

Universities Students' Perception and Attitude to Patriotism in Nigeria with the Deteriorating Economy

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijasct.2014/vol12n14557>

Published December 02, 2024

Citation: Urien J. (2024) Universities Students' Perception and Attitude to Patriotism in Nigeria with the Deteriorating Economy, *International Journal of African Society, Cultures and Traditions*, Vol.12, No.1, pp.45-57

Abstract: *The study examined universities students' perception and attitude to patriotism in Nigeria with the deteriorating economy. Three research questions were raised in the study. Survey design was adopted for this study. The population for this study comprised all public universities students in Nigeria. The sample for this study was 1000 respondents from three universities namely Delta State University, Abraka, University of Benin and University of Port-Harcourt. At the first stage, stratified random sampling method was used to select 1000 undergraduate students to participate in the study. Secondly simple random sampling technique (balloting) was used to select three universities. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "Students Perception and Attitude to Patriotism Questionnaire (SPAPQ). The instrument is divided into part A and B. Part A is concerned with personal information about the respondents. Part B solicits responses on all the research questions. Each item was anchored on a four rating scale of: Strongly Agree (SA), Agreed (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with a corresponding nominal value of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was administered by the researcher and two research assistants who are familiar with the study area. 1000 copies of questionnaire were administered and were all retrieved and used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics of simple percentage, mean score and standard deviation was used to answer research questions. From the study, it is concluded that the deteriorating economy's impact on students' perception and attitudes towards patriotism as a result decreased national pride, increased cynicism and disillusionment, growing sense of hopelessness, reduced trust in government and institutions and increased desire for emigration. However, because of the deteriorating economy, students feel that being patriotic is a waste of time. They see patriotism as outdated or irrelevant. It therefore recommended that the government and policy-makers should revitalize economic activities and job creation. Improved governance and accountability etc.*

Keywords: perception, attitude, patriotism, deteriorating economy, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, the concepts of nationalism, patriotism, and citizenship are of significant interest to educators. Grammes (2021) emphasizes that these concepts are complex and not straightforward in educational contexts. In Nigeria, the education system has historically served as a primary means of fostering unity and patriotism among its citizens. Lee (2022) notes that education is viewed as a crucial factor in promoting national unity and encouraging loyalty among the country's diverse population. One of the primary goals of the national education system is to instill a sense of patriotism in students. The school curriculum has been designed to foster this spirit by emphasizing the importance of cultural values and promoting unity and tolerance among various ethnic groups, thereby reinforcing their identity as Nigerians and encouraging positive relations with other nations in an interconnected world.

Similarly, patriotism can be described as a feeling of national loyalty, affection for national symbols, beliefs in a country's superiority, and an essential component in fostering the civility necessary for the growth of a mature nation (Huddy & Khatib, 2017). Patriotism encompasses feelings of belonging, love, pride, and care for one's country. As a political idea, it denotes loyalty to the nation without necessarily focusing on ethical qualities. Consequently, the social and political manifestations of patriotism can produce either positive or negative outcomes, influenced by how citizenship education is approached. While patriotism may be viewed negatively for its blind obedience, it can also be perceived positively due to its democratic, constructive, and critical dimensions (Ozturk, Malkoc & Ersoy, 2016). To foster the modern democratic society that Nigeria aspires to, embracing patriotic values is essential. It's important to recognize that patriotism is not an innate trait; instead, it can be developed over time and within specific social contexts.

Thus, individuals' expressions of patriotism and their degree of patriotic attitudes are largely shaped by societal norms and the quality of education available, which includes the teaching effectiveness of educators. There exists a crucial distinction between traditional pedagogy that focuses on knowledge acquisition via direct instruction and a more interactive pedagogical approach that encourages practical learning experiences, which help students grasp their role in contributing to a modern democracy. A key requirement for modern democratic societies is that their members feel a connection and loyalty to their community, as the effectiveness of these societies relies significantly on the voluntary and genuine support of their individuals (Brezovsek & Hacek, 2016).

Additionally, fostering patriotism among students can only be achieved through educators who embody these principles (Tonga & Aksoy, 2014). In a related context, economic difficulties such as poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and inequality have led to a decline in patriotic sentiment among students. The deteriorating economic situation has contributed to widespread

disillusionment, potentially impacting university students' views and attitudes toward patriotism. There is an example of an incident where the National Anthem was made into a rap song, playful body movement when the anthem is sung, refusal to salute the flag, japa syndrome and the contents of the song were altered such that it insulted the nation. Lack of support for government projects (Daerego, 2017).

As highlighted by Rasheed and Mohd (2019), this incident underscores the erosion of national unity and pride. Researchers Daerego (2017) and Aniza (2018) argue that such actions compromise the unity of Nigeria's multiracial society. Various incidents demonstrate the alarming decline of national pride among younger generations (Ahmad et al., 2011). According to Awang (2023), the education system established following independence faces significant challenges in cultivating patriotism and national pride among the younger generation. Their perception is affecting their attitude to patriotism negatively.

Statement to the Problem

Despite Nigeria's rich cultural heritage and national resources, the country faces significant economic challenges including rising poverty, unemployment, insecurity and inequality. This deteriorating economic situation has led to growing disillusionment, declining national pride and identity, increasing cynicism and skepticism towards government policies and institution, perceive disconnect between national values and individual well-being, potential impact on national cohesion, social stability and future leadership among university students potentially affecting their perception and attitude towards patriotism.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. How does the deteriorating economy affect universities students' perception and attitude to patriotism in Nigeria?
2. How does gender in a deteriorating economy affect universities students' perception and attitude to patriotism in Nigeria?
3. How does race in a deteriorating economy affect universities students' perception and attitude to patriotism in Nigeria?

REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is anchored on Constitutional Patriotism Theory propounded by Muller (2007). The main point about this constitutional patriotism theory is that it supports the rules based on free, democratic and liberal citizenship that spells equality for all (Muller, 2007). Constitutional patriotism is said to be about loyalty and identity, which is related to political beliefs and it inculcates the concept of history in some ways and also the re-construction of moral development.

Constitutional patriotism also has its own boundaries; each individual needs to recognize his own as well as others' freedom, acknowledge the rights of equality and learn to live together in a fair manner. Constitutional patriotism also gives focus to political boundary. In this matter, the lack of liberal thinking is more general, which in turn translates into political boundaries.

Deteriorating economy on universities students' perception and attitude to patriotism

According to Daerego, (2017) deteriorating economy's impact on university students' perception and attitudes towards patriotism cannot be overemphasized. Economic instability such as unemployment, inflation, and economic uncertainty erode trust in government and institutions. Corruption, governance issues and ineffective governance undermine national pride. Social inequality and injustice such as disparities in education, healthcare, and economic opportunities fuel disillusionment (Aniza, 2018). Political polarization for instance divisive politics and social media amplify differences, weakening national unity. Globalization and cultural exchange, exposure to diverse perspectives and cultures challenges traditional notions of patriotism.

Adeniyi (2020) noted that the effects of deteriorating economy on student attitude to patriotism such as:

1. Decreased national pride: Economic struggles overshadow national achievements.
2. Increased cynicism and disillusionment: Students question government's ability to address economic issues.
3. Growing sense of hopelessness: Limited job opportunities and economic uncertainty dampen optimism.
4. Reduced trust in government and institutions: Corruption and ineffectiveness erode confidence.
5. Increased desire for emigration: Students seek better economic opportunities abroad.

Okpara (2022) argued that because of the deteriorating economy, students feel that being patriotic is a waste of time. They see patriotism as outdated or irrelevant. Globalization and cultural exchange challenge traditional patriotism. National identity as complex and multifaceted: Students recognize diversity within national identity. Okpara (2022) noted that economic struggles overshadowing national loyalty. That is basic needs take precedence over national pride. Government accountability and transparency as key to patriotism, students demand effective governance. Social justice and equality as essential to national pride, students prioritize inclusivity and fairness.

According to Okeke (2023) the deteriorating economy has led to students attitudinal shifts such as:

- a) From nationalist to global citizen mindset: Students prioritize global issues over national loyalty.
- b) Prioritizing personal interests over national loyalty: Economic struggles focus students on personal goals.
- c) Questioning authority and challenging status quo: Students demand change and accountability.
- d) Embracing diversity and inclusivity: Students celebrate diversity and promote social justice.

e) Seeking alternative forms of identity and community: Students explore non-national identities.

In the same vein, Okeke (2023) highlighted the consequences of the diverse effects on university students' perception and attitude to patriotism as follows:

1. Decreased civic engagement and participation: Disillusioned students withdraw from politics.
2. Reduced national cohesion and unity: Polarization and divisiveness weaken social fabric.
3. Increased brain drain and emigration: Talented youth seek opportunities abroad.
4. Weakened social fabric and community ties: Economic struggles erode community cohesion.
5. Potential for social unrest and instability: Frustrated students may protest or mobilize.

Gender on students' perception and attitude to patriotism in Nigeria

According to Okeke (2023) gender plays a significant role in shaping university students' perception and attitudes towards patriotism. Patriotism or the love and loyalty one has for their country, is complex and multifaceted concept. Research has shown that various factors including gender can influence individuals' perception and attitude towards patriotism. Women tend to prioritize social justice and equality within national identity, while men focus on national pride and loyalty. Women often express emotional attachment to patriotism, whereas men emphasize rational, ideological aspects. Civic engagement (women are more likely to participate in community service and volunteer work, while men engage in political activism). Women are socialized to prioritize relationships and community, influencing their patriotic attitudes.

However, Adeogun (2021) highlighted that women emphasize diversity, equality and social justice. Women connect patriotism to personal experiences and emotions. Women prioritize community service and volunteer work. Women question traditional notions of patriotism. On the other hand, Men emphasize national pride, loyalty, and authority. Men focus on ideological and philosophical aspects. Men participate in political activism and leadership. Men associate patriotism with protection and defense.

A study by Sullivan et al (2011) found that males tend to exhibit higher levels of patriotism than females. On a contrary, research by Stuaab (2019) revealed that females are more likely to prioritize social justice and equality influencing their patriotism attitudes. A study by Oyero (2017) found no significant gender differences in patriotic attitudes among students. According to Benedict (2019) males are often socialized to prioritize national loyalty while females are encouraged to focus on family and community.

Race on universities students' perception and attitude to patriotism in Nigeria

Nigeria, a multicultural society with over 250 ethnic groups, presents a unique context for examining the relationship between ethnicity and patriotism. Historical experiences such as ethnic groups experiences with colonialism, civil war and political marginalization impact patriotic

attitude (Oyero, 2017). He further noted that ethnic groups cultural values and traditions shape patriotic attitude. Language policies and educational curricula influence students' perception of patriotism. Hausa-Fulani students patriotic attitude are influenced by their Islamic identity. Okoro (2021) asserted that race in a deteriorating economy has a significant impact on Nigerian university students' perception and attitudes towards patriotism such as:

1. Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo students: These three major ethnic groups may prioritize ethnic identity and cultural heritage over national identity.
2. Minority ethnic groups: Students from smaller ethnic groups (e.g., Efik, Ijaw, Urhobo) may feel marginalized and question national unity.
3. Northern, Southern, and Middle Belt regions: Students from different regions may hold differing views on patriotism based on regional experiences, economic conditions, and cultural practices.
4. Urban-rural divide: Students from urban areas (e.g., Lagos, Abuja) may have different perspectives than those from rural areas.

Aniza (2018) noted that economic struggles such as students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may prioritize economic survival over patriotism. Social inequality for instance students from marginalized groups (e.g., women, persons with disabilities) may question national unity. in the same vein, Muslim-Christian divisions i.e students may hold differing views on patriotism based on religious identity. Interfaith dialogue (students may prioritize religious harmony). Research has shown that racial identity and experiences shape individuals' perceptions and attitude towards patriotism.

METHODOLOGY

Design

Survey design was adopted for this study. The researcher used survey design as an appropriate design because information was obtained on universities students perception and attitude to patriotism in Nigeria with the deteriorating economy.

Population

The population for this study comprised all public universities students in Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for this study was 1000 respondents from three universities namely Delta State University, Abraka, University of Benin and University of Port-Harcourt. At the first stage, stratified random sampling method was used to select 1000 undergraduate students to participate in the study. Secondly simple random sampling technique (balloting) was used to select three universities. This ensures everyone has equal chance of being selected to respond to the instrument

and reduces sampling bias. This is because of the large population of respondents involved in the study.

Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled “Students Perception and Attitude to Patriotism Questionnaire (SPAPQ). The instrument is divided into part A and B. Part A is concerned with personal information about the respondents. Part B solicits responses on all the research questions. Each item was anchored on a four rating scale of: Strongly Agree (SA), Agreed (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with a corresponding nominal value of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

Method of Data Collection

The instrument was administered by the researcher and two research assistants who are familiar with the study area. 1000 copies of questionnaire were administered and were all retrieved and used for data analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics of simple percentage, mean score and standard deviation was used to answer research questions. Benchmark of 2.50 was established to accept any item with a mean rating of 2.50 or above as agreed while any item with a mean rating less than 2.50 was regarded as disagreed for research questions.

Table 1: Response to deteriorating economy on students’ perception and attitude to patriotism

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	STD	Mean
1.	Decreased national pride	334 (33.4%)	255 (25.5%)	215 (21.5%)	196 (19.6%)	2.92	.78
2.	Increased cynicism and disillusionment	340 (34%)	327 (32.7%)	123 (12.3%)	210 (21%)	2.94	.84
3.	Limited job opportunities and economic uncertainty dampen optimism.	251 (25.1%)	249 (24.9%)	200 (20%)	300 (30%)	3.24	.77
4.	Reduced trust in government and institutions	291 (29.1%)	286 (28.6%)	222 (22.2%)	201 (20.1%)	2.88	.77

5.	Increased desire for emigration	261 (26.1%)	95 (9.5%)	201 (20.1%)	443 (44.3%)	3.02	.84
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From table 1, out of 1000 respondents 334 (33.4%) and 255 (25.5%) respondents agreed that decreased national pride is one of the effect of a deteriorating economy on students' perception and attitude to patriotism while 215 (21.5%) and 196 (19.6%) respondents opposed. Also, 340 (34%) and 327 (32.7%) respondents agreed that increased cynicism and disillusionment is one of the effect of a deteriorating economy on students' perception and attitude to patriotism while 123 (12.3%) and 210 (21%) respondents disagreed. More so, 251 (25.1%) and 249 (24.9%) respondents agreed that limited job opportunities and economic uncertainty dampen optimism and is one of the effect of a deteriorating economy on students' perception and attitude to patriotism while 200 (20%) and 300 (30%) respondents disregard the statement. In the same vein, 291 (29.1%) and 286 (28.6%) respondents agreed that reduced trust in government and institutions is one of the effect of a deteriorating economy on students' perception and attitude to patriotism while 222 (22.2%) and 201 (20.1%) respondents think otherwise. Finally, 261 (26.1%) and 95 (9.5%) respondents agreed that increased desire for emigration is one of the effect of a deteriorating economy on students' perception and attitude to patriotism while 201 (20.1%) and 443 (44.3%) respondents disagreed with the statement.

Table 2: Response to Gender on universities students' perception and attitude to patriotism

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	STD	Mean
1.	Women connect patriotism to personal experiences and emotions	322 (32.2%)	400 (40%)	100 (10%)	178 (17.8%)	3.16	.74
2.	Women prioritize community service and volunteer work	286 (28.6%)	214 (21.4%)	448 (44.8%)	52 (5.2%)	2.96	.90
3.	Men emphasize national pride, loyalty, and authority	400 (40%)	109 (10.9%)	131 (13.1%)	366 (36.6%)	2.94	.89

4.	Men focus on ideological and philosophical aspects	292 (29.2%)	285 (28.5%)	193 (19.3%)	230 (23%)	2.98	.82
5.	Men associate patriotism with protection and defense	305 (30.5%)	527 (52.7%)	76 (7.6%)	90 (9%)	2.78	.79

From table 2, out of 1000 respondents 322 (32.2%) and 400 (40%) respondents agreed that women connect patriotism to personal experiences and emotions while 100 (10%) and 178 (17.8%) respondents disagreed. Also, 286 (28.6%) and 214 (21.4%) respondents agreed that women prioritize community service and volunteer work while 448 (44.8%) and 52 (5.2%) respondents opposed the statement. More so, 400 (40%) and 109 (10.9%) respondents agreed that men emphasize national pride, loyalty, and authority while 131 (13.1%) and 366 (36.6%) respondents disregard the statement. In the same vein, 292 (29.2%) and 285 (28.5%) respondents agreed that men focus on ideological and philosophical aspects while 193 (19.3%) and 230 (23%) respondents disagreed. Finally, 305 (30.5%) and 527 (52.7%) respondents agreed that men associate patriotism with protection and defense while 76 (7.6%) and 90 (9%) respondents opposed.

Table 3: Response to race on students' perception and attitude to patriotism

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	STD	Mean
1.	Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo students: These three major ethnic groups may prioritize ethnic identity and cultural heritage over national identity	220 (22%)	502 (50.2%)	170 (17%)	108 (10.8%)	3.16	.74
2.	Minority ethnic groups: Students from smaller ethnic	444 (44.4%)	290 (29%)	66 (6.6%)	200 (20%)	2.96	.90

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	groups (e.g., Efik, Ijaw, Urhobo) may feel marginalized and question national unity.						
3.	Students from different regions may hold differing views on patriotism based on regional experiences, economic conditions, and cultural practices	526 (52.6%)	92 (9.2%)	302 (30.2%)	80 (8%)	2.78	.79
4.	Muslim-Christian divisions i.e students may hold differing views on patriotism based on religious identity	290 (29%)	287 (28.7%)	193 (19.3%)	230 (23%)	2.98	.82
5.	Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may prioritize economic survival over patriotism	400 (40%)	109 (10.9%)	131 (13.1%)	360 (36%)	2.94	.89

From table 3, out of 1000 respondents 220 (22%) and 502 (50.2%) respondents agreed that students major ethnic groups may prioritize ethnic identity and cultural heritage over national identity while 170 (17%) and 108 (10.8%) respondents disagreed. Also, 444 (44.4%) and 290 (29%) respondents agreed that students from smaller ethnic groups may feel marginalized and question national unity while 66 (6.6%) and 200 (20%) respondents opposed the statement. More so, 526 (52.6%) and 92 (9.2%) respondents agreed that students from different regions may hold differing views on patriotism while 302 (30.2%) and 80 (8%) respondents disregard the statement. On the other hand, 290 (29%) and 287 (28.7%) respondents agreed that students may hold differing views on patriotism based on religious identity while 193 (19.3%) and 230 (23%) respondents is of another view. Finally, 400 (40%) and 109 (10.9%) respondents agreed that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may prioritize economic survival over patriotism while 131 (13.1%) and 360 (36%) respondents disagreed.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The outcome of the analyzed data showed that deteriorating economy's impact on university students' perception and attitudes towards patriotism such as decreased national pride, increased cynicism and disillusionment, growing sense of hopelessness, reduced trust in government and institutions and increased desire for emigration. This is in line with Okpara (2022) argued that because of the deteriorating economy, students feel that being patriotic is a waste of time. They see patriotism as outdated or irrelevant. Globalization and cultural exchange challenge traditional patriotism. National identity as complex and multifaceted: Students recognize diversity within national identity. Okpara (2022) noted that economic struggles overshadowing national loyalty. It also revealed that gender plays a significant role in shaping university students' perception and attitudes towards patriotism. This is in line with Adeogun (2021) highlighted that women emphasize diversity, equality and social justice. Women connect patriotism to personal experiences and emotions. Women prioritize community service and volunteer work. Women question traditional notions of patriotism. On the other hand, Men emphasize national pride, loyalty, and authority. Men focus on ideological and philosophical aspects. Men participate in political activism and leadership. Men associate patriotism with protection and defense.

The study also showed that race in a deteriorating economy has a significant impact on Nigerian university students' perception and attitudes towards patriotism. This is in line with Okoro (2021) who asserted that the major ethnic groups may prioritize ethnic identity and cultural heritage over national identity. Students from smaller ethnic groups (e.g., Efik, Ijaw, Urhobo) may feel marginalized and question national unity. Students from different regions may hold differing views on patriotism based on regional experiences, economic conditions, and cultural practices.

CONCLUSION

From the study, it is concluded that the deteriorating economy's impact on students' perception and attitudes towards patriotism as a result decreased national pride, increased cynicism and disillusionment, growing sense of hopelessness, reduced trust in government and institutions and increased desire for emigration. However, because of the deteriorating economy, students feel that being patriotic is a waste of time. They see patriotism as outdated or irrelevant.

Recommendations

It therefore recommended that the government and policy-makers should:

1. Economic revitalization and job creation: Addressing economic struggles restores national pride.
2. Improved governance and accountability: Transparency and effectiveness rebuild trust.
3. Enhanced social welfare and equality: Addressing disparities promotes social justice.
4. Inclusive and diverse national identity: Celebrating diversity strengthens national unity.
5. Engaging youth in policy-making and decision-making processes: Empowering students fosters ownership.
6. Incorporate diverse perspectives in patriotic education.
7. Encourage critical thinking and civic engagement.
8. Address intersectional identities in patriotic discourse.
9. Foster inclusive and empathetic environments.

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