

A Survey of National Values Awareness and Erosion Among Secondary School Students in Niger State: Implication for National Patriotism Counselling

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Abstract: *The thrust of this study focused on investigating the level of awareness and erosion of national values in school children and its implications for national patriotism. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprises of all secondary school students in Niger State. A sample size of 1,270 students was randomly selected across the three senatorial districts of the state. A self-developed questionnaire titled 'Nigeria's Nationalism Scale' was used to obtain information for the study from the respondents. The instrument was validated and a reliability index of 0.87 was obtained. Descriptive statistics of percentage was used in answering the research questions while inferential statistics of t-test and linear regression were used to test the hypotheses. Findings revealed that secondary school students in Niger state have a higher level of national values awareness and both value awareness level and level of value erosion have significant influence on patriotism. The study recommended among others that counsellors should be employed and adequately be provided with necessary facility and fund to complement the effort of the civic and social studies teachers in re-orientating the school students in Niger state on national values.*

Key words: value, awareness, erosion, patriotism, counselling.

INTRODUCTION

Development in any nation of the world is dependent on the level of patriotism of its citizens.

The nationalist movement that led Nigeria gaining independent was motivated by immense love for the nation. Regrettably, that nationalistic stimulus was inhibited shortly after the attainment of the independence. For greed and selfish motives, politicians use tribe, religion and other divisive modes to grasp or stay in power. This prevents the younger generation from seeing the values of unity, love and patriotism rather considers tribe and religion. It is the firm belief of the researchers that no meaningful development will take place in Nigeria without reassessing the essence of patriotism in the body politic of the nation.

In this modern era, the concept of patriotism has been a subject of discussion. There are different perceptions towards the description of patriotism on its content and distinctive characteristics. Many occasions in Africa especially Nigeria, the spirit of patriotism has been restricted to call to serve in the military and dying in the combat which is the ultimate sacrifice anyone can make for his or her country and serve in government position but neglecting civic patriotism. According to Standard Dictionary, patriotism means love of one's country. This involves special affection for one's own country, special concern for the well-being of the country and willingness to sacrifice oneself to promote the country's good.

The notion of patriotism as reported by Burlakova, Bogatyreva, Polozhentseva and Yulina (2020), was associated with the tradition of orthodox culture and consisted in the willingness to sacrifice everything for the country. According to Altikulac (2016), patriotism is one's feeling of love and loyalty toward one's country. In the Great Soviet encyclopaedia, the concept of patriotism was defined as the boundless devotion of soviet people to the soviet social order, their socialist fatherland (Burlakova, et al 2020). In the submission of Burlakova, et al (2020), patriotism helps to reveal to one's contemporaries the value content of such concepts-symbols as Motherland, Statehood, Fatherland, homeland, social justice, their roles in the consolidation of the country and In its self-determination for the standpoint of the unity of tradition and modernity; past, present and future.

Feeling of patriotism is not just feeling of love for motherland. It is a high consciousness of civic responsibility for the fate of the motherland, a deep conviction in the need to subordinate the interest of each to the interest of all (Zimnyaya, et al, 2005 in Burlakova et al, 2020). Patriotism is a culture that displays one's love for the society and nation where one is born. Patriotism according to Jideofor (2016) is often defined as an emotional attachment to a nation which an individual recognizes as his/her homeland. Patriotism is sometimes called 'national feeling' or 'national pride. He observed further that the core features of patriotism include special affection for one's own nation (country); a sense of personal identification with the nation, special concern for the well-being of the nation and willingness to sacrifice to promote the nation's good.

Values as noted by Enu and Esu (2011) in Anzene (2014) are basic beliefs and attitude in society whether of individuals or groups which are considered worthwhile and serve as a guide to choices and behaviour in our daily life. These are ideals that guide or qualify one's personal compartments

and interactions. Values stand for ideas that guide the conduct of one's life. Chandra, Mohanasundaram and Singaravelu (2013) viewed values as those characteristics of human society which set norms, exert control and influence the thinking, willing, feeling and actions of individuals.

Understanding the different values of the society or nation is an important factor in the promotion of sustainable democratic government and development. Al-Agha (2010) indicates the importance of values in the life of communities, groups and individuals. He argues that values are the essence of the human being and the basis for his existence. These values protect the individual from deviation and being dragged into negative desires; and they satisfy the needs of the individual that are appropriate for his beliefs and thoughts (Subheyyin et al, 2017).

It is an eminent fact that many developed nations of the world got to their present status as a result of patriotism of their citizens. But the reverse is the case in the developing nations such as Nigeria. In the case of Nigeria, some of the reasons for lack of patriotism is attributed to lack of understanding and awareness of the core national values and its erosion. The awareness of societal values helps to equip citizens with basic ethic and norms to live a decent and worthy life which contribute to peaceful environment and economic growth. Value awareness means having a good knowledge of belief, skills, habits and practices cherished by family, community and the nation one finds him/herself. Meynhardt and Fröhlich (2019) defined value awareness as a subject's competence to recognize that an object could impact certain value categories, or alternatively, as a subject's competence to recognize that a value category is relevant in an evaluation. This implies that the level of value awareness reflects the configuration of a higher-order relevance system, integrating multiple value categories.

National values form the basis or principles upon which decision of good and bad is considered. It implies behaviour, attitude exhibited and encouraged by members of the society for the fact that they are both good and desirable to mankind generally as against those behaviours condemned and discouraged (Osalusi & Ajayi, 2021). Kar (2022) observed that there is erosion of value in all aspects of education. Consequently there is erosion of value in all spheres of human life. Presently in Nigeria, every section of the country is affected by the massive erosion of values. It changes the setup of human minds and society every day. Political and economic corruption, scandals and scams, terrorism, antisocial and antinational activities and all sorts of crimes are increasing very fast and this indicates that humanity already have lost its values. (Ghosh, 2018) According to Jimoh, Joji and Jibril (2022), the Nigeria national values are invariably and concisely put together for easy learning and acquaintance; this is seen in the national identity and symbol of the nation such as Nigeria national anthem, pledge and coat of arm. Erosion of these values and lack of its awareness have made Nigerians shift away from being patriotic to their nation. The basis upon which an individual uphold the national values is patriotism. A person who is patriotic has the belief that the ideology and basis for country development are good and worthy of sacrificing. Ghosh (2018) stated that degradation of values led society to face serious problems, in

some cases becomes obstacle in the way of progress. Today's news and social media are flooded with the news of anti-social activities like murder, rape, corruption, cybercrime; these are effects of value erosion. Sadly, the high rates of values degeneration and collapse have raised the question of the awareness level of Nigerians. Are the school students aware of the national values as enshrined in the constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria? If yes, to what extent? The researchers therefore intend to investigate the level of national values awareness and value erosion among secondary school students in Niger State with implication for patriotism counselling.

Statement of the Problem

In the past, national days such as the Independence Day are proud and significant occasion celebrated by Nigerians to remember the sacrifices and achievements of the nation's heroes who fought for Nigeria's independence. At all levels of education especially primary and secondary, school children were taught the history of Nigeria and that of those who fought for the freedom of the nation. Therefore, school children spent weeks preparing for the day with passion, love and devotion. All these are fading away as cherished national values are eroded.

In an attempt to inculcate and preach patriotism to school children, Nigeria has made determined efforts. These efforts include the teaching of civic education in primary schools and embedding some values in the social studies curriculum. In spite of these efforts, patriotism behaviour of Nigerians remains worrisome. This is seen as result of erosion and low level of awareness among citizens. For the fact that secondary school students are adolescents and in a critical stage of transition from childhood and adulthood and who are future leaders, the researcher intend to investigate the level of national values awareness and value erosion among secondary school students in Niger State: An implication for patriotism counselling.

Objectives of the Study

The study intends to investigate the:

1. Level of national values awareness among secondary school students in Niger State
2. Level of values erosion among secondary school students in Niger State.
3. The influence of value awareness on patriotism of secondary school students in Niger State.
4. The influence of value erosion on patriotism of secondary school students in Niger State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were set to direct the study

1. What is the level of national values awareness among secondary school students in Niger State?
2. What is the level of values erosion among secondary school students in Niger State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study

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1. There is no significant difference in the value awareness level of male and female secondary school students in Niger State.
2. There is no significant difference in the value erosion level of male and female secondary school students in Niger State.
3. Value awareness level of secondary school students has no significant influence on their patriotism.
4. Value erosion among secondary school students has no significant influence on their patriotism.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive survey. The choice of descriptive survey is that it helps to obtain pertinent and precise information concerning phenomena and due to the fact that descriptive survey investigates phenomena in their natural setting. Conducting survey research will help in asking questions on the value awareness and erosion level and how these influence patriotism of secondary school students in Niger State. The population for the study comprised all secondary school students in Niger State. Using simple random sampling method, a sample of 1, 270 secondary school students across the three senatorial districts of Niger State.

A self-developed questionnaire tagged “Nigeria’s Nationalism Scale” was used to obtain information for the study from the students. The instrument consists of two sections: section “A” elicit demographic information of the respondent while section “B” which has three sub-section elicit information on the three focus areas of the study i.e the value awareness, value erosion and patriotism. Section B contained 50 items; 20 items on value awareness, 15 items on value erosion and 15 items on patriotism. Scores obtained from the administered instrument were used for analysis. The instrument was given to three experts for face and content validity in the field of Psychology, Counselling and Measurement and the corrections, observations, suggestions and comments made by the experts were effected. The measure of stability of the instrument was ascertained using test-retest method of reliability. The two sets of scores obtained from the two administrations were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient statistics. The coefficient of 0.87 was obtained and was adjudged to be adequate for the study.

Copies of the validated instruments were distributed to 1,300 secondary school students by the team of researchers. The researchers met the respondents personally and assured them of confidentiality of response supplied. The respondents were encouraged to be honest in completing the scale. Out of the 1,300 copies of the scale that were administered, 1,270 adequately filled were scored and analysed for the study. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for the analysis of data collected for the research. The descriptive statistics of simple percentage was used in answering the research questions while inferential statistics of t-test and linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 significant levels.

Results Presentation

The results of the analysed data for this study are presented below

Research Question 1: What is the level of national values awareness among secondary school students in Niger State?

The national values awareness of secondary school students was measured on three levels of high, mid and low. Below is the percentage distribution of the students' awareness levels.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Level of National Values Awareness

Score Range	N of Responses	Percentage %	Remark
0-59	18	1.42	Low level of values awareness
60-79	274	21.60	Mild level of values awareness
80-100	978	76.98	High level of values awareness

On the national values awareness scale, there are 20 items with a corresponding 5 Likert-type response format; the lowest score on the scale is 20 (1 * 20 items); while the highest score is 100 (5 * 20 items). Hence, scores that range from 20 - 59 are considered a low level of national values awareness, 60 - 79 scores are considered a mild level of national values awareness; while 80 - 100 scores range is remarked a high level of national values awareness. Table 1 thus shows that 18 (1.42%) of the 1,270 respondents indicated a lower level of national values awareness, 274 (21.60%) showed a mild level of national values awareness; while 978 (76.98%) revealed a high level of national values awareness. It is inferred therefore that secondary school students in Niger state have a higher level of national values awareness.

Research Question 2: What is the level of values erosion among secondary school students in Niger State?

The values erosion among secondary school students was measured on three levels of high, mid and low. Below is the percentage distribution of the students' awareness levels.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Level of Values Erosion

Score Range	N of Responses	Percentage %	Remark
15 -44	562	44.32	Low level of values erosion
45-59	518	40.79	Mild level of values erosion
60-75	190	14.89	High level of values erosion

On the values erosion scale, there are 15 items with a corresponding 5 Likert-type response format, the lowest score on the scale is 15 (1 * 15 items); while the highest score is 75 (5 * 15 items). Hence, scores that range from 15 - 44 are considered a low level of values erosion, 45 - 59 scores are pronounced a mild level of values erosion; while 60 - 75 score range is remarked a high level of values erosion. Table 2 thus indicates that 562 (44.32%) of the 1,270 respondents indicated a lower level of values erosion, 518 (40.79%) showed a mild level of values erosion; while 190 (14.89%) revealed a high level of values erosion. It is inferred therefore that secondary school students in Niger state have a lower level of values erosion.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the value awareness level of male and female secondary school students in Niger State.

Table 3: Independent t-test Comparing Male and Female Respondents' Level of National Values Awareness

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t	p-value	Decision
Male	490	83.82	11.07	1,268	4.70	0.000	Rejected
Female	780	87.88	10.27				

* Sig. at $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows the independent t-test analysis comparing male and female students level of national values awareness. It reveals that at 1,268 Degree of Freedom, the calculated t-value of 4.70 is statistically significant at ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Thus, the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the male secondary school students in Niger state differed from the female counterparts in their awareness level of national values. The mean values of 87.88 in Table 3 favoured the female respondents, which indicated that they were more aware of the national values than the male students (with a mean value of 83.82).

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the value erosion level of male and female secondary school students in Niger State.

Table 4: Independent t-test Comparing Male and Female Respondents' Level of Values Erosion

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t	p-value	Decision
Male	490	45.84	11.60	1,268	0.55	0.579	Retained
Female	780	46.37	11.63				

* Sig. at $p < 0.05$

Table 4 shows that at the 1,268 Degree of Freedom, the calculated t-value of 0.55 is statistically not significant at ($p = 0.579 > 0.05$). Thus, the hypothesis is retained. This implies that the male secondary school students in Niger state were similar to their female counterparts in their level of values erosion. The mean values of 45.84 and 46.37 respectively in Table 3 is indifferent (less than difference of 1) for both genders. Hence, both male and female secondary school students in Niger State were similar in their level of values erosion.

Ho3: Value awareness level of secondary school students has no significant influence on their patriotism.

Table 5: Linear Regression Showing the Influence of Value Awareness on Respondents' Patriotism

Source	R ²	F	B	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.	Decision
Value awareness	0.107	75.5	.257	.030	.000	.000	Rejected

Dependent Variable: Patriotism

A linear regression analysis was used to test if the value awareness has influence on the respondents' patriotism. The results in Table 5 shows that the predictors or independent variable (value awareness) explained 10.7% of the variance ($R^2 = .107$; $F[1,633] = 75.54$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Hence, the hypothesis is rejected. This follows that values awareness influences patriotism of secondary school students in Niger state.

Ho4: Value erosion among secondary school students has no significant influence on their patriotism.

Table 6: Linear Regression Showing the Influence of Value Erosion on Respondents' Patriotism

Source	R ²	F	B	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.	Decision
Value Erosion	0.007	4.67	.062	.029	.086	.031	Rejected

Dependent Variable: Patriotism

A linear regression analysis was used to test if the level of value erosion of respondents has significant influence on their patriotism. The results in Table 6 shows that the predictors or

independent variable (value erosion) explained 0.7% of the variance ($R^2 = .007$; $F[1,633] = 4.67$, $p = 0.031 < 0.05$). Hence, the hypothesis is rejected. This means that values erosion predicts or influences patriotism of secondary school students in Niger state.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

National values are ideals that direct or qualify comportments and interactions of a nation. The awareness level of citizens is very paramount to patriotism and sustainable development of the nation. This study was conducted to assess the level of national values awareness and value erosion among secondary school students in Niger State with the possibility of its influence on patriotism of students in the state. The findings of the study revealed a high level of national values awareness among secondary school students in Niger State. This high awareness may be connected to the fact that national values are taught in civic, social studies and some other subject in secondary schools. This is supported by the study of Mittal (2016) that found secondary school students with average level of values awareness.

The study also found out that secondary school students in Niger state have a lower level of values erosion. The low level of value degeneration among secondary school students may not be unconnected to the fact that the students unlike in tertiary institutions are under the watch, control and guide of their parents.

Another finding of the study revealed that there is significant difference in the value awareness level of male and female secondary school students in Niger State. The result of the finding shows that the male secondary school students in Niger state differed from the female counterparts in their awareness level of national values. The study revealed a mean value of 87.88 in favour of the female students which indicated that they were more aware of the national values than the male students with a mean value of 83.82.

The findings also reveal that both male and female secondary school students in Niger State were similar in their level of values erosion. This means that there is no significant difference in the value erosion level of male and female secondary school students in Niger State. The reason for the indifference may be that most secondary school students are from the same close environment where norms, belief and cultural ideology are similar unlike in the tertiary institutions where students comes from different state, region and probably continent.

The findings of the study as well revealed that values awareness influences patriotism of secondary school students in Niger state. This finding is supported with the finding of Unachukwu and Amaonye (2021) which found out that value education significantly influences the behaviour and attitude of secondary students toward the development of their society. This implies that level of value awareness among students helps in improving the moral consciousness of students and make them become obedient to the constitutional law of the society, thereby increase their patriotism

level. Schwartz et al. (2010) reported that patriotism correlates positively with values such as security, conformity, tradition and power. According to World Educators Forum (2015) an awareness of value in students, will make them develop respect for the environment, give them a balanced personality and make them understand critically and have the consciousness of the need for a healthy environment. These values awareness protect the individual from deviation and being dragged into negative desires (Subheyin et al, 2017). With more value awareness, humans could be better equipped to meet the demands of (post)modern society as they increase their cognitive complexity to find, emphasize and consequently create true value for themselves, others and society as whole (Meynhardt & Frehlich, 2019).

The study further revealed that value erosion predicts or influences patriotism of secondary school students in Niger state. One of the reasons for lack of patriotism in Nigeria is attributed to low level of national value awareness and its erosion. High awareness of national values forms and shapes decision of individuals which invariably affects or influences individual attitude and behaviour toward others and the society. This implies that degeneration of values has impact on the level of patriotism people have for their country. In the submission of Ghosh (2018) degeneration of values could lead society to face problems and become hindrance to growth and development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings obtained from this study, it is concluded that secondary school students in Niger state are aware of Nigeria national values and the level of value erosion among them are very low. With this high awareness among the students, females are more aware of the values than the male student. It is also concluded that level of value awareness and value erosion have significant influence on patriotism.

Recommendations

Going by the findings of the study, the researchers recommend:

1. Adequate Counsellors should be employed and adequately be provided with necessary facility and fund to complement the effort of the civic and social studies teachers in re-orientating the school students in Niger state on national values.
2. For the fact that levels of value awareness and value declination have influence on patriotism, government through the national orientation agency and ministry of education should organise regular seminars and workshops for all categories of teachers in secondary schools to foster value re-orientation in schools to further complement the curriculum contents on values.
3. Counsellors should work in collaboration with parents, community leaders and other community stakeholder to sensitise and re-orientate the mindset of the future leaders (adolescents and youths) in the society concerning the need to stand for their nation and work collectively for the betterment of the society.

4. National Orientation Agency should collaborate with counselling units in secondary schools in Nigeria to organise annual value re-orientation programmes to abreast students with the values of the nation and how they affect our daily routines.

Implication for Counselling

From the findings of the study, value awareness and erosion play an essential role in patriotism of students in Niger State. The school counsellors on this note need to understand the need for consistent values re-orientation in the school. There is need to intensify value awareness counselling among secondary school students. Counselling intervention for the enhancement of patriotism should begin with increased awareness of the national values and the need adolescents and youths to uphold them. The adolescents and the youths are the strongest workforce and future leaders of the society; in a situation where they are conscious of the the nation's values, nationalism and patriotism become difficult. Therefore, counsellors will do more to assist in creating more awareness among students in Niger State specifically and Nigeria in general.

Value erosion as well contributes to lack of patriotism among students. This needs to be checked and controlled. Therefore, school counsellors should help students to understand the negative implications of value erosion or degeneration in the society.

Social vices and maladaptive behaviour of students are geared due to lack of community or societal value consciousness and clarification. The need to curb these vices and behaviour require counselling intervention especially of at the grassroot or foundation of educational system.

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