to Civic Education objectives. Thus, the relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of female students in senior secondary schools in Benue State is 0.49.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of students in senior secondary schools in Benue State.

Table 4: ANOVA of Regression of Civic Education Objectives and Moral Development of Students in Senior Secondary Schools in Benue State

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.045	1	.045	.162	.038[b]
	Residual	58.697	213	.276		
	Total	58.741	214			

Table 4 reveals that $F(1,214) = 0.162$; $p = 0.038 < 0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating s significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of students' moral development in senior secondary schools in Benue State. Thus, based on evidence from data analysis there is significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. The findings suggest that the curriculum objectives are meaningfully associated with students' ethical growth.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of male students in senior secondary schools in Benue State.

Table 5 ANOVA of Regression of Civic Education Objectives and Moral Development of Male Students in Senior Secondary Schools in Benue State

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.013	1	.013	.902.	.011.[b]
	Residual	57.513	114	.505		
	Total	57.526	115			

Table 5 reveals that $F(1,115) = 0.902$; $p = 0.011 < 0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of male students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. Empirical evidence suggests a meaningful relationship between Civic Education objectives and the moral growth of male students in senior secondary schools in Benue State.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of female students in senior secondary schools in Benue State.

Table 6: ANOVA of Regression of Civic Education Objectives and Moral Development of Female Students in Senior Secondary Schools in Benue State

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.069	1	6.069	30.806	.000[b]
	Residual	19.109	97	.197		
	Total	25.178	98			

Table 6 reveals that $F(1,98) = 30.806$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of female students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. Thus, based on evidence from data analysis, there is significant correlation between Civic Education objectives and female students' moral

development in senior secondary schools in Benue State.

Discussion of Findings

Finding on Civic Education objectives and moral development of students revealed that, there is significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. This implies that, the attainment of Civic Education objectives is a determinant of moral development of students in senior secondary schools. The study found linear and positive relationship between attainment of Civic Education objectives and moral development of students in senior secondary schools.

The finding agrees with that of Uzoka and Njoku (2015) that home, school and culture are some of the environmental factors that strongly influence the moral behaviour of secondary school students. The finding agrees with that of Iqbal, Khanam and Dogar (2017) that there is significant increase in the morality on every age level of students of both private and Madrasah sectors. The finding agrees with that of Iqbal, Khanam and Dogar (2017) that, students of private schools had better moral development than that of Madrasah students during three age stages of early childhood, childhood and adolescence due to curricular activities in both sectors. The finding agrees with that of Mahwish and Abid (2018) that there was a significant relationship between moral atmosphere of school and moral development of students and that the role of schools' moral atmosphere is significant in the development of students' morality. The finding agrees with that of Abang and Ngban (2019) that home social relations significantly influence students' indiscipline behaviour.

The finding agrees with that of Ebute, Attah, Yusuf and Maisamari (2020) that the parents of secondary school students are more autocratic than other parental styles and the status of moral development of students are appreciably high. The finding agrees with that of Eteng, Abang, Uchegbue and Ntamu (2021) that students with high involvement level were significantly more deviant (in terms of sexually

related deviant behaviour and bullying) than their counterparts with low level of involvement. However, the finding disagrees with that of Okpechi, Arop and Edwin (2020) that teacher-students relationship does not significantly influence the morality among secondary school students.

Finding of the present study establishes support for the process through which children develop proper attitude and behaviour towards other people in the society, based on social and cultural norms, rules and laws in Civic Education classrooms. This agrees with the study carried out by Mas'ud, Indriani and Sahid (2024) that the cultivation of a strong positive character profoundly influences both individuals and society. Individuals demonstrating robust character exhibit consistent behaviour, integrity and adherence to positive values, even when faced with significant pressure or adversity. The objectives of Civic Education are concerned with changes that occur over time in behaviour, emotion and cognition relative to the realm of the morals. These changes occur when the child imitates the actions of responsible adults and is commended for engaging in socially acceptable behaviour and punished for socially unacceptable behaviours. The finding tallies with the investigation of Ekechukwu and Amaeze (2016) that teachers' factors influence students' disruptive behaviours. The moral upbringing of children does not come by chance, but through discipline and deliberate efforts by Civic Education teachers, parents and the society. It is observed that parents have the foremost responsibility for raising the child to become a moral person. The process begins early in childhood and continues through the school years. This is responsible for the significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of students in senior secondary schools in Benue State.

Finding on Civic Education objectives and moral development of male students revealed that, there is significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of male students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. This implies that, the attainment of Civic Education

objectives is a determinant of moral development of male students in senior secondary schools. The study found linear and positive relationship between accomplishment of Civic Education objectives and moral development of male students in senior secondary schools. The finding agrees with that of Eremie and Nwagbogwu (2018) that male students were influenced by moral motivation and moral judgment on academic achievement.

The finding of the present study supports the development that, the education of male students attain affect their moral and social development by determining the kind of relationship they have with different peoples in the society. The emphasis is that, morality could be controlled and directed so that the male students in senior secondary schools obtain the ability to act according to the expectations of the society. Male students' personal and social responsibilities are nourished by the right experiences in Civic Education class, where they acquire personal capabilities of the mature adult to be aware of how to cooperate with others, to accept responsibility and his actions rather than fantasy. This is responsible for the significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of male students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. As Civic Education objectives instill the ability to live and work together, that is the feeling of comradeship. This agrees with Simushi, Simui and Muleya (2025) who opine that Civic Education serves as a fundamental catalyst for individual development, ultimately fostering more inclusive and resilient societies. It also involves discipline in public place such as taking turns and learning to be courteous, learning self-control, sharing ideas and experiences with others, including the spirit of self-confidence. All these are ingredients of moral development of male students in senior secondary schools in Benue State responsible for the significant relationship found in the present study.

Finding on Civic Education objectives and moral development of female students revealed that, there is significant relationship between Civic Education objectives and moral development of female students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. This implies that, the attainment of Civic Education objectives is a determinant of moral development of female students in senior secondary schools. The study found linear and positive relationship between achievement of Civic Education objectives and moral development of female students in senior secondary schools. The finding agrees with that of Eremie and Nwagbogwu (2018) that female students were influenced by Moral motivation and Moral judgment on academic achievement.

Moral development of female students focuses on the emergence, change and understanding of morality from infancy through adulthood in senior secondary schools. Morality develops across a lifetime and is influenced by female students' experiences and their behaviour when faced with moral issues through different periods of physical and cognitive development in Civic Education class. This finding agrees with that of Okafor and Okafor (2013) that at a point in the moral development of the girl-child some factors like poor family background, peer group influence and negative use of the media could cause a derail which leads to pilfering, truancy, gossiping, prostitution and other social vices. Interestingly, the present study found support for the fact that, the attainment of Civic Education objectives is a determinant of moral development of female students in senior secondary schools in Benue State.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study was concluded that the attainment of Civic Education objectives had linear and positive correlate with moral development of students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. It was also established that the attainment of Civic Education objectives had linear and positive associate with moral development of male and female students in senior secondary schools in Benue State. The following recommendations were made in the light of the findings of this study:

1. Curriculum designers should modernise the civic instruction to focus on the social and moral needs of male and female students.

2. Civic Education curriculum developers should enhance instructional materials by integrating a greater emphasis on students' moral development

3. Recognising the distinct nuances in how different genders approach moral growth, schools should invest in dedicated facilities and tailored programming to support comprehensive moral development for all students.

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