

# Assessment of Undergraduates Civic Education Knowledge and Electoral Participation in Southwest Nigeria

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## Abstract

The study investigated undergraduates' civic education knowledge and electoral participation in Southwest Nigeria. It also investigated the relationship between undergraduate civic education knowledge and electoral participation. The study adopted convergent parallel mixed method with population of all undergraduates for all the public universities situated in the southwest, Nigeria. A sample of 600 respondents was selected using multistage sampling for the quantitative instrument, while 18 participants were purposively selected for qualitative instrument using focus group discussions. Data were collected using the Undergraduates' Civic Education Knowledge and Electoral Participation Questionnaire (UCKEPQ) and a semi-structured interview guide for the focus group discussion. The questionnaire was validated and yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.82. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and regression analysis at 0.05 significance level, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed. Results showed that undergraduates possessed moderate to high civic knowledge but exhibited low to moderate electoral participation. A significant positive relationship existed between civic knowledge and electoral participation ( $r = 0.67, p < 0.05$ ). Civic education knowledge significantly influenced electoral participation ( $F = 136.84, p < 0.05$ ), explaining 17.5% of the variance. Qualitative findings showed that political mistrust, insecurity, and weak youth mobilization hindered participation despite adequate civic education awareness. The study concludes that civic education knowledge alone does not ensure active electoral participation. It recommends experiential civic learning and reforms that strengthen trust in electoral institutions.

**Keywords:** civic education knowledge, electoral participation, public universities, southwest nigeria

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Civic education courses are widely offered in Nigerian universities, however, questions about whether undergraduate translates this into meaningful electoral participation remains a subject of concern, especially in Southwest Nigeria where youth voter apathy remains a scholarly concern (Adebayo & Ogunyemi, 2022; Okafor & Adekunle, 2023). In democratic setting, the roles of civic education cannot be underestimated. It is essential for providing students information on their rights and duties during election. It is well acknowledged that civic education challenges young people to become involved in politics. Research indicates that students who possess greater civic awareness and democratic beliefs are more likely to vote during election (Hoskins et al., 2022; Print & Lange, 2021). However, the relationship is not always straightforward because participation is also influenced by institutional quality, political trust, and electoral integrity (Galston, 2022). Civic education may not translate into electorate turnout during election in many developing countries due to poor political frameworks and low youth knowledge of civic education (Norris, 2021).

In Africa, particularly in Nigeria, youth participation in voting is still an issue, despite expanding civic education programs at secondary and postsecondary institutions. Research indicates that although Nigerian undergraduates acquire civic education through general studies, their participation in elections is still comparatively unimpressive (Ibrahim & Salihu, 2023; Ojo & Balogun, 2024). INEC statistics from the 2023 elections revealed low youth turnout in Southwest Nigeria, despite a high level of political consciousness of university students. This is attributed by academics to perceived inefficient governance, election violence, and political mistrust (Ezeani, 2022).

According to Ogunleye and Daramola (2022), civic education in Nigerian universities is frequently criticized for being too theoretical and having little connection to real-world learning experiences like debates, simulations, and electoral activities. Students may be aware of democratic processes theoretically, without actually participating in them, necessitating an empirical investigation of this gap in Southwest Nigeria. Regional studies show youth participation in governance is influenced by peer pressure, social media, and institutional support, in addition to civic awareness (Akinyemi & Bello, 2024). However, effective civic education remains vital for political consciousness and democratic responsibility, making its influence on undergraduate electoral participation important to understand. Undergraduate civic education knowledge and electoral involvement can be studied in Southwest Nigeria, which has a large number of federal, state, and private colleges and is politically engaged and highly educated. It is essential for analyzing how civic education influences young people's future political behaviour because it is a significant source of Nigeria's undergraduates.

Research on undergraduates' civic education knowledge and electoral participation in Southwest Nigeria is still severely lacking, despite increasing attention to civic education and political participation among university students. The majority of previous studies in Nigeria concentrated on voter behaviour, political engagement, or civic awareness without really looking at how students' actual election participation is influenced by their civic education knowledge. Additionally, a lot of research was restricted to particular states, institutions, or young people, which made the results less generalizable. Additionally, the majority of studies used quantitative methods, which

offered little justification for why civic awareness could or might not result in voting. Additionally, empirical results continue to be mixed, with some studies attributing low participation to political mistrust, electoral violence, apathy, and socioeconomic limitations, while others related civic education awareness to political engagement. As a result, this study uses a mixed approaches strategy to close the gap.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Civic Education**

Although modern researchers have varied conceptions of civic education, most definitions place a strong focus on citizenship development, democratic values, and active engagement in public affairs. Civic education, according to White et al. (2023), is a process that gives students the knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and democratic principles necessary to become involved in political activities and responsible problem solvers in society. In a similar vein, Hillygus and Holbein (2023) defined civic education as the development of democratic competencies, interpersonal skills, and practical civic skills that allow youth to actively engage in democratic processes beyond simple knowledge acquisition. Civic education, according to Bringle and Clayton (2021), entails developing civic knowledge, values, attitudes, and behaviors that equip people for political engagement and responsible public life. Additionally, Miles (2021) defined civic education as a process that prepares students to confront modern democratic issues including disinformation, inequality, and political disengagement through social responsibility and critical involvement.

Summarily, civic education is a knowledge-based and values-driven educational practice, with the goal of educating people for responsible citizenship. Although both local and international literature concur that it is crucial for bolstering democracy, its efficacy depends on how well it is put into practice and how successfully students are able to convert civic knowledge into active engagement in governance processes.

### **2.2. Level of undergraduate Civic Education Knowledge**

For civic involvement and political participation, undergraduate civic education knowledge is becoming more and more important both internationally and in Nigeria. Understanding political systems, governance, rights, obligations, and democratic procedures are all involved. Research indicates that civic education is provided to undergraduates; nevertheless, understanding differs depending on context, exposure, and institutional support (Balogun, 2025; Hoskins et al., 2022).

Empirical evidence shows that undergraduate civic awareness in Nigeria is generally moderate rather than strong. A study in North-Central Nigeria reported that most undergraduates had average civic knowledge, scoring only slightly above the benchmark, indicating limited understanding of civic duties and democratic concepts (Balogun, 2025). Similarly, Yusuf et al. (2023) found average civic knowledge, suggesting students understand basic civic ideas but lack deeper knowledge of governance processes and political participation mechanisms. This trend is also noticeable in Southwest Nigeria, where students have a basic understanding of democratic norms and civic rights, but their knowledge is still mainly theoretical and has no relationship to actual political participation. Ojo and Balogun (2024) discovered that undergraduates had a moderate

degree of civic awareness, which suggests that there were little opportunities for practical learning and civic involvement.

Studies conducted in developed countries reveal comparable trends. According to Hoskins et al. (2022), undergraduate civic knowledge is frequently uneven, with students comprehending civic rights better than institutional systems and participation procedures. This implies that without hands-on experience and interactive teaching strategies, civic education by itself cannot guarantee complete civic literacy. Civic awareness is also influenced by curriculum design, teaching tactics, and political exposure, according to research. When participatory and interactive civic education methods are employed, students show increased civic consciousness and improved retention of democratic principles (Print & Lange, 2021). Civic education in Nigeria and other developing nations is still theoretical, which reduces actual civic engagement of the youths.

### **2.3. Electoral Participation**

Voting, registering to vote, contesting for office, and participating in election-related discussions are all considered forms of electoral participation. It is an essential component of democratic government, because, it shows the importance of voters on political choices and the choice of leaders. The most frequently used measure of electoral involvement in contemporary democracies is voter turnout, which quantifies the percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots (Yakubu & Onwuegbuchulam, 2025). From a wider angle, voters' direct participation in electing leaders and shaping public policy is reflected in electoral participation, which is a subset of political participation. Because active citizen participation improves accountability, legitimacy, and representation, scholars contend that the degree and kind of electoral participation are directly related to the quality and longevity of democracy (Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2026). Voting is simply one aspect of electoral engagement; other activities include observing election procedures, attending political rallies, and participating in voter education.

Election participation is impacted by both individual and institutional factors, including political awareness, trust in electoral institutions, socioeconomic level, and voting system accessibility, according to recent international study. Voting is a vital democratic right associated with equality, inclusion, and human development, especially for marginalized groups like people with disabilities, according to studies conducted in African contexts (Pente et al., 2024). Effective civic education and inclusive voting systems also greatly increase participation by raising citizens' awareness and self-assurance. Due to voter apathy, electoral violence, and mistrust of political institutions, election participation in Nigeria is extensively researched. Even with regular elections, participation fluctuates because of poor institutions, political manipulation, and insecurity (Adewara et al., 2025; Adebogun et al., 2025), which frequently discourages youth participation and erodes democracy.

### **2.4. Level of Electoral Participation**

Election participation, which is frequently measured by voter turnout, is a crucial indicator of the health of democracies in both developed and developing nations. International research reveals significant differences between nations and demographic groupings, which are indicative of civic consciousness, political trust, and institutional credibility. According to a comprehensive study, accessibility and contextual factors affect

participation, and turnout varies by social category and area (Harada et al., 2024). Participation is therefore uneven due to structural and environmental variables, with young people and first-time voters frequently exhibiting low turnout. According to Mulyawan et al. (2024), first-time voters' typically low to moderate election involvement was strongly influenced by socioeconomic incentives, political efficacy, and campaign exposure.

In African contexts, structural problems like low institutional trust, electoral violence, and insecurity frequently impact voter turnout. Election-related violence reduces voter turnout, especially in politically insecure areas, according to a study conducted in Côte d'Ivoire (van Baalen, 2023). Similarly, studies conducted in developing democracies reveal that low and irregular participation, particularly among disadvantaged populations, is caused by fear, uncertainty, and mistrust of electoral institutions. According to research conducted between 2015 and 2023, political unrest, socioeconomic difficulties, and low electoral trust have all contributed to Nigeria's inconsistent and declining voter turnout (Daukere et al., 2024). A 2023 study found low turnout weakens democratic legitimacy and public confidence in government (Hassan, 2024).

Local electoral participation is moderate to low, according to studies conducted in Southwest Nigeria. Low turnout in municipal elections is influenced by voter confidence, campaign efficacy, and perceived rewards, according to Adebogun et al. (2025). Gender studies also show that turnout reflects structural issues and democratic indifference, even though both sexes participate (Yakubu & Onwuegbuchulam, 2025).

## **2.5. Undergraduate Civic Education Knowledge and Electoral Participation**

A growing number of recent empirical research look at the connection between undergraduates' election activity and civic education understanding. Evidence from global settings demonstrates a strong and favorable relationship between civic engagement and civic knowledge. In a mixed-method study involving 300 students, for example, Al-Ansari et al. (2025) discovered that civic education greatly enhanced political awareness and raised involvement in activities like voting and attending meetings. The study also showed a significant increase in political awareness and engagement as a result of the civic education intervention, underscoring the close connection between behavioral participation and information development. According to Alscher et al. (2022), political knowledge greatly raises students' chances of participating in civic and political life by mediating the impact of civic education. More civic-minded students are more interested in politics and actively participate in elections.

Zainurin and Wan Husin (2025) discovered that students' electoral behavior is greatly influenced by their political understanding from civic education, with educated students being more inclined to vote and participate in campaigns. According to the study's findings, civic education encourages responsible and knowledgeable voting. In a similar vein, Suhariyanto and Rozak (2025) found a statistically significant positive correlation between political engagement and civic education among Generation Z students, suggesting that civic knowledge improves participation in democratic processes. Although there are contextual distinctions, similar patterns are seen in Nigerian and African environments. Research indicates that although civic education raises awareness of democratic processes, its influence on real election participation may be diminished by

institutional flaws, political mistrust, and socioeconomic difficulties. Nonetheless, studies repeatedly demonstrate that students who know more about civic education are more likely to be interested in and participate in elections than students who know less. This supports the idea that education increases political efficacy and engagement (Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022).

However, some empirical research indicates that voting behavior and civic education knowledge are not always directly or significantly correlated. Deimel et al. (2022), for instance, discovered that while political knowledge affects anticipated voting participation, faith in political institutions frequently mediates this effect. This suggests that even students with sufficient civic understanding may be less likely to vote if they have low institutional trust. Similarly, the direct effect of civic education on participation may be mitigated by contextual factors including social influence, political atmosphere, and perceived voting efficacy.

## **2.6. Empirical Studies on Significant Relationship between Undergraduate Civic Education Knowledge and Electoral Participation**

Undergraduate civic education knowledge and voting engagement are significantly positively correlated, according to recent empirical research. According to Al-Ansari et al. (2025), students who received structured civic education showed more political consciousness as well as increased engagement in democratic activities like voting. In a similar vein, a cross-national European study found that students' desire to vote is significantly predicted by their political knowledge, with better informed students being more likely to cast a ballot. Civic education programs increased youth political engagement and voter turnout in Africa, especially in Nigeria, according to Chansa et al. (2024). University students who receive civic education are more prepared to engage in politics.

However, some empirical research indicates that there may not always be a significant or direct correlation between civic education knowledge and voting participation. Civic and electoral involvement did not significantly affect political trust or democratic attitudes, according to a study conducted in Ethiopia. This suggests that knowledge and participation may sometimes function independently. According to Deimel et al. (2022), faith in political institutions acts as a mediator in the connection, which is frequently modest. These results imply that the impact of civic education on undergraduates' actual voting behavior may be limited by contextual factors like perceived efficacy, political atmosphere, and institutional credibility. Nigeria has experienced similar results. Manuwa (2023) discovered that despite youths' increasing civic consciousness, political indifference, electoral mistrust, and insecurity continue to be the key causes of low voting participation. This implies that civic education could raise awareness without appreciably altering behavior. Additionally, more extensive international research demonstrates that variables including political atmosphere, identity, and income have a greater impact on election involvement than just educational attainment.

## **2.7. Empirical Studies on Significant Influence of Undergraduate Civic Education Knowledge on Electoral Participation**

Further empirical data indicates that voting behaviour is not usually greatly influenced by civic education understanding. Chen & Khoso (2025) showed that not all

facets of civic education had an impact on students' political engagement; there was no discernible correlation between classroom political debates and participation, suggesting that exposure to civic education content is not the only factor influencing behaviour. In a similar vein, Deimel et al. (2024) discovered that although political and ideological education can enhance social behaviour and civic awareness, its impact on active political participation varies and depends on the situation. This is consistent with data from around the world that civic education outcomes differ depending on learning contexts, instructional quality, and broader sociopolitical circumstances (UNICEF Office of Research, 2023). Overall, our results imply that undergraduate civic education knowledge may have little effect on election participation in the absence of favourable institutional and sociopolitical settings.

## **2.8. Theoretical Framework**

This study is well explained by the Theory of Civic Voluntarism developed by Verba, Scholzman, and Brady in 1995. According to the theory, people engage in political and electoral activities when they have access to resources, opportunities for recruitment, and psychological engagement. In this study, civic education knowledge increases political interest, confidence, and civic responsibility by equipping undergraduates with knowledge of civic duties, voting rights, democratic values, and governance processes. Nevertheless, informed students may still abstain due to insecurity, mistrust, poor mobilization, or restricted voting access; therefore, participation depends on civic awareness, motivation, and supportive contextual conditions.

## **2.9. Statement of the Problem**

Despite being a required general studies subject at Nigerian universities, questions remain over the effectiveness of civic education in encouraging significant electoral activity among undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria. Voter apathy, electoral mistrust, political unpredictability, and sporadic electoral violence are characteristics of Nigeria's democratic environment that deter young people from participating. Despite being exposed to civic education on democratic values, political rights, and electoral procedures, many students still exhibit poor engagement in voting and governance activities, according to data from recent elections, including the general elections in Southwest Nigeria in 2023. In general, the area still reports poor voter turnout, apathy among young people, and increasing political disengagement during elections.

Additionally, there are few possibilities for experiential learning or practical application that links knowledge to actual political action, and civic education in Nigerian colleges is frequently offered mostly in theoretical form. Students' political behavior and civic awareness diverge as a result. As a result, this study offers a helpful framework for evaluating the degree to which university-acquired civic education knowledge affects voting behavior. Additionally, the region's diversity of educational institutions and student experiences provides a solid foundation for conclusions that can guide more extensive national democratic and educational changes. Given that adolescents play a crucial role in maintaining democracy and guaranteeing accountability, this disparity raises questions regarding the efficacy of civic education in influencing voter turnout. In light of this, this study evaluates undergraduate civic education knowledge and how it relates to voting participation in Southwest Nigeria.

Research Question. What is the level of undergraduate civic education knowledge in universities in Southwest Nigeria ?. What is the level of electoral participation among undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria ?. What is the relationship between undergraduate civic education knowledge and electoral participation in Southwest Nigeria ?.

Hypotheses:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between undergraduate civic education knowledge and electoral participation in Southwest Nigeria.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant influence of undergraduate civic education knowledge on electoral participation in Southwest Nigeria.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

In order to evaluate undergraduates' civic education knowledge and election engagement in Southwestern Nigeria, this study used a mixed methods approach with a convergent parallel design. For a more comprehensive understanding, the design integrated qualitative insights into students' perspectives, experiences, and variables impacting electoral engagement with quantitative data on civic awareness and participation patterns.

#### **3.2. Participants of the Study**

To guarantee sufficient representation and manageability of the study population, a multistage sampling approach was used. To ensure a fair representation of the region, three of the six states in Southwest Nigeria were chosen at random for the first stage. The second phase involved the purposeful selection of one federal and one state university from each selected state based on factors such as geographic distribution, institutional ownership, accessibility, and 300 and 400 levels undergraduate student availability. This made sure that the two main types of public universities in the area were represented, and ensure that students above 18 years are the participants in this study.

To guarantee that students from various academic specialties were fairly represented, faculties and departments were chosen in the third stage using stratified sampling. Following that, 100 undergraduate respondents from 300 and 400 levels were chosen at random from each of the six universities, for a total quantitative sample of 600 respondents. The sample size was deemed sufficient to produce trustworthy data and improve the findings' generalizability throughout Southwest Nigerian public universities. Eighteen participants were purposefully chosen for focus groups and interviews for the qualitative strand based on their availability, relevance, and capacity to offer rich information about civic education knowledge and electoral engagement.

#### **3.3. Instruments**

The structured Undergraduates' Civic Education Knowledge and Electoral Participation Questionnaire (UCKEPQ), which includes multiple-choice and Likert-scale items covering demographics, civic knowledge, political awareness, voting behavior, and electoral participation, was used to gather quantitative data. A semi-structured interview guide on civic duty, political engagement, obstacles to participation, and recommendations for improvement was used to collect qualitative data. The instruments

were validated by specialists in measuring, educational research, and political science. Good internal consistency was indicated by a pilot study's Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87.

### 3.4. Data Analysis Techniques

Research questions 1 and 2 were addressed via frequency counts and percentages. While simple regression evaluated hypothesis 2 at 0.05 significance, Pearson correlation addressed research question 3 and hypothesis 1. Qualitative data obtained from the interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and carefully reviewed for accuracy and familiarity with the data. The transcripts were then organised and subjected to thematic analysis using a systematic coding procedure. Open coding was first conducted to identify significant statements, recurring ideas, and meaningful patterns related to civic education knowledge and electoral participation. Similar codes were subsequently grouped into categories and sub-themes through axial coding, while related sub-themes were merged into broader themes that addressed the objectives of the study. The coded data were continuously compared across participants to identify similarities, differences, and emerging patterns. Finally, the themes were interpreted and supported with relevant participants' responses to provide deeper understanding and explanation of the quantitative findings.

The study was conducted with strict adherence to ethical standards. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were provided with adequate information about the study before participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, while confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy of responses were ensured throughout the research process.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. The level of undergraduate civic education knowledge in universities in Southwest Nigeria

**Table 1:** Level of Undergraduate Civic Education Knowledge in Universities in Southwest Nigeria (N = 600)

Level of Civic Education Knowledge	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
High	281	46.83
Moderate	203	33.83
Low	116	19.34
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>

*Fieldwork, 2026*

According to Table 1's results, 281 respondents (46.83%) had a high level of civic education knowledge, 203 respondents (33.83%) had a moderate level, and 116 respondents (19.34%) had a low level. This suggests that most undergraduates have either high or moderate civic education knowledge. Overall, the results indicate that undergraduate civic education knowledge in Southwest Nigerian universities is moderately high, meaning that many students are reasonably aware of civic rights, responsibilities, governance procedures, and democratic values, though a significant portion still needs more civic education.

These outcomes were corroborated by qualitative findings from focus group talks. In general, participants showed knowledge of civic ideas such as human rights, democracy, good governance, and electoral responsibilities. Numerous students reported that their comprehension of governance and civic duties had increased as a result of civic education they had received through secondary school, university courses, social media, and public campaigns. Some participants did, however, disclose a lack of familiarity with particular electoral laws, political organizations, and policy-making procedures. Although there were still gaps in deeper practical and institutional understanding, the convergence of both data strands showed that undergraduate civic education knowledge in Southwest Nigerian universities was reasonably high. This indicates that although students are reasonably knowledgeable about fundamental civic issues, more hands-on and ongoing civic education is needed to develop comprehensive civic competence.

The inclusion of civic-related courses in university curriculum, easier access to information via social media and digital platforms, and increased political consciousness among young people during recent elections could all be contributing factors to this result. Students' comprehension of rights, obligations, and government may have been enhanced by exposure to public discussions, student union activities, and civic initiatives. However, several respondents still reported moderate or low knowledge levels, which could be explained by differences in institutional commitment, students' individual interests, and the lack of possibilities for actual civic engagement.

This outcome is consistent with Balogun's (2025) observations that undergraduates' comprehension of democratic values, civic rights, and government systems has improved as a result of exposure to civic education programs in postsecondary institutions. It is also in line with the findings of Ojo and Balogun (2024), who discovered that students in Southwest Nigeria had a noticeable understanding of civic norms as a result of exposure to political material and curriculum. In a similar vein, Hoskins et al. (2022) found that organised civic education programs can greatly improve students' understanding of democratic institutions and citizenship duties in European environments. Therefore, increasing access to civic information through formal education, media engagement, and heightened political consciousness among Nigerian undergraduates may be responsible for the comparatively high percentage of respondents with high civic knowledge in our study.

The outcome, however, is against the previous research that found Nigerian undergraduates' knowledge of civic education to be generally moderate rather than high. For example, according to Balogun (2025), the majority of students in North-Central Nigeria only scored marginally above average criteria, suggesting a lack of proficiency with civic responsibilities and democratic procedures. Similarly, Yusuf et al. (2023) discovered that Kwara State undergraduates only showed mediocre civic awareness, indicating a cursory familiarity with civic ideas rather than a thorough comprehension. The current result also deviates from Ogunleye and Daramola's (2022) assertion that civic education in many developing nations is still too theoretical and not adequately linked to real-world civic involvement, which limits the acquisition of relevant information. Additionally, even in industrialized nations, students frequently have a greater understanding of civic rights than institutional functioning and involvement mechanisms, according to Hoskins et al. (2022). The disparity in results could be caused by institutional variances, regional

disparities, rising political consciousness, or recent advancements in the provision of civic education in Southwest Nigerian universities.

#### 4.2. The level of electoral participation among undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria

**Table 2:** Level of Electoral Participation among Undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria (N=600)

Undergraduate Electoral Participation	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
High	124	20.67
Moderate	197	32.83
Low	279	46.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>

*Fieldwork, 2026*

According to Table 2's results, 124 respondents (20.67%) had a high level of electoral engagement, 197 respondents (32.83%) had a moderate level, and 279 respondents (46.50%) had a low level. This suggests that a low level of election involvement was exhibited by most undergraduates. Overall, the results point to the need for more political mobilization and civic engagement programs among Southwest Nigerian undergraduates, even though many students participate in democratic processes like voter registration, voting, and political engagement.

The quantitative results were corroborated by qualitative conclusions from focus group talks. Many undergraduates were politically informed but did not actively participate in elections, according to participants. Low participation was attributed by a number of students to lack of desire, transportation challenges, mistrust of the democratic process, academic obligations, and insecurity during elections. Additionally, some stated that their capacity to vote was restricted when they were abroad from their home areas during elections. Nonetheless, several participants reported that social media awareness and advocacy initiatives were progressively boosting young people's involvement in politics. Election participation among Southwest Nigerian undergraduates was generally low to moderate, according to the convergence of both data strands. Students showed enthusiasm in democratic governance, but their actual involvement in elections remained low. This highlights the need for young mobilization, institutional assistance, and measures that increase students' access to and confidence in voting.

Political indifference, mistrust of democratic systems, unease during elections, and discontent with governance results could all contribute to this result on Table 2. Many undergraduates would believe that their votes don't really matter, which would discourage them from actively participating. Participation may also be limited by academic pressures, moving during elections, and challenges with voter registration or polling place access. Furthermore, poor civic engagement initiatives, insufficient youth-focused political mobilization, and unfavourable opinions of politicians may deter regular election involvement beyond simple registration or sporadic voting.

This outcome is consistent with what Mulyawan et al. (2024) discovered that young voters frequently exhibit low to moderate electoral involvement because of low political efficacy, little exposure to campaigns, and low belief in the significance of their votes. Additionally, it validates the results of Daukere et al. (2024), who documented a steady

drop in voter turnout in Nigeria's Fourth Republic elections from 2015 to 2023 and attributed the trend to poor confidence in electoral institutions, economic hardship, and political discontent. In a similar vein, Hassan (2024) noted that poor turnout in the 2023 presidential election diminished public trust in government and undermined democratic legitimacy. Adebogun et al. (2025) observed that low voter confidence and limited perceived rewards of involvement contributed to lower turnout in local elections in Southwest Nigeria. Thus, the prevalence of low election involvement among undergraduates in this study may be indicative of broader national trends of socioeconomic constraints, institutional mistrust, and youth apathy.

The result, however, runs contrary to research that indicates young people and undergraduates might exhibit moderate or rising election engagement under favourable circumstances. According to Harada et al. (2024), voter turnout frequently increases in areas with accessibility, civic consciousness, and advantageous contextual circumstances, suggesting that adolescent participation levels are not intrinsically low. This suggests that undergraduate involvement can increase dramatically with appropriate mobilization and favourable election settings. Additionally, Yakubu and Onwuegbuchulam (2025) found that young voters, both male and female, actively participated in elections in several Nigerian contexts, indicating that apathy may not be common among all demographic groups. Van Baalen (2023) also pointed out that in more politically secure regions with greater faith in institutions, participation tends to increase, even when insecurity can reduce turnout. Differences in location, political environment, election type, institutional confidence, or the particular undergraduate populations examined could be the cause of the discrepancy between prior studies and the current outcome. It might also suggest that Southwest Nigerian undergraduates have particular obstacles like difficulties registering to vote, mistrust of political figures, or conflicting academic and financial demands that lower their involvement in elections.

### 4.3. The relationship between undergraduate civic education knowledge and electoral participation in Southwest Nigeria

**Table 3:** Relationship between Undergraduate Civic Education Knowledge and Electoral Participation in Southwest Nigeria (N = 600)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Undergraduate Civic Education Knowledge	600	67.41	11.58	0.67	0.000	Significant	
Undergraduate Electoral Participation	600	63.16	13.05				Positive Moderate Relationship

*Fieldwork, 2026, Significant Level =  $p > 0.05$*

There is a moderately positive relationship between undergraduate civic education knowledge and electoral participation among respondents in Southwest Nigeria, according to Table 3's Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.67$ ). The p-value of 0.000 is less than the significance level of 0.05, demonstrating the statistical significance of the link. In practical terms, as undergraduates' civic education knowledge increases, so does their level of participation in electoral activities like voter registration,

voting, political discussions, and campaign involvement. This finding suggests that raising undergraduates' civic education knowledge may improve their democratic participation.

The statistical results were corroborated by qualitative findings. Participants clarified that students were generally more interested in taking part in elections if they understood the importance of voting, democratic governance, and citizens' rights. Numerous respondents claimed that civic awareness promoted political knowledge, self-assurance in voicing opinions, and a desire to use voting to advance the country. However, other participants pointed out that issues including political mistrust, election violence, insecurity, and logistical difficulties inhibited involvement, so knowledge alone did not always convert into participation. Improving civic education in conjunction with electoral reforms is crucial for boosting youth participation, as the convergence of both strands showed that undergraduate civic education knowledge had a strong and positive relationship with electoral participation in Southwest Nigeria. Although civic knowledge greatly encourages electoral engagement, external barriers may limit the extent to which informed students actively participate.

This outcome might be the consequence of civic education raising understanding of civic duties, voting rights, governance procedures, and the significance of democratic engagement. Undergraduates with knowledge are more likely to comprehend how elections affect public policy and leadership, which encourages participation. Confidence and political efficacy may also be increased by exposure to civic education, political debates, media coverage, and campus participation initiatives. Students are more inclined to register, cast ballots, engage in political discourse, and take part in campaigns or advocacy activities as they gain more knowledge.

This outcome is consistent with the results of Al-Ansari et al (2025), who discovered because civic education significantly increased students' political awareness and increased their involvement in events like voting and political gatherings. Additionally, it validates the results of Alscher et al. (2022), who found that political knowledge has a significant mediating role in civic education's ability to increase students' interest in politics and election engagement. In a similar vein, Zainurin and Wan Husin (2025) found that students who had higher civic and political education were more inclined to vote, run for office, and engage in democratic activities in a responsible manner. A statistically significant positive correlation between civic education and political participation among Generation Z students was also verified by Suhariyanto and Rozak (2025). Thus, the current study indicates that Southwest Nigerian undergraduates' awareness, confidence, and preparedness to participate in election processes rise in tandem with their increased civic education knowledge.

The finding, however, is contrary to some empirical research that contends that civic education understanding does not always equate to actual voting. For example, Deimel et al. (2022) discovered that although political knowledge may influence the intention to vote, other intervening factors like perceptions of electoral credibility confidence in democratic institutions, as well as contentment with governance frequently influence the actual decision to vote. This suggests that if students think the election system is opaque or ineffective, they may have sufficient civic knowledge yet still be politically indifferent. Similarly, Willeck and Mendelberg (2022) pointed out that while education generally increases political efficacy, contextual elements like peer pressure,

socioeconomic difficulties, and the current political environment might lessen the benefit of civic knowledge on involvement. Therefore, even though the current study discovered a strong positive correlation, other research indicates that civic education knowledge by itself might not be enough to ensure active election participation in the absence of favourable institutional and environmental circumstances.

#### 4.4. Hypotheses Testing

##### 4.4.1. There is no significant relationship between undergraduate civic education knowledge and electoral participation in Southwest Nigeria

**Table 4:** Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Undergraduate Civic Education Knowledge and Electoral Participation in Southwest Nigeria (N = 600)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Undergraduate Civic Education Knowledge	600	67.41	11.58	0.67	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Undergraduate Electoral Participation	600	63.16	13.05				Positive relationship

*Fieldwork, 2026, Significant Level =  $p > 0.05$*

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient between undergraduate civic education knowledge and election participation is  $r = 0.67$ , with a p-value of 0.000, which is below the significance level of 0.05, according to Table 4. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which claims that there exist no meaningful connection between election participation in Southwest Nigeria and undergraduate civic education knowledge, is rejected. This indicates that the two variables have a significant positive association. According to the research, undergraduates who are more knowledgeable about civic education are more likely to actively engage in democratic activities including voting, voter registration, and political debates.

This result might be the effect of civic education providing undergraduates with information about civic duties, democratic rights, and political processes, which promotes involvement. Students who are well-informed are more likely to recognize the importance of voting and participating in politics. Interest and confidence may be further bolstered by exposure to current political events, media content, and university debates. Additionally, civic education increases political efficacy by instilling in students the belief that their involvement may impact governance, which in turn increases voter registration, voting, and political discourse.

This result is consistent with a number of recent empirical studies carried out both developing and developed clime. This outcome corroborates the findings of Al-Ansari et al. (2025), who discovered that students who received structured civic education became more politically conscious and engaged in voting and other democratic activities. Additionally, it is consistent with a cross-national European study that found that students' intention to vote is significantly predicted by their political awareness, with more knowledgeable students demonstrating a higher readiness to participate in elections. In a similar vein, Chansa et al. (2024) found that initiatives for civic education raised political

participation and voter turnout in Africa, particularly among young Nigerians. According to the current findings, civic education increases the possibility that undergraduates would participate in elections by providing them with the information, self-assurance, and drive needed for active democratic involvement.

The results, however, run counter to research that contends civic education knowledge does not always have a significant or direct influence on voter turnout. Civic and electoral involvement, for instance, did not significantly affect political trust or democratic attitudes, according to study done in Ethiopia. This suggests that knowledge and participation may function independently in some situations. Similarly, Deimel et al. (2022) observed that while civic knowledge affects election participation, the link is frequently weak because it is mediated by elements including perceptions of government responsibility, confidence in electoral results, and faith in political institutions. This implies that even informed undergraduates can decide not to cast ballots if they believe the political climate is unreliable or unfriendly. The degree to which civic education knowledge translates into actual electoral participation can therefore be weakened by contextual factors like institutional trust, political climate, and personal efficacy, despite the fact that the current study found a significant positive relationship.

**4.4.2. There is no significant influence of undergraduate civic education knowledge on electoral participation in Southwest Nigeria**

**Table 5:** Regression Analysis of the Influence of Undergraduate Civic Education Knowledge on Electoral Participation in Southwest Nigeria (N = 600)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	f-value	p-value	Decision
Regression	18552.63	1	18552.63	136.84	0.000	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
Residual	86874.15	598	135.44			
Total	105526.78	599				

**Model Summary**

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Estimate
0.417	0.175	0.174	12.04

Significant Level =  $p > 0.05$

With an F-value of 136.84 and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05, the result in Table 5 demonstrates that undergraduate civic education knowledge significantly influenced electoral participation among respondents in Southwest Nigeria. Consequently, the null hypothesis that there is no significant influence of undergraduate civic education knowledge on electoral participation is rejected. The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.175) suggests that greater proficiency in civic education are linked to increased electoral participation among undergraduates.

This result can be the result of civic education knowledge enhancing the student's understanding of voting rights, democratic principles, and the importance of engagement in governance. Undergraduates who are well-informed are more likely to believe that elections are important and to take civic engagement seriously. Political conversations, media exposure, and university courses might increase awareness and motivation to register or cast a ballot. The R<sup>2</sup> number also shows that, although civic knowledge is

important, socioeconomic situations, political trust, security, and peer pressure also have an impact on voting behaviour.

Higher levels of civic education knowledge are linked to increased involvement in electoral activities, according to the results, and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.175$ ) indicates that civic knowledge accounts for a significant amount of the variation in students' participation. This corroborates more extensive empirical data showing civic education gives youth political consciousness, an awareness of democratic procedures, and a sense of civic duty that motivates them to cast ballots and take part in governance. The results also indicate that undergraduates are more likely to become active participants and gain confidence in the political process when they are sufficiently informed about their rights, responsibilities, and the importance of elections. Consequently, the current study supports the claim that civic education is still a crucial instrument for boosting young people's political engagement in Nigeria.

The results, however, run counter to research that suggests civic education knowledge could not have a major direct impact on voting behaviour, especially in situations when structural impediments are present. For instance, Manuwa (2023) noted that despite Nigerian students' growing civic consciousness, their real voting participation is still low because of political indifference, mistrust of electoral institutions, and insecurity. In a similar vein, Chen and Khoso (2025) discovered that not all civic education components significantly predict students' political engagement, particularly when classroom exposure does not result in real-world participation. Additionally, Deimel et al. (2024) contended that the direct relationship between civic education and active political participation is erratic and heavily influenced by contextual elements including the sociopolitical climate, teaching quality, and institutional credibility. Similarly, the current study's  $R^2$  value of 0.175 suggests that factors other than civic knowledge account for a significant amount (82.5%) of election participation. This implies that although civic education knowledge is important, its influence can be constrained in the absence of good socioeconomic circumstances, political stability, and institutional trust.

#### **4.5. Overall Summary of Interview Findings for 18 Participants**

The majority of participants had moderate to high civic education understanding, especially with regard to citizens' rights, democratic values, and governance procedures, according to in-depth interviews with 18 undergraduate students. Political debates, social media, and university courses were important sources of information. However, because many people reported registering to vote but not consistently casting ballots, electoral participation was generally low to moderate. Mistrust of electoral institutions, instability, scholastic obligations, and discontent with political leaders were noted as major obstacles. The majority of respondents agreed that increased civic awareness promotes involvement, but they stressed that in order to convert information into active electoral engagement, credible elections, young mobilization, and institutional.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

According to the study's findings, undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria have a moderate to high degree of civic education knowledge, meaning that many of them are reasonably knowledgeable about civic rights, responsibilities, democratic values, and governance procedures. Their relatively low to moderate level of electoral participation,

however, indicates that civic knowledge does not always equate to active participation in electoral activities. The study also found a strong positive correlation between civic education knowledge and electoral involvement, suggesting that more civic awareness increases students' propensity to participate in voting and other democratic procedures. However, other factors including political trust, institutional credibility, security, and socioeconomic conditions all influence electoral behaviour, as evidenced by the limited explanatory value of civic knowledge. Therefore, in order to encourage increased youth electoral participation and deepen democratic consolidation in Southwest Nigeria, it is imperative to promote practical and participatory civic education coupled with changes that boost confidence in electoral institutions.

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