

**NIGERIA –A MOTHER WITHOUT CHILDREN: IMPLICATIONS FOR CITIZENSHIP
EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Nigeria is ironically described as “a mother without children” to capture the weak bond between the state and its citizens. Unlike developed economies such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom, where patriotism is a strong national value, Nigerian citizens exhibit a low level of patriotism towards the state. This deficiency is linked to decades of neglect by successive governments in providing healthcare, quality education, affordable food, fuel subsidy, poverty alleviation, and a guaranteed future. National development requires active citizen participation, yet such participation is limited in Nigeria due to alienation and disillusionment. This study investigates the rationale behind the description of Nigeria as a mother without children, using Need Theory as its framework. The research adopts a descriptive survey design, employing self-administered interview questionnaires via phone calls, emails, and physical contact with 200 respondents across age brackets of 18–39 years and 40–75 years. Data were analyzed using simple percentage calculations. Findings reveal that patriotism among Nigerian citizens is alarmingly low, negatively affecting their role in national development. The paper concludes that effective implementation of citizenship education across all levels of education is critical for cultivating patriotism and national consciousness. It recommends that government should initiate policies and programmes capable of rebuilding trust, promoting civic responsibility, and encouraging citizens to contribute to sustainable national development.

Key Words: Nigeria, Mother, Children, Citizenship, Patriotism, National Development

Introduction

Mothers are never without children, yet Nigeria is ironically described as a mother without children. This reflects the neglect that citizens experience, much like children who grew up without the care of their mother. Many Nigerians have struggled to survive harsh conditions, facing neglect from the state in terms of access to healthcare, education, food security, fuel subsidy, poverty alleviation, and a guaranteed future. In contrast, developed economies such as the United States of

America and the United Kingdom enjoy strong patriotism from their citizens. In Nigeria, however, patriotism is low, weakening citizens' participation in national development. Unless government demonstrates genuine concern for citizens' well-being, trust and loyalty to the state will continue to decline. Policies that alienate citizens further hinder their willingness to support and contribute meaningfully to nation building.

Citizenship education is designed to bridge this gap by training young people to understand the processes of citizenship and patriotism. As a subject, it prepares learners to appreciate their civic roles, cultivate love and commitment to their country, and contribute to national progress. By linking patriotism with development, citizenship education emphasizes that a nation advances through the collective efforts of its people. It teaches that the highest service one can render is to be a patriotic citizen.

Conceptually, patriotism denotes love, attachment, and commitment to one's nation. Jideofor Adibe (2016) underscores that patriotism entails special affection for Nigeria, a sense of personal identification with the nation, and a willingness to sacrifice for its good. Yet, evidence shows that patriotism in Nigeria is in decline. For instance, voter apathy has increased steadily, with the 2024 electoral report by Ben Ezeamalu confirming a historically low turnout, continuing a two-decade trend of disengagement. Such apathy reflects disinterest in national affairs and undermines collective development.

This negative attitude stems largely from neglect of citizens' basic needs. Like a mother abandoning her children, Nigeria has failed to provide for many of its people, who live without significant government support. While the state's primary duty is security of lives and property, insecurity has reached alarming levels. Similarly, quality of life remains poor, with most citizens living below the poverty line. Doris Dokua Sasu (2024) reports that Nigeria scored only 0.38 points in the 2023 Digital Quality of Life Index, ranking 88th globally—a marginal improvement from 0.34 in 2022—showing limited government impact on citizens' welfare.

Patriotism is critical to national development, yet it is difficult to mobilize a dissatisfied and disillusioned populace. The Nigerian Constitution (Section 24c) requires citizens to enhance the prestige of the nation, defend it, and render national service. It also emphasizes national unity, obedience to law, and responsible co-existence. However, many citizens are reluctant to fulfill these duties because they feel excluded from the benefits of governance. As a result, Nigeria appears abandoned—like a mother without children—with citizens showing little concern for the welfare of the state.

It is against this backdrop that this paper discusses *Nigeria: A Mother without Children: Implications for Citizenship Education and National Development in Nigeria*.

Statement of the Problem

A mother without children is the ironical description of Nigeria and her citizens. Other developed economy, such as United States of America and the United Kingdom enjoy patriotism from their citizen. Citizens in Nigeria have low rate of patriotism towards the Nigeria State. Attention given to citizens by their government in terms of healthcare service delivery, education, fuel subsidy, cheap food items, poverty alleviation and a guaranteed future can prompt patriotism. It takes the participation of citizens to achieve national development. Studies have not been sufficiently directed towards the investigation on the rationale why Nigeria is described as a mother without children. The paper has answered the following question that: What is the rate of patriotism of citizens in Nigeria. This question sought the opinion of a cross section of citizens in Nigeria to provide the needed answer in the following section of the paper.

Objective of the Paper

It is the main objective of the paper to establish the rate at which there is patriotism among citizens and national development in Nigerian. Specific objective includes the following:

- i. Examine the rate of Patriotism of Citizens in Nigeria
2. Determine the rate of participation of the Nigerian citizens in national development
3. Assess the rate at which participants' gender, age bracket, level of education, and employment, would influence their patriotism and participation in national development as citizens in Nigeria.

The Need Theory

The study is hinged on the Need Theory for its theoretical framework. The theory was developed by Harvard psychologist David McClelland in the 1960s. Need theory is a motivational model that explains how a person's actions are influenced by their needs for achievement, affiliation, and power. This theory aligned with the theory of response stimulus. Stimulus-response theory, presents the idea that learning and behaviour can be explained by interactions between stimuli and the responses they evoke. Both theories are used to explain how we can understand the correlation between Nigeria like a mother and patriotic citizens in national development. The implication of the theory to this study indicates that there is a point of motivation from the country, Nigeria in terms of satisfying the basic need for quality life for their citizen to prompt their response for patriotism and meaningfully contribute to national development. Thus, the above theory is appropriate for use in this type of study. Hence, it is adopted to provide a theoretical framework for the paper.

Methodology

. The design is based on a descriptive survey involving the use of a self-response interview questionnaire through phone calls, email and physical contacts on a cross-section of the Nigeria society among age bracket of 18-39years and 40-75years 200 adults respondents. Generated data were analyzed using simple percentage calculation. Data presentation utilized Table of percentage with a rating on responses where: 100% =4; 80% =3; 60% =2; and 30% =1, respectively.

Literature Review on Basic Variables of the Study

This section of the paper presents a review of related empirical literature where attention is given to discussing the following variables, including: citizenship education, patriotism of citizens in Nigeria, participation of the Nigerian citizens in national development, respectively.

1. Citizenship Education and Curriculum Implementation

Citizenship education is a school subject that teaches students how to be active and responsible citizens in a democracy. It helps students develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to make decisions and take responsibility for their communities. By teaching citizenship education, teachers support the building of their students' skills and aptitudes in critical thinking, analyzing information, expressing ideas, taking part in discussions, negotiating, conflict resolution, and participating in community action. Citizenship education is an important school subject because it has a linear correlation with national development since students learn acceptable behaviors needed for nation-building. Responsibilities of citizens to their country are emphasized during the implementation of this curriculum. Citizenship education is important because it helps people become informed, responsible, and active citizens who can contribute to their communities and society. The study by Edinyang, Ele and Odey (2023) stated that, "the idea of citizenship education is centered on educating people about their rights, obligations, and roles as citizens of a given nation". Training for role-play by individual and collective individuals to meaningfully contribute to national development make the course one of the outstanding educational programmes of the Nigeria Federal government with the intention to develop in every young adult, the need to become patriotic to the country and where there is opportunity they can meaningfully support the country

The implementation of Citizenship Education in Nigeria involves integrating civic knowledge, values, and skills into the curriculum and daily life of students. This includes direct teaching of citizenship as a subject, integration of civic concepts into other subjects, and cross-curricular activities that connect with the community. Effective implementation also relies on strong political commitment, democratic teaching methodologies, and inclusive education practices. The study by Ckaimz, Ita and Uba. (2025) linked the successful implementation of the citizenship education curriculum to the realization of nation-building goals and objectives in Nigeria. This is because the authors found that Citizenship Education plays a critical role in fostering national identity,

civic responsibility, and active participation among citizens, which are essential to achieving broader nation-building objectives.

Thus, effective implementation of the citizenship education curriculum is important to drive home the objective of the programme. Implementation implies to the teaching and learning of the subject in classroom situation where teacher, students and the subject-matter interact. It is at the implementation stage that the objective of the programme is being inculcated into the minds of the students. In this way, students are able to imbibe the doctrine inherent in citizenship education. Nigeria is in dared need of the knowledge and understanding of citizenship education in order to prepare the young adults to become patriotic to their country. Therefore, school teachers with the knowledge of the subject matter are encouraged to effectively implement the curriculum for the purpose of realizing the goals of the programme.

2. Patriotism in Nigeria

Patriotism is a concept that details how citizens of a country would demonstrate their affections and supports for their country. National development requires that citizens participate actively by showing commitment to government programme and policies. It thus demands that citizens should be patriotic to the country's good. This is because, patriotism is a virtue without which any attempt at nation-building will be futile. In other words, a majority of the citizens of Nigeria must show concerns for the development of the country by being responsible and by showing a strong desire to contribute their quota to the development of their motherland and make her outstanding in the comity of nations. Joseph Ononaye (2017) suggested that "if we want to instill patriotism into Nigerians, we must teach it first in our schools. We must make a big deal of it by engaging young Nigerians on the subject from an early age." According to the above author, patriotism teaching "should be included as an area of study in the national education curriculum and amply discussed". The above observation points to the fact that there is low rate of patriotism in Nigeria. May be through teaching and other mediums, we would be able to encourage patriotism among Nigerian citizens.

Echezonam Williams (2022) stated that "people see Nigerians as unpatriotic people and there's no doubt that Nigerians are among the world most unpatriotic people." The above researcher blamed lack of patriotism among Nigerian citizens to leadership failure. The implication is that citizens are discouraged by their government inaction in term of basic provision of the quality of life that would prompt patriotism from the citizens in Nigeria. Timothy Oyegoke (2023) reports in the issue of Business Day of January 4, 2023 that, "It is disheartening to see the rate at which brilliant and resourceful Nigerians are eager to leave the country." The report adds in the following that, "this has raised a concern on whether many Nigerians are leaving as a result of their lack of patriotism or their desire to live in a place where they can avoid gambling on their life and well-being." Thus, the deduction from the reports above supports the view that there is reduced patriotism among citizens of Nigeria when compared to other countries, such as the United States

and the United Kingdom, respectively, where citizens demonstrate uncompromising support for these countries. Lack of patriotism will mean that a very great number of citizens will be docile in their contribution to nation-building.

3. Correlation between Patriotism and National Development in Nigeria

There is a significant relationship between patriotism and national development. This is because, whatever development that is experienced in a country it is determined by the reaction of citizens who participate in ensuring that the nation attains its objectives. Iheakanwah Felix Arinzech (2023) stated that patriotism has a connection with national development. According to the researcher, “many countries view patriotism as an integral part of their nation-building and promotion of socio-economic development”. The author also added that “patriotism is essential to effectively grow and sustain a country’s economy”. Against this backdrop, patriotism promotes national identity and pride. Patriotism increases the likelihood of citizens’ willingness to sacrifice personal interests for the common good of the nation. Patriotism brings people together and encourages them to work collaboratively towards national development. Nigeria needs patriotic citizens to drive her goal of the national development plan since finding points to the fact that patriotism affects economic development. Patriotism in Nigeria, like in other nations, is a complex mix of love, loyalty, and a sense of belonging to one's country, often intertwined with national pride, cultural identity, and historical experiences. However, Nigeria's experience with patriotism is often described as fragile and fluctuating, influenced by economic conditions, political stability, and social cohesion.

Patriotism is considered as one the vital factors for nation building. Taiye (2024) posited in the following that:

In the grand tapestry of nation-building, two important ingredients are often overlooked: patriotism and loyalty. These ingredients, once the bedrock of society seem to be fading into irrelevance, as modernity and globalization take center stage. Meanwhile, their absence threatens the very foundation upon which nations are built (p. 1.).

The description above appears to correspond with the Nigerian experience where citizens are not very concerned about their country. It has made Nigeria to be like a mother without children.

Ben (2008) found that, “most of the developed countries of the world today attained greatness, partly as a result of the patriotism shown by their citizens. Unfortunately the level of patriotism of Nigeria citizens is low. Without mincing words, this has contributed to the development of the country negatively”. It was the aim of the researcher to encourage patriotism in Nigeria. This is vital because there is a correlate between the patriotism of citizens and the development in Nigeria as it is elsewhere in the committee of nations.

National development in Nigeria according to Adama (2006) is the comprehensive progress and improvement of the nation across various sectors, with the aim to enhancing the totality of the citizen’s well-being at all times. Thus, the above researcher is of the view that the process of

achieving development in Nigeria would necessarily encompass economic, social, political, and cultural advancements and it has to be achieved through strategic planning, policy implementation, and citizen engagement. The above idea aligned with the Nigerian 2021-2025 plans, which aims to lift millions out of poverty and establish a national social protection system. The author also stated that the purpose of education in most countries including Nigeria is the development of individuals who would participate effectively in national development processes. The study by Tolu Lawal1 and Abe Oluwatoyin (2017) found that “development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation”. This idea is based on the fact that a country is classified as developed when is able to provide a quality of life for its citizenry.

John Vaisey (2025) defines national development as “the overall influence of all human forces and the increase to the inventory of physical, human capital, knowledge, and skill” When we view national development from the above, it means that it encompasses all facets of an individual’s life as well as the life of a nation. Hence, to achieve the goals of national development, governments at all levels must be willing to mobilize her citizens and promote the ideals of patriotism and encourage citizenship education in order to foster participation of citizens so as to pursue the plans of national development in Nigeria. In addition to this, the term “national development” refers to the improvement of an entire nation. The term “national development” refers to the improvement of a country in all areas, including the political, economic, social, cultural, scientific, and material spheres. The capacity of a nation to enhance its citizens’ standard of living is an indicator of the nation’s level of development. It is possible to accomplish this by offering a majority of citizens the essential components of a means of subsistence, such as employment opportunities, equal status, increase in purchasing power, access to cheap price of food, effective and efficient power supply, poverty reduction, and most importantly the security of lives and properties of citizens which is the highest responsibility of government that is capable of prompting patriotism of citizens. The following section of this paper tested the rate of patriotism of citizen in relation to the rate of their commitment to the Nigerian National Development Plan.

Presentation of Data and Discussion

Research Question One: What are the factors affecting the rate of patriotism of citizens of Nigeria in Nigeria?

This question is answered using the responses of the participants who were administered the self-respondents interview questionnaire consisting of six (6) items, which measured the rate of patriotism of citizens of Nigeria. The simple percentage calculation was employed to rate their responses. Data are presented on Table 1.1 as follows:

Table 1.1: Analysis of Percentage Calculation on Factors Affecting the Rate of Patriotism of Citizens of Nigeria in Nigeria.

S/N	Question Items	N	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	%	Remark
1.	I am enjoying free healthcare services with my family	200	44	39	54	149	286	57.2%	Accepted
2.	I enjoyed free education	200	16	24	48	164	252	50.4%	Accepted
3.	I am enjoying fuel subsidy	200	16	15	40	171	242	48.4%	Rejected
4.	I purchase a cheap food item	200	28	18	48	163	257	51.4%	Accepted
5.	My future is guarantee in Nigeria	200	308	72	64	67	511	102.2%	Accepted
6.	I am aware that a majority of Nigerian are suffering	200	456	51	28	55	590	118.0%	Accepted

Source: Field Survey by the Researcher, 2024

Table 1.1 presents data that assessed the opinion of 200 interviewed participants. Item one with the highest responses of SD = 149 showing that a majority of citizens in Nigeria are not enjoying free healthcare services with their family. Item two obtained the highest responses, where: SD= 164, meaning many citizens are not enjoyed free education. Item three responses of SD= 171 indicates that there is no fuel subsidy enjoyed by citizens. Item four with the highest responses in SD= 163 imply that food items are not cheap in Nigeria. Responses on item five received a favorable response where: SA= 308, meaning that many citizens believed that there is a bright future with Nigeria. Finally, the last item with responses where SA =456 as highest in the response revealed that there is growing awareness among citizens that a majority of Nigerians are suffering. Based on the above results, it is safe to state that most of the items in the interview are capable of affecting the rate of patriotism of citizens of Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What is the rate at which Nigerian citizens are willing to participate in national development in Nigeria? Responses to the twelve (12) items of the interview questionnaire were analyzed to provide the answer to this question. The simple percentage calculation was employed to rate their responses. Data are presented in Table 1.2 as follows:

**Table 1.2: Analysis of Percentage Calculation at the Rate at which Nigerian Citizens
Participate in National Development in Nigeria**

S/N	Question Items	N	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	%	Remark
1.	If I have the opportunity I would prefer to work in abroad	200	584	69	38	12	703	70%	Accepted
2.	I am willing to go to any length to defend Nigeria	200	116	90	144	69	419	83.8%	Accepted
3.	Nigeria is the best country in the world	200	120	84	100	92	396	79.2%	Accepted
4.	I owe my loyalty to my country	200	232	102	104	56	494	98.8%	Accepted
5.	It is good to help pay the debt owe by Nigeria	200	100	48	94	112	354	70.8%	Accepted
6.	It is my duty to support the policies/programme of government	200	184	159	124	39	506	101.2%	Accepted
7.	I am willing to uphold the honour of my country	200	252	171	92	34	549	109%	Accepted
8.	I have respect for the Nigerian flag	200	348	147	74	27	596	119.2%	Accepted
9.	I have respect for the Nigerian currency	200	300	165	80	30	575	115.0%	Accepted
10.	I will use my resources, gift as well as my talents	200	312	174	50	39	575	115.0%	Accepted

	to contribute meaningfully to the glory of Nigeria								
11.	I proudly identify myself anywhere I am as a Nigerian citizen	200	432	156	52	14	654	130.8%	Accepted
12.	I am ready to provide voluntary services to promote development in Nigeria	200	268	195	80	28	571	114.2%	Accepted

Source: Field Survey by the Researcher, 2024

Table 1.2 received results with high rating as seen in the performance percentage calculation based on the responses of participants that were interviewed. All the 12 items point to the fact that Nigerian citizens are indifferent towards participating in National Development in Nigeria. 584 responses show that if they have the opportunity, they would prefer to work abroad, supporting the JAKPA syndrome causing brain drain in the country. This is despite the fact that there were 432 responses that agree that they would be proud to identify themselves as a Nigerian citizen. Therefore, the question is answered that there is a low rate at which Nigerian citizens are willing to participate in national development in Nigeria.

Discussion of Finding

Finding in the study shows that there are factors affecting the rate of patriotism of citizens in Nigeria. The six items in Table 1.1 are some of the major factors affecting the low rate of patriotism of citizens in Nigeria. Majorities of citizens are not enjoying free education; the fuel subsidy removal brought about increase in cost of transportation; the purchase of food items is out of reach of the masses; many doubt if they have their future guarantee in Nigeria; there is a growing awareness by a majority of Nigerian there is suffering in among citizens in the country. These factors dampened the sense of patriotism of citizens in Nigeria.

There is the finding in this study that revealed a low rate at which Nigerian Citizens are willing to participate in National Development given the fact that Nigerian citizens are indifferent considering the harsh environment they find themselves. There is a growing feeling of government neglect to the welfare of the citizens by the Nigerian government. Many of our citizens prefer to work abroad if they have the opportunity. The sense of belonging is an important feature if citizens are to be mobilized to participate in national development. Creating an enabling environment could

be an incentive that would promote patriotism against the disenchantment that has enveloped the country.

Conclusion

There is no need to deny the fact that a majority of Nigerians lack patriotism when compared to other countries, such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The citizens of these two countries enjoy significant benefits from the national governments in terms of healthcare delivery services, free education and other entitlements that promote quality of life in civilized societies. Such a situation enhances the patriotism of citizens. Therefore, the paper concludes that there would be increased participation of citizens to national development when the basic needs of citizens are met. This could also promote a high rate of patriotism from among citizens.

Recommendations

The paper recommended that:

- i. Nigerian government should cater for the wellbeing of its citizens, like what obtains in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. This will raise the rate of patriotism of citizens in Nigeria.
- ii. Nigerian citizens should show more love for their country by contributing towards the development of the country. Citizens should appreciate the fact that east or west, home is the best.
- iii. Leaders should lead us well by showing positive examples that citizens can emulate. Charity, they say begins at home.
- iv. Teachers should effectively implement the citizenship education curriculum to enable students to acquire the doctrine of patriotism.

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APPENDIX 1

Nigeria- a mother without children: implication for citizenship education and national development in Nigeria.

Research Instrument

**A Self-Respondent Interview Questionnaire on Nigerian Citizenship, Patriotism and
National Development (SRIQNCPND)**

Section A: Data of Respondent (BDR)

1. Citizen of Nigeria: Yes () No ()
2. Gender: Male () Female ()
3. Age Bracket: 18-39 years () 40-75 years ()
4. Level of Education: Non Graduate () Graduate ()
5. Employment: Self Employed () Government Employed ()
6. State of Origin. Specify: -----
7. LGA of Origin. Specify: -----
8. Senatorial District: Specify: -----

Section B. Measure of Patriotism of Citizen of Nigeria Questionnaire Scale (MPCNQS)

Nigerians live in a homeland called Nigeria. It is presumably stated that Nigeria does not give attention the basic needs of her citizens. Assess the above assumption where your response is rated on the following percentage of 100% (4), 80% (3), 60% (2) and 30% (1).

Rating Scale

S/N	Question Items	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1.	I am enjoying free healthcare services with my family				
2.	I enjoyed free education				
3.	I am enjoying fuel subsidy				
4.	I purchase cheap food item				
5.	My future is guarantee				
6.	I am aware that a majority of Nigerian are suffering				

Source: Field Survey by the Researcher, 2024

Section C: Measures of National Development Questionnaire Scale (MNDQS)

National development depends on the participation of the citizens of a country. Based on your observation, rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements where

your response would be rated on the following percentage: 100% (4) 80% (3) 60% (2) 30% (1) respectively.

S/N	Question Items	Rating Scale			
		100% (4)	80% (3)	60% (2)	30% (1)
1.	If I have the opportunity I would prefer to work in abroad				
2.	I am willing to go to any length to defend Nigeria				
3.	Nigeria is the best country in the world				
4.	I owe my loyalty to my country				
5.	It is good to help pay the debt owe by Nigeria				
6.	It is my duty to support the policies/programme of government				
7.	I am willing to uphold the honour of my country				
8.	I have respect for the Nigerian flag				
9.	I have respect for the Nigerian currency				
10.	I will use my resources, gift, talents to contribute meaningfully to the glory of Nigeria				
11.	I proudly identify myself anywhere I am as a Nigerian citizen				
12.	I am ready to provide voluntary services to promote development in Nigeria				

Source: Field Survey by the Researcher, 2024