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Societal vices, social values, and civic competence among senior secondary students in Ife Central, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the relationships between societal vices, social values, and civic competence among senior secondary school students in Osun State, Nigeria. It investigated the relationships among societal vices and civic competence, social values and civic competence, and the combined influence of both factors on students' civic competence. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study population comprised senior secondary school students in Osun State, and a sample of 200 students was selected from four schools in the Ife Central Local Government Area using a multistage sampling procedure. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument, the "Societal Vices, Social Values and Civic Competence Questionnaire" (SVSVCCQ), and analyzed using frequency counts, simple percentages, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC). The findings revealed a significant relationship between societal vices and civic competence among the students ($r = 0.882$; $p < 0.05$). The findings further indicated that societal vices and social values are important dimensions of the social environment that are associated with students' civic competence. The study highlights the need for schools, families, and other stakeholders to strengthen positive social values and address societal vices as part of efforts to promote responsible and active citizenship among secondary school students.

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1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental process through which individuals develop the knowledge, abilities, values, and character needed to contribute meaningfully to their families and communities. It should not be equated with schooling. Schooling represents one formal means through which education is delivered, whereas education encompasses the broader and continuing process of human learning through which knowledge is acquired, intellectual capacities are cultivated, and diverse skills are developed (Adesemowo and Sotonade, 2022). In this broader sense, education involves not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the development of the mind, the cultivation of discipline, and the formation of character. Okwori and Ede (2012) similarly describe education as the transmission of relevant knowledge that enables learners to adapt to their environment and live useful and productive lives. Its value consequently extends beyond individual advancement, as educated individuals are expected to apply their knowledge, skills, and values to contribute to social development. In contemporary society, education also has an important role in cultivating socially desirable values and addressing behaviors that may undermine individual and collective well-being. Within schools, Civic Education provides an important avenue for this purpose by integrating

value formation, responsible conduct, and civic responsibility into students' educational experiences, thereby helping them develop the dispositions needed to become responsible members of society.

Civic education is a continuous process of preparing individuals to become responsible and engaged members of society. It encompasses the development of civic norms and values, appropriate attitudes and moral dispositions, social awareness, practical skills, relevant knowledge, respect for legal rights, and constructive relationships with others. It also cultivates qualities such as honesty, reliability, patriotism, diligence, dedication, and a responsible sense of time, all of which contribute to citizens' capacity to support national growth and development (Abika, 2014). As an integral component of education, civic education equips learners with the knowledge and competencies to participate meaningfully in democratic society, exercising their rights and fulfilling their civic responsibilities. Its influence extends beyond formal classroom instruction to the broader educational environment, including extracurricular activities, student discussions, and organizational involvement both within and outside the school. Schools are particularly important in this process because they provide structured opportunities for learners to develop civic competence and translate it into active participation in community life. At the same time, civic engagement is not shaped solely by schools. Family upbringing also has a substantial influence, particularly through the everyday attitudes and behaviors parents model, which can shape children's dispositions toward civic participation (World Bank Group, 2014). In addition, high schools serve as important social institutions where students' intellectual abilities, imagination, and social behavior patterns can be developed. Through these experiences, schools seek to develop individuals who are mentally prepared, socially responsible, and capable of making constructive contributions to their academic development and to the nation's socio-economic and political progress.

Civic competence refers to the capacity that students develop to participate meaningfully in democratic citizenship. It comprises two closely related dimensions: intellectual competence and participative competence (Hoskins, Saisana, and Villalba, 2012). Intellectual competence enables students to examine social and civic issues critically, reflect on different perspectives, and express reasoned criticism in ways that remain open and constructive. More importantly, such competence can help individuals recognize, on rational grounds, why involvement in efforts to improve their communities matters. Participative competence, in contrast, is reflected in students' willingness and ability to translate civic knowledge and values into active, responsible engagement in public and community life. The formation of these competencies, however, extends well beyond the boundaries of formal schooling. Parents, peers, media exposure, and civil society provide different social experiences through which young people encounter civic norms, expectations, and practices. From early childhood, political socialization, particularly the identification and transmission of values within everyday social relationships, has been regarded as an important foundation for the development of civic competence (Lauglo and Oia, 2008; Kahne and Sporte, 2008). Ultimately, civic competence enables individuals to participate more fully in civic life by combining an understanding of social and political concepts and structures with a willingness to engage actively and responsibly in democratic processes.

In relation to Civic education, competence includes knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, and civic dispositions. The qualities of a competent active citizen are referred to as civic competence (Kaumba, Kabombwe, and Mwanza, 2020). In other words, knowledge, skills, attitudes/beliefs, and civic dispositions make up competence. Therefore, Civic competence refers to the set of skills, knowledge, and values that enable individuals to participate effectively in democratic processes and to contribute to the development of their communities and society as a whole. Westheimer (2009) opined that Civic competence refers to the ability to critically analyze and participate in the public sphere, to understand the complex social and political issues that affect one's community and society, and to engage in informed and responsible civic action. To Jenkins, Andolina, Brady, Schlozman, and Verba (2016), Civic competence refers to the ability to participate effectively in civic life, including voting, advocacy, and community service, and to understand the workings of government and the political process. Civic competences enable people to act responsibly in society and to interact with others in line with values such as transparency, openness, social responsibility, and human dignity. Well-developed Civic competence in learners will help inculcate acceptable attitudes and behaviors that will lead to and drastically reduce societal vices (unacceptable attitudes and behaviors).

Social vices are deviant behaviours such as illicit sex, drug addiction, evil, immorality, murder, examination malpractice, thuggery, and other criminal tendencies. Elujekwute (2019) describes social vices as acts of indiscipline that violate societal norms and values. According to Okoye (2013), social vices are harmful and antisocial behaviors that deviate from acceptable societal norms and values. Okeke (2010)

explains social vices as immoral, unethical, and illegal practices that are detrimental to individuals and society. Adebayo (2013) depicts social vices as activities that violate moral and ethical standards and endanger social well-being. Amadi and Urho (2015) state that social vices are actions or behaviors that undermine social harmony and moral values. Social vices refer to patterns of behavior that violate social norms and can undermine individual well-being and community life. Among the behaviors commonly associated with social vices are cultism, robbery, ritual killing, kidnapping, smoking, and drug trafficking. In educational settings, a lack of discipline may also take forms that directly disrupt teaching and learning, including bullying, vandalism, alcohol and substance abuse, trance-related behavior, and persistent failure or unwillingness to complete assigned schoolwork. Such problems do not emerge in isolation. Rapid social change, uncritical adoption of external cultural influences, weak leadership, pervasive corruption, and the growing influence of mass media can gradually erode traditional cultural values and patterns of behavior once regarded as socially acceptable. The consequences extend beyond individual misconduct, as social vices can disrupt relationships, weaken social cohesion, and create broader challenges for communities and society as a whole.

The prevalence of corruption, indiscipline, disregard for elders and the rule of law, and a growing lack of commitment to social responsibilities reflect troubling trends in Nigerian society. Violence across the social, political, and economic spheres has further affected citizens' sense of security and social well-being. Among young people, forms of incivility have become increasingly visible, while civic virtues such as respect, responsibility, integrity, and commitment to the common good appear to be under considerable pressure. Persistent cult activities in secondary schools and higher education institutions, together with kidnapping and the continuing threat posed by Boko Haram, illustrate the broader challenges confronting Nigerian communities (Abika, 2014; Miwari & Tariah, 2023). Such conditions can affect individuals' mental and physical well-being, as well as their academic development and moral formation. Addressing these challenges requires more than disciplinary control; it also calls for sustained efforts to develop students' civic competence by strengthening responsible attitudes, socially acceptable behavior, respect for shared norms, and active commitment to others' well-being. In this regard, cultivating civic competence from an early stage of education may help develop individuals who are better prepared to participate responsibly in society and support broader national development.

Values can be understood as principles or standards that individuals and communities use to determine what is considered important, worthwhile, and appropriate in life. They also provide guidance for evaluating conduct, particularly in relation to what a society regards as desirable or morally acceptable. In a broader cultural context, values are expressed through actions, practices, and shared beliefs that a community considers meaningful and worth preserving. Social values are particularly important within a social system because they help sustain social order by providing general guidance for social conduct while establishing expectations and norms that regulate interactions among members of society (Mishra, 2015). Honesty, for instance, represents a social value when truthful and trustworthy behavior is collectively recognized as an important standard of conduct within a community (Mishra, 2015). Social values do not operate independently of the wider social structure; together with norms and institutions, they influence how social processes are organized and experienced within a particular society (Tiwari, 2019). From a broader perspective, Adewuya (2002) categorizes social values into five dimensions: values governing interactions between individuals and institutions; moral values derived from both written and unwritten ethical codes; economic values concerned with profit and loss; political values associated with democracy, freedom, and patriotism; and spiritual values related to redemption, salvation, and other dimensions of spiritual life.

Social values provide the general guidelines for social conduct. Social values are the principles and beliefs that shape individuals and society as a whole. Examples of social values include fundamental rights, patriotism, respect for human dignity, rationality, sacrifice, individuality, equality, democracy, and so on, which guide our behaviour in many ways. Honesty, fairness, responsibility, respect, good conduct, etc., are social values. Social values promote peaceful, developed, socially and democratically minded citizens. Social values and value education instil in individuals acceptable and responsible behaviour, enabling them to become responsible citizens and build a developed society. Societal vices and social values can influence the development of civic competency among senior secondary school students. Societal vices such as drug abuse and crime can erode respect for the rule of law, a fundamental aspect of civic competency (Edwin, Ndifon, & Otu, 2025). Students who engage in these vices may not understand the importance of obeying laws and regulations, which can lead to a breakdown of social order.

On the other hand, social values such as honesty, respect for authority, and patriotism can promote civic competency among senior secondary school students. Students who understand the importance of these values are more likely to participate in civic activities such as voting, community service, and volunteerism. In conclusion, the influence of societal vices and social values on civic competency among senior secondary school students cannot be overemphasized. It is essential to promote positive social values and discourage societal vices to develop students who are responsible, engaged, and active citizens in their communities. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the influence of societal vices and social values on the civic competence of secondary school students in Ife Central Local Government Area of Osun State. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to (i) Determine the relationship between societal vices and civic competence among secondary school students in Osun State, (ii) determine the relationship between social values and civic competence among secondary school students in the study area; and (iii) Examine the Influence of societal vices and social values on civic competence among secondary school students in the study area. The research hypothesis is Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between societal vices and civic competence of senior secondary school students in Osun State. Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between social values and civic competence of senior secondary school students in Osun State. Ho_3: There is no significant influence of societal vices and social values on civic competence among senior secondary school students in Osun State.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design and Participants

The study employed a descriptive survey research design to examine the relationships among societal vices, social values, and civic competence among senior secondary school students in the Ife Central Local Government Area (LGA) of Osun State. This design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect data from a defined population and examine patterns of association among the variables within the study setting. The study population comprised senior secondary school students enrolled in the LGA, from which a sample of 200 students was drawn through a multistage sampling procedure. At the first stage, four senior secondary schools were selected from the LGA using simple random sampling. At the second stage, 50 students were randomly selected from each participating school, yielding a total sample of 200 students.

2.2 Instruments and Data Collection

Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument entitled the "Societal Vices, Social Values and Civic Competence Questionnaire" (SVSVCCQ). The questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section A collected the respondents' socio-demographic information, while Sections B, C, and D each comprised seven items measuring societal vices, social values, and civic competence, respectively. Responses to these items were recorded on a three-point projective rating scale: Always (A), Sometimes (S), and Never (N). To establish the instrument's face and content validity, the SVSVCCQ was reviewed by experts, whose corrections and recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire. Its internal consistency was subsequently assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which produced a coefficient of 0.76. This value was considered acceptable, indicating that the instrument had adequate reliability for data collection in the study.

2.3 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages to summarize the respondents' characteristics. At the same time, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) and regression analysis were employed to examine the relationships among the study variables and their predictive associations with civic competence.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

The results of the analyses of the data collected are presented in the tables below:

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of socio-demographic information of the respondents in senior secondary schools in Ile Central Local Government Area of Osun State

S/N	Variables		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender	Male	94	47.0
		Female	106	53.0
2.	Age	Less than 15 years	70	35.0
		15 years	55	27.5
		Above 15 years	75	37.5
3.	Class	SSS 1	60	30.0
		SSS 2	76	38.0
		SSS 3	64	32.0

N = 200

Table 1 summarizes the socio-demographic characteristics of senior secondary school students who participated in the study in Ife Central Local Government Area of Osun State. Of the respondents, 47.0% were male, and 53.0% were female, indicating a slightly higher representation of female students. Regarding age, 35.0% were younger than 15 years, 27.5% were 15 years old, and 37.0% were above 15 years. In terms of class level, 30.0% of the respondents were in SSS 1, 38.0% in SSS 2, and 32.0% in SSS 3. Overall, the respondents represented all three senior secondary school levels, with SSS 2 students accounting for the largest proportion of the sample.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between societal vices and civic competence among senior secondary school students in Ife Central Local Government Area of Osun State. To test this hypothesis, responses to the seven items measuring societal vices in Section B and the seven items assessing civic competence in Section D were analyzed using the PPMC. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Pearson product-moment correlation of the relationship between societal vices and civic competence of senior secondary school students in Ile Central Local Government Area of Osun State

Groups	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig.(2-tailed)	Remark
Societal Vices	200	14.35	3.11	-0.882	.045	Significant
Civic Competence	200	16.44	4.10			

($r = -0.882$; $p<0.05$)

Table 2 indicates a significant negative relationship between societal vices and civic competence among senior secondary school students in Ife Central Local Government Area of Osun State ($r = -0.882$; $p < 0.05$). Given that the p-value is below the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between societal vices and students' civic competence is rejected. The negative correlation coefficient indicates that higher levels of societal vices are associated with lower levels of civic competence among the students. Overall, the finding demonstrates a statistically significant inverse relationship between the two variables within the study area.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between social values and civic competence among senior secondary school students in Osun State. To test this hypothesis, responses to the seven items measuring social values in Section C and the seven items assessing civic competence in Section D were analyzed using the PPMC. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Pearson product-moment correlation of the relationship between social values and civic competence of senior secondary school students in Ile Central Local Government Area of Osun State

Groups	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig.(2-tailed)	Remark
Social Values	200	15.65	3.79	0.751	.005	Significant
Civic Competence	200	16.44	4.10			

($r = 0.751$; $p<0.05$)

Table 3 indicates a significant positive relationship between social values and civic competence among senior secondary school students in Ife Central Local Government Area of Osun State ($r = 0.751$; $p < 0.05$). Since the p-value is below the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between social values and students' civic competence is rejected. The positive correlation

coefficient indicates that higher levels of social values are associated with greater civic competence among students. The finding demonstrates a statistically significant positive relationship between social values and civic competence in the study area.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant influence of societal vices and social values on civic competence among senior secondary school students in Osun State. To test this hypothesis, responses to the seven items measuring societal vices in Section B, social values in Section C, and civic competence in Section D were analyzed using regression analysis. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression analysis of the combined relationship between societal vices and social values on civic competence of senior secondary school students in the study area.

$R = 0.742^a$ $R^2 = 0.551$ Adj. $R^2 = 0.028$ $F = 2.551$	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	14.735	5.302		1.532	.000
Societal Vices	1.664	1.109	0.227	0.757	.044
Social Values	2.045	1.224	0.889	1.821	.005

* Dependent Variable: Civic Competence

* Predictors: (Constant), Societal Vices and Social Values

Table 4 shows that societal vices and social values, when considered jointly, are statistically significantly associated with the civic competence of senior secondary school students in the study area ($F = 2.551$; $p < 0.05$). Given that the p-value is below the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis stating that societal vices and social values have no significant combined relationship with students' civic competence is rejected. The finding suggests that the two variables, taken together, are significantly associated with variations in students' civic competence in the study area. Thus, societal vices and social values should be considered jointly when examining the social factors related to civic competence among senior secondary school students.

3.2 Discussion

The study revealed a significant negative relationship between societal vices and the civic competence of senior secondary school students in Osun State. In practical terms, the finding suggests that greater exposure to or involvement in societal vices is associated with lower levels of civic competence among students. Such a relationship is plausible because behaviors that contradict accepted social norms may weaken the values, attitudes, and sense of responsibility that underpin constructive civic participation. The finding is broadly consistent with Apase and Yawe (2019), who noted that social vices have increasingly emerged as a widespread concern at both national and global levels. These behaviors are not confined to particular ethnic, racial, or religious groups and may take diverse forms, including examination malpractice, indecent dressing, prostitution, political thuggery, cultism, drug addiction, targeted assassination, armed robbery, pipeline vandalism, damage to electricity infrastructure, and cybercrime (Apase and Yawe, 2019). Such practices conflict with the social norms and values that communities seek to preserve, including honesty, diligence, shared beliefs, attitudes, customs, traditions, ideals, practical skills, and culturally defined prohibitions transmitted across generations through formal and informal education. From a behavioral perspective, Igwe (2014) describes social vices as antisocial actions that violate established social norms and values, ranging from indecent dressing and sexual harassment to promiscuity, character assassination, impersonation, and financial fraud. Similarly, Omonijo, Nnedum, Fadugba, Uche, and Bieree (2013) characterize social vices as acts of commission, omission, or negligence that contravene the cultural values and accepted standards of conduct within a particular community, situation, or social setting. Viewed collectively, these perspectives indicate that societal vices represent more than isolated acts of misconduct; they reflect departures from the normative foundations through which individuals learn responsible behavior and participate constructively in society.

The study also found a significant relationship between social values and the civic competence of senior secondary school students. This finding is consistent with Turkkahraman (2014), whose research examined the influence of social values on civic competence and found that these values can positively contribute to students' civic competencies, personal development, and broader national development. At the

societal level, social values comprise shared moral beliefs and principles that guide acceptable conduct and help sustain collective life. Because these values are broadly recognized and shared within a community, they can provide students with a common normative foundation for understanding their responsibilities toward others and the society in which they live. Civic development, however, requires more than the internalization of established values. Llewellyn, Cook, and Molina (2010) argued that civic learning should engage students with questions of social justice, enabling them to examine power relations, critically investigate political issues, and recognize opportunities to contribute to social change. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that social values may provide an important normative basis for civic competence, while meaningful civic learning can help students translate those values into critical awareness and responsible participation in social life.

Social values play an important role in regulating everyday interactions and organizing community activities. Values such as honesty, helpfulness, modesty, and diligence shape expectations about how individuals should behave toward one another and fulfill their responsibilities. From a sociological perspective, however, values are not necessarily universal; their meaning and relative importance may vary across social groups and historical contexts. Within a social system, these shared values provide a normative framework that guides individuals in initiating and carrying out social activities. By establishing common expectations, they help people understand their respective roles and responsibilities, coordinate their actions, and perform social functions in an orderly manner. In everyday life, such values can also strengthen interpersonal relationships, support the pursuit of personal and professional goals, and encourage individuals to develop the attitudes and behaviors associated with responsible and productive citizenship.

The study finally indicated a significant influence of societal vices and social values on the civic competence of senior secondary school students in the study area. The results corroborate the findings of Rose and Rudolph (2006), who argued that social vices significantly influence learners' civic competence. In another study by Dias and Soares (2018), it was found that enforcing civic dimensions is a valuable approach to enhancing education as a collective societal endeavour and a common good. Social values and social vices can significantly impact civic competence, which is an individual's ability to participate effectively in civic life, including engaging in public discourse, understanding government processes, and taking action to address social issues. Developing civic competencies is crucial for students because it helps them to become active and responsible citizens who can contribute to society in meaningful ways. Civic competences are an essential part of a well-rounded education, and they play a critical role in preparing students to become engaged and responsible citizens who can contribute to the betterment of society.

4. Conclusion

The study found that societal vices were negatively and significantly associated with the civic competence of senior secondary school students, whereas social values were positively and significantly associated with civic competence. The findings indicate that both societal vices and social values are important factors influencing students' civic competence in the study area. These findings highlight the need for coordinated efforts among schools, families, education authorities, and students to strengthen positive civic development while addressing behaviors that undermine responsible citizenship. Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, school stakeholders should implement awareness programs that help students understand the social consequences of vices such as corruption, drug abuse, violence, and discrimination, while reinforcing the principles and responsibilities of responsible citizenship. Second, parents should strengthen value-based education at home by consistently modeling and reinforcing traditional, socially constructive values that support children's moral development and prepare them to become responsible adults. Third, school administrators, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, should provide regular workshops and seminars for teachers, students, and parents on strategies to promote appropriate conduct and address behavioral problems within and beyond the school environment. Finally, students should be encouraged to participate actively in civic activities and community development initiatives, particularly those that enable them to identify social problems, discuss possible solutions, and contribute constructively to their communities.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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