
EXPLORING THE ROLE OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN CURBING DRUG ADDICTION AMONG TERTIARY INSTITUTION STUDENTS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

With potentially disastrous effects on academic performance, mental health, and societal development, drug addiction among young people in Nigerian higher institutions is an expanding public health and social issue. This study investigates the use of citizenship education as a tactic to reduce drug addiction among students in Lagos State owned universities, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. This was chosen because it involves using structured questionnaire in the researchers' variable of interest. The sample institutions are Lagos State University, Ojo (LASU) and Lagos State University of Education, Ojo/Ijanikin (LASUED) in Lagos State. The sample for the study consists of 350 students (194 LASU and 156 LASUED) that were selected using simple random and stratified sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "The Role of Citizenship Education in Curbing Drug Addiction among Tertiary Institution Students in Lagos State (RCECDA)" and analyzed using simple percentages and Chi-Square statistics. Findings

revealed no significant relationship between students' exposure to citizenship education and their status as tertiary learners, and no significant relationship between civic engagement and self-reported drug use behaviours. However, a significant relationship was found between the challenges faced by educators and administrators and the components relevant to drug-abuse prevention. The study recommends curriculum revision, multi-stakeholder collaboration, NDLEA involvement, peer educator training and strengthened campus counseling services to enhance the preventive impact of citizenship education on drug addiction.

Keywords: Drug addiction, tertiary institutions, citizenship education, Lagos State

Introduction

Drug addiction among university students in Nigeria represents a serious challenge with far-reaching consequences for both societal progress and individual well-being. Recent studies indicate that a notable proportion of college students report using substances such as alcohol, codeine, tramadol, cannabis, and other psychotropic drugs (Adedeji, 2024). This problem continues to escalate as a public health, educational, and social concern, particularly in Lagos State which is one of Nigeria's most populous and socioeconomically diverse regions (Abazie & Etal, 2022). Although higher education plays a vital role in building human capital, the persistent prevalence of substance abuse among undergraduates and other tertiary learners across Nigerian universities and polytechnics threatens both individual academic outcomes and broader national development goals. Substance misuse has been linked to poor academic performance, declining mental health, increased absenteeism, and risky social behaviours, all of which erode social cohesion and institutional productivity. Beyond these physical risks, it also undermines academic achievement, mental health, and social cohesion more broadly (Ibeh, 2022).

Addressing this growing crisis requires more than punitive measures; preventive strategies are essential. One such strategy is citizenship education which is an educational approach that fosters civic values, responsible conduct, social engagement, and ethical reasoning. By cultivating a strong sense of civic duty, moral responsibility, and community belonging, citizenship education can shape students' attitudes and behaviours in ways that mitigate key risk factors for drug addiction, such as peer pressure, low self-control and lack of purpose (Ibeto, 2024).

Idowu et al. (2018) examined the institutional challenges involved in implementing citizenship curricula, as well as potential pathways for effectively integrating citizenship education into tertiary institutions identified citizenship education as a potentially powerful preventive and transformative tool. Traditionally focused on instilling knowledge of civic rights, responsibilities, ethics, and social values, it can also equip students with critical awareness of personal decision-making, social norms, and community expectations (Adewale, 2022). By embedding principles of social responsibility, lawful conduct, and community engagement into pedagogical practice, citizenship education provides learners with the cognitive and affective skills needed to resist negative peer influences and make healthier life choices including the decision to avoid or desist from drug use (Isola et al., 2025).

Empirical studies on drug misuse in Nigerian tertiary institutions point to several recurring risk factors, including peer pressure, curiosity, low self-esteem and environmental stressors (Etal & Armstrong, 2023; Hassan, 2019). These findings also reveal that even where students have been exposed to broad drug education programmes, significant gaps remain in their understanding of the full consequences of drug addiction. This points to a critical shortfall: while awareness of substance misuse exists, conventional tertiary curricula often fail to incorporate contextualized citizenship education that links individual conduct to civic responsibility, cultural norms, and legal frameworks.

Drug use among young adults has been particularly pronounced in Lagos State and other parts of southwestern Nigeria. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has raised concerns over rising drug addiction on college campuses, noting that as much as 40–50% of some student populations may be affected (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023).

Against this backdrop, this study investigates the role of citizenship education in curbing drug addiction among tertiary institution students in Lagos State. It seeks to bridge the empirical and pedagogical gaps in existing drug prevention strategies by focusing on how citizenship education can enhance students' understanding of the legal, ethical, and social dimensions of drug abuse, thereby reducing its incidence and consequences within higher education environments. The specific objectives therefore are to:

- i. examine the relationship between tertiary institution students' exposure to Citizenship Education and drug abuse prevention (civic courses, workshops and clubs);
- ii. assess the relationship between civic engagement (participation in social/ community service) and self-reported drug use behaviours' among the students; and
- iii. determine the relationship between challenges encounter by educators and administrators face in integrating citizenship education and components that are relevant for drug-abuse prevention.

Hypotheses

This study has the following null hypotheses to be tested:

- Ho1:** There is no significant relationship between tertiary institution students' exposure to Citizenship Education and drug abuse prevention(civic courses, workshops and clubs).
- Ho2:** There is no significant relationship between civic engagement (participation in social/ community service) and self-reported drug use behaviours' among the students.
- Ho3:** There is no significant relationship between challenges encounter by educators and administrators face in integrating citizenship education and components that are relevant for drug-abuse prevention.

Methods

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This is adopted for its suitability in examining the role of citizenship education in reducing drug addiction among tertiary institution students in Lagos State through a structured questionnaire targeting the variables of interest. The population for the study comprised all students in Lagos State own universities, with Lagos State University, Ojo and Lagos State University of Education, Oto/Ijanikin serving as the focused institutions. A sample of 350 students was randomly selected, using stratified and simple random sampling techniques at different stages of participant selection.

The research instrument, titled “The Role of Citizenship Education in Curbing Drug Addiction among Tertiary Institution Students in Lagos State (RCECDA),” was used for data collection. This instrument was divided into two sections. Section A captured demographic information, including gender, age, and level of education, while Section B consisted of 20 structured items designed to assess the importance of citizenship education in reducing drug addiction among tertiary students. The instrument was reviewed, critiqued and refined by three experts in research, measurement, and evaluation, and all relevant corrections and suggestions were incorporated prior to administration. The reliability of the instrument was established using the test-retest method, with Cronbach's Alpha employed to determine the reliability coefficient, yielding a value of 0.78.

The researchers and the research assistants visited the institutions and distributed copies of the questionnaire directly to the students in their classrooms and remained present throughout to clarify any questions or instructions respondents found unclear. Once a student finished filling out the instrument, the completed copy was collected on the spot before the researchers moved on to the next respondent. Data analysis was guided by the study's hypotheses. Bio-data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, while simple percentages and the multiple regression statistical method were employed to test the null hypotheses.

Results

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between tertiary institution students' exposure to Citizenship Education and drug abuse prevention.

Table 1: Simple Regression Analysis of the Relationship between Students' Exposure to Citizenship Education and Drug Abuse Prevention

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p-value	Decision
Constant	28.41	2.17	-	13.07	.000	
Citizenship Education	0.08	0.06	0.04	1.36	.17	Not Significant

Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p-value
0.037	0.001	0.001	1.85	.17

A simple regression analysis in Table 1 revealed that Citizenship Education did not significantly predict drug abuse prevention among tertiary institution students, $\beta = .037$, $t = 1.36$, $p = .174$. The model explained only 0.1% of the variance in drug abuse prevention ($R^2 = .001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

p-value
.00

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between civic engagement and self-reported drug use behaviours among students.

Table 2 Simple Regression Analysis of Civic Engagement and Self-Reported Drug Use Behaviour

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p-value	Decision
Constant	31.21	2.01	-	15.52	.00	
Civic Engagement	-0.07	0.06	-0.03	-1.25	.21	Not Significant

Not Significant at $p > 0.05$

Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p-value
0.033	0.001	0.000	1.56	.212

The regression analysis in Table 2 indicated that civic engagement was not a significant predictor of students' self-reported drug use behaviour, $\beta = -.03$, $t = -1.25$; $p = .21$. The model accounted for 0.1% of the variance ($R^2 = .001$). Consequently, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between challenges encountered by educators and administrators in integrating citizenship education and drug abuse prevention components.

Table 3 Simple Regression Analysis of Relationship between Institutional Challenges and Drug Abuse Prevention Integration

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p-value	Decision
Constant	24.12	1.96	-	4.80	.00	
Institutional Challenges	0.43	0.09	0.28	12.29	.00	Significant

Significant at $p < 0.05$

Model Summary

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	p-value
0.28	0.08	0.08	23.04	.00

Table 3 regression results in Table 3 showed that institutional challenges significantly predicted the integration of citizenship education and drug abuse prevention components, $\beta = .28$, $t = 4.80$; $p < .001$. The model explained 7.9% of the variance ($R^2 = .08$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussions

This study explored the role of citizenship education in curbing drug addiction among tertiary institution students in Lagos State. The first hypothesis, which posited that no significant relationship between tertiary institution students' exposure to Citizenship Education and drug abuse prevention (civic courses, workshops and clubs) was not rejected. Accordingly, no significant relationship was found between students' exposure to citizenship education and their status as tertiary learners in Lagos State. This finding aligns with David (2022), who

argued that civic participation has inconsistent predictive power regarding youth risk behaviour, noting that several longitudinal studies found no statistically significant link between civic engagement indicators and substance-use behaviour among students. Similarly, John (2022) and Patrick (2021) found no significant relationship between civic engagement and self-reported drug-use behaviour, emphasizing instead that peer pressure, parental supervision, and psychological factors were stronger determinants of adolescent substance use.

Hypothesis two, which stated that no significant relationship exists between civic engagement (participation in social or community service) and self-reported drug use behaviours among students, was also not rejected. Accordingly, no significant relationship was found between civic engagement and students' self-reported drug use behaviours. This finding corroborates Ballard (2021), Wray-Lake et al. (2020), and Metzger et al. (2023), who similarly found no statistically significant relationship between participation in community service activities and self-reported substance abuse behaviours among students. Their findings suggest that civic participation alone may not be sufficient to meaningfully influence behavioural outcomes related to drug use.

Hypothesis three, which claimed that no meaningful relationship exists between the challenges educators and administrators face in integrating citizenship education and the components relevant to drug-misuse prevention, was rejected. Accordingly, a significant relationship was found between the challenges faced by educators and administrators in integrating citizenship education and the components relevant to drug-abuse prevention. This is broadly consistent with Obiagu and Onele (2024), who concluded that mainstream school-based drug education programmes had little measurable impact on students' drug-use behaviour despite the existence of such interventions, suggesting that integration challenges alone may not significantly determine prevention outcomes. Similarly, Valente et al. (2025) identified several implementation challenges within school-based drug prevention programmes but

noted that these challenges did not necessarily translate into significant failures of prevention objectives across all school settings.

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that there is no discernible relationship between Lagos State tertiary institution students' exposure to citizenship education (such as civic classes, workshops, and clubs) and their status as students. This suggests that students who have received citizenship education may be more inclined toward social cohesion than those without adequate exposure to civic responsibility, even though this relationship did not reach statistical significance in the present study. The study also found no significant relationship between civic engagement (participation in social or community service) and students' self-reported drug use behaviours.

However, the findings revealed a significant relationship between the challenges educators and administrators face in integrating citizenship education and the components relevant to drug-abuse prevention. The findings further indicate that no significant relationship exists between evidence-based recommendations for leveraging civic education and strategies to reduce harmful gambling behaviour in schools across Lagos State. This also extends to student involvement in leadership and the extent to which an understanding of civic education can support this process.

Recommendations

Citizenship education curriculum in tertiary institutions should be revised to **explicitly include modules on substance abuse**, drug risks, decision-making in risky contexts, and peer resistance. Also, a collaboration with **student unions, counseling services, lecturers, and local NGOs** to co-develop civic programs that address drug use. Thereafter, there should also be involvement of **National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA)**, local health agencies, or civic education NGOs to deliver workshops, seminars, and campaigns in institutions. Furthermore, training of **peer educators** in tertiary institutions to champion civic values and lead discussions on drug risks, using their own lived experiences or training. Campus guidance

and counseling departments ought to be strengthened. Counselors should be proactive in identifying early indicators of substance use, well-staffed, and reachable.

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