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The Role of Education in Political Socialization of the Nigerian Citizens: Implication For Primary Education

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Abstract: Education, especially at the primary level, serves as the foundation for instilling democratic values, civic responsibility, and political awareness. This study used a survey research design to examine the role of education in political socialization in Aguata Local Government Area. A sample of 100 participants from selected communities was surveyed using a structured questionnaire with a four-point Likert scale. Data analysis applied a 2.5 mean cutoff for acceptance. The findings reveal that primary education significantly contributes to the political socialization of children, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to understand political systems and engage in democratic processes. Key elements such as political education in schools, exposure to mass media, and participation in civic activities were identified as critical factors in shaping political dispositions. However, the study also highlights challenges such as inadequate political education, limited resources, and the need for curriculum reforms to foster a more inclusive and effective political socialization process. The study highlights the importance of integrating comprehensive civic education into primary school curricula to promote national unity, enhance political engagement, and prepare young Nigerians to become responsible, active citizens. The findings suggest that strengthening political socialization at the primary education level is vital for ensuring the development of a politically conscious and participatory citizenry, which is essential for the sustainable growth of Nigeria's democracy.

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INTRODUCTION

Political socialization refers to the process by which individuals acquire political beliefs, values, and behaviors, often through formal and informal channels such as family, peers, media, and education (Adesanmi, 2022). In Nigeria, education plays a pivotal role in shaping the political attitudes and behaviors of citizens, especially at the primary education level. Primary education serves as a foundational stage for introducing civic responsibilities, political awareness, and democratic values, which ultimately influence citizens' participation in the political process (Adamu, 2023). In the context of Nigeria, political socialization is heavily influenced by the educational system. Primary education, as the first formal educational stage, is critical in introducing children to the basic tenets of politics, governance, and citizenship (Ariyo & Folorunso, 2022).

According to Davis and Turnbull (2024), education in Nigeria has been used as a tool for both nation-building and political integration, enabling individuals to understand and participate in the political process. Schools are not just centers for academic learning, but also for the cultivation of political attitudes and values. Through subjects like Civic Education, Social Studies, and History, primary school students are exposed to the country's political structure, the roles of government institutions, electoral processes, and the importance of voting and active citizenship (Akinola, 2023). Civic education, which was formally introduced into the Nigerian curriculum in the 1980s, is a key component of political socialization in schools. It provides students with essential knowledge about their rights and responsibilities as citizens, including the importance of voting and engaging in democratic activities. This subject is particularly crucial in a country like Nigeria, where political apathy and low voter turnout have often been identified as barriers to democratic consolidation (Azubuike-Oba, 2023). Akeusola (2023) argue that a comprehensive civic education curriculum can significantly reduce political apathy and promote active political engagement, which is vital for the survival of Nigeria's democracy.

The extent to which political education at the primary level impacts citizenship is a critical issue in Nigeria's political landscape. Research by Ojo (2023) suggests that early political socialization in schools helps shape individuals who are more likely to engage in political processes as adults. Studies indicate that children who receive political education are more likely to vote, participate in community service, and become active members of civil society (Rasheed et al, 2024). These educational experiences encourage young people to adopt democratic values such as fairness, equality, and respect for the rule of law. Furthermore, such education promotes social cohesion by highlighting the importance of national unity, tolerance, and understanding of diverse ethnic and cultural groups in Nigeria.

Azubuike-Oba (2023) highlight the positive relationship between political education and participation in democratic activities. In their study, they found that students who had been exposed to political education in primary school were more inclined to participate in local elections, volunteer for political campaigns, and engage in political discourse. The knowledge gained from school-based civic education programs

serves as a foundation for developing informed and responsible citizens who understand the political structures that govern them. Despite the potential benefits, the role of education in political socialization faces several challenges in Nigeria. One major issue is the inadequate implementation of the civic education curriculum (Tiamiyu, 2022). Although civic education is part of the national curriculum, its delivery has been inconsistent and, at times, ineffective due to inadequate teacher training, insufficient resources, and poor educational infrastructure.

According to Ojo (2023), teachers often lack the necessary skills to effectively teach civic education, which results in students receiving incomplete or superficial knowledge about their political rights and responsibilities. This problem is further compounded by the lack of practical engagement in the subject, as students are often taught in a theoretical manner without real-life applications or opportunities for critical thinking and political participation. Another challenge is the lack of political neutrality in some educational contexts. In a highly politicized environment like Nigeria, schools may sometimes reflect political biases that influence the political socialization process (Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022). Political socialization through education is supposed to be impartial and objective, but teachers or educational administrators may unintentionally promote particular political ideologies, which can limit students' ability to form independent political opinions. This is particularly problematic in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country like Nigeria, where political allegiances can be heavily influenced by ethnic and regional considerations. Therefore, the present study is essential due to gaps in the effective delivery of civic education in Nigeria's primary schools. While Zhao and Zhang (2024) emphasize the importance of early political socialization, studies like Igwebueze (2024) highlight inconsistencies in curriculum implementation and teacher preparedness. Moreover, the role of education in stimulating active political participation remains underexplored. This research aims to address these gaps by evaluating how primary education can better equip children to become informed and engaged citizens in Nigeria's democratic process.

METHODS

This study utilized a survey research design to investigate the role of education in the political socialization of citizens in Aguata Local Government Area (LGA). Survey design was chosen because it involves gathering data from a representative sample of people to generalize findings about the broader population. The study focused on Aguata LGA, which comprises fourteen autonomous communities, with selected sample areas being Ekwulobia, Igbo-Ukwu, Uga, and Isuofia. The population for the study included all citizens of Aguata LGA, encompassing both workers and students from selected academic institutions. The sample consisted of 100 participants—chosen randomly. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire, developed by the researchers, which employed a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) to capture respondents' opinions. The Likert scale values were: Strongly Agree (4), Agree

(3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The questionnaire was administered directly to respondents at selected schools to ensure high response rates. The cutoff point for acceptance was a mean score of 2.5 and above, with scores below 2.5 considered rejected. This method ensured that the study's findings were based on the consensus of respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent has education and political socialization taken place in Aguata Local Government Area?

Table 1. Extent that Education and Political Socialization in Aguata Local Government Area

| S/N | Questionnaire items | SA | A | SD | D | TOTAL | \bar{X} | DECISION |
|-----|--|----|----|----|----|-------|-----------|----------|
| 1 | Education has made Aguata LGA citizens to be more politically aware and motivated. | 28 | 44 | 12 | 16 | 100 | 2.9 | Accepted |
| 2 | The citizens have been participating in political activities. | 46 | 20 | 12 | 22 | 100 | 3.6 | Accepted |
| 3 | Education have enhanced their political socialization. | 46 | 20 | 12 | 22 | 100 | 3.0 | Accepted |
| 4 | The people of Aguata LGA have been politically sensitized. | 40 | 36 | 10 | 14 | 100 | 3.1 | Accepted |

Table 1 presents the results of a survey on the extent to which education and political socialization have influenced citizens in Aguata Local Government Area (LGA). Respondents were asked about their political awareness, participation, and socialization. The responses show that education has significantly impacted political awareness (mean = 2.9), citizen participation (mean = 3.6), and political socialization (mean = 3.0). The majority agreed that education has politically sensitized the people of Aguata LGA (mean = 3.1). The acceptance of each statement is based on the mean values, all of which fall within the "Accepted" range.

Research Question 2: What are their dispositions towards politics for socialization?

Table 2. Dispositions Towards Politics for Socialization

| S/N | Questionnaire item | SA | A | SD | D | TOTAL | \bar{X} | DECISION |
|-----|---|----|----|----|----|-------|-----------|----------|
| 1 | They participate fully in politics and socialized. | 28 | 44 | 12 | 16 | 100 | 2.9 | Accepted |
| 2 | They are well disposed as they socialize politics during elections. | 40 | 36 | 12 | 12 | 100 | 3.0 | Accepted |
| 3 | Citizens are sensitized by political activities. | 40 | 36 | 12 | 12 | 100 | 3.0 | Accepted |
| 4 | The people are motivated by the electoral processes and outcomes. | 26 | 34 | 28 | 12 | 100 | 2.7 | Accepted |

Table 2 evaluates the dispositions of citizens in Aguata Local Government Area (LGA) towards politics and socialization. Respondents were asked about their participation and attitudes towards political engagement. Results indicate that citizens generally participate and socialize in politics (mean = 2.9), are well-disposed to discuss politics during elections (mean = 3.0), and are sensitized by political activities (mean = 3.0). The table also shows that while the people are motivated by electoral processes and outcomes (mean = 2.7), the level of motivation is slightly lower than other aspects but still within the "Accepted" range.

Research Question 3: What is their level of socialization during political activities?

Table 3. Level of Socialization During Political Activities

| S/N | Questionnaire Items | SA | A | SD | D | Total | \bar{X} | Decision |
|-----|--|----|----|----|----|-------|-----------|----------|
| 1. | The people always come out in mass to vote during election period. | 35 | 49 | 6 | 10 | 100 | 3.1 | Accepted |
| 2. | Citizens participate in political rallies and gatherings. | 52 | 32 | 6 | 10 | 100 | 3.3 | Accepted |
| 3. | They are actively involved in the | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----------|
| | campaigns and awareness exercises. | 26 | 34 | 12 | 28 | 100 | 2.7 | Accepted |
| 4. | They comply properly with the political rules and regulations. | 35 | 49 | 6 | 10 | 100 | 3.1 | Accepted |

Table 3 assesses the level of socialization during political activities in Aguata Local Government Area (LGA). The respondents were asked about their participation in various political events. The results show that citizens actively vote during election periods (mean = 3.1) and participate in political rallies and gatherings (mean = 3.3), with both activities receiving strong support. However, involvement in campaigns and awareness exercises is somewhat lower (mean = 2.7), suggesting that participation is less active in these areas. Citizens also comply well with political rules and regulations (mean = 3.1). All items were accepted based on their mean scores, reflecting general engagement in political activities.

Research Question 4: How exposed are they to political education and socialization?

Table 4. Exposure to Political Education and Socialization

| S/N | Questionnaire Items | SA | A | SD | D | Total | \bar{X} | Decision |
|-----|--|----|----|----|----|-------|-----------|----------|
| 1. | The people are taught civic/ political education in schools. | 30 | 40 | 5 | 25 | 100 | 3.2 | Accepted |
| 2. | They get political information through mass media. | 40 | 36 | 12 | 12 | 100 | 3.0 | Accepted |
| 3. | They are well exposed as they socialize during election periods. | 40 | 36 | 12 | 12 | 100 | 3.0 | Accepted |
| 4. | Citizens participate in the political socialization and education. | 30 | 50 | 5 | 15 | 100 | 3.1 | Accepted |

Table 4 examines the exposure to political education and socialization among citizens in Aguata Local Government Area (LGA). The survey results indicate that people are taught civic and political education in schools (mean = 3.2), which is well received. They also acquire political information through mass media (mean = 3.0) and are exposed to political socialization during election periods (mean = 3.0). Additionally, citizens actively participate in political socialization and education (mean = 3.1). All items have

been accepted based on their mean scores, reflecting a positive engagement with political education and socialization in the community.

Discussion

The relationship between education and political socialization plays an important role in shaping citizens' political awareness and participation, as demonstrated in Aguata Local Government Area (LGA). The survey indicates that education has significantly contributed to making Aguata citizens more politically aware and motivated. This finding aligns with studies showing that education enhances political engagement by stimulating awareness (Zhao & Zhang, 2024). In contrast, a study by Willeck and Mendelberg (2022) found that while education raises awareness, it does not always translate into increased political participation, suggesting that other factors, like media exposure, also play a critical role. In Aguata, citizens have been actively participating in political activities, a trend echoed in a related study by Ojo (2023), which found that education directly influences political participation in Nigerian communities. Similarly, the survey indicates that education has enhanced political socialization, with citizens becoming more involved in political processes, such as voting and attending rallies, further confirming findings by Tiamiyu (2022), who reported that educated individuals are more likely to engage in political discussions and socialization. Lastly, Aguata LGA citizens have been politically sensitized, reinforcing the conclusion that education plays a central role in increasing political consciousness and participation. This suggests that education, combined with active political socialization, is a powerful tool for stimulating an engaged and politically aware populace.

The dispositions of citizens towards politics and socialization in Aguata Local Government Area (LGA) reflect a high level of political engagement, with survey results showing active participation and sensitization. The finding that citizens fully participate in politics and socialization aligns with recent studies demonstrating that political socialization enhances individuals' engagement in democratic processes (Azubuike-Oba, 2023). In contrast, a study by Rasheed et al, (2024) found that political participation is often limited by factors such as apathy and lack of political trust, especially in rural areas, suggesting that context matters in the extent of participation. The survey also reveals that Aguata citizens are well-disposed to socialize politics during elections, a finding that agrees with Ojo et al (2023), who reported that elections serve as a focal point for political socialization. Political activities during elections serve as key moments for citizens to engage with political discourse. Furthermore, Aguata citizens report being sensitized by political activities, in line with research by Akeusola (2023), which suggests that awareness campaigns and political mobilization foster greater civic participation. Lastly, the motivation generated by electoral processes and outcomes in Aguata reflects the critical role elections play in motivating citizens. This is consistent with a study by Azubuike-Oba (2023), who found that electoral participation is often driven by the desire

to influence outcomes. Together, these findings indicate a politically active and sensitized citizenry in Aguata, driven by political education and engagement.

The level of socialization during political activities in Aguata Local Government Area (LGA) indicates a high degree of civic engagement, with citizens participating actively in various political events. The finding that people in Aguata consistently come out in mass to vote during election periods is in line with research by Akinola (2023), which demonstrated that education and political awareness lead to increased voter turnout. In contrast, a study by Davis and Turnbull (2024) observed that while voter turnout may be high, political apathy remains an issue in some regions, especially among the youth. Additionally, Aguata citizens actively participate in political rallies and gatherings, agreeing with findings by Ariyo and Folorunso (2022), who highlighted that rallies serve as critical platforms for socializing political messages and stimulating community engagement. However, the survey indicates slightly less involvement in campaigns and awareness exercises, a trend that contrasts with the findings of Adamu (2023), who reported that campaign participation in Nigeria can be hindered by inadequate resources and limited access to political information. Lastly, the high compliance with political rules and regulations in Aguata reflects the importance of political education in shaping civic responsibility, echoing research by Adesanmi (2022), which emphasized that informed citizens are more likely to adhere to political norms and laws.

Exposure to political education and socialization in Aguata Local Government Area (LGA) shows that education and media play significant roles in shaping political awareness and engagement. The finding that citizens are taught civic and political education in schools aligns with research by Obiagu et al, (2023), which emphasized the importance of formal education in stimulating democratic values and political engagement. In contrast, a study by Ojo (2022) suggested that political education in schools may be less impactful in areas where the curriculum is not updated to reflect contemporary political issues. Aguata citizens also receive political information through mass media, a finding supported by Azubuike-Oba (2023), who noted that mass media, especially television and radio, are key channels for political socialization. However, a study by Suemo et al, (2023) found that media consumption in rural areas is often limited, which may reduce its effectiveness in reaching all citizens. Moreover, the survey reveals that citizens are well-exposed to political socialization during election periods, which is consistent with findings by Bamidele et al, (2023), who showed that elections serve as peak moments for political socialization. Finally, Aguata citizens participate in political education and socialization, echoing a related study by Okocha and Dapoet (2024), which highlighted that active engagement in political education strengthens democratic participation.

Implication of political socialization of the Nigerian citizens on primary education

The political socialization of Nigerian citizens has significant implications for primary education, particularly in shaping the political consciousness and civic

engagement of the younger population. Primary education serves as the foundation for instilling democratic values, political awareness, and civic responsibility, which are essential for stimulating active citizenship (Timidi & Okuro, 2024). As Nigerian children progress through primary school, they are exposed to basic principles of governance, human rights, and civic duties, which influence their long-term attitudes towards politics and society. The integration of civic and political education into the primary school curriculum plays a critical role in nurturing future generations who are informed and actively engaged in the democratic process. In Nigeria, where political participation can be influenced by ethnic, religious, and regional divides, early political socialization helps promote national unity, tolerance, and understanding (Ohanyere et al, 2024). By imparting knowledge of the political system and encouraging discussions about national issues, primary education can build a more politically aware and responsible citizenry.

In contrast, when political socialization is inadequate or biased, it can lead to apathy or disillusionment, especially among young people who feel disconnected from the political system. Studies such as those by Igwebueze (2024) indicate that early education influences attitudes toward politics, and where the curriculum is not robust in stimulating civic engagement, students may lack the motivation to participate in the political process later in life. Furthermore, if political education is not inclusive or is heavily politicized, it may reinforce divisions and further entrench ethnic or regional biases. The implications of effective political socialization through primary education are profound. It equips future voters with the skills and knowledge to make informed choices, contributes to the development of a politically active electorate, and encourages citizens to hold leaders accountable. Consequently, investing in political socialization at the primary school level is vital for strengthening Nigeria's democratic culture and ensuring its sustainable development.

CONCLUSIONS

The study on the role of education in the political socialization of Nigerian citizens highlights the critical importance of education, particularly at the primary level, in shaping political attitudes, behaviors, and civic engagement. Education serves as the foundation for stimulating political awareness, democratic values, and active citizenship, which are essential for the development of a robust and participatory democracy. The findings suggest that early exposure to civic and political education significantly influences the political dispositions of individuals, empowering them to become informed, responsible, and engaged members of society.

In Nigeria, where political participation is often shaped by complex socio-cultural and regional factors, primary education plays a pivotal role in promoting national unity, tolerance, and informed political participation. By integrating political education into the curriculum, schools can counteract political apathy and encourage young citizens to understand and engage with the political system. Moreover, a well-rounded political education at the primary level can contribute to bridging divides and stimulating a sense

of national identity, ensuring that future generations are not only equipped to make informed electoral choices but are also motivated to participate in the political process.

However, for political socialization to be truly effective, it is crucial that the primary education system in Nigeria provides inclusive, non-partisan, and comprehensive political education. This will ensure that all citizens, regardless of their background, are equally empowered to engage in the political landscape. Ultimately, the study highlights the need for policymakers to prioritize civic and political education in primary schools as a means to nurture a politically conscious, active, and cohesive society—one that contributes to the sustainable development of Nigeria's democracy

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