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Effect of Project-Based Teaching Method on Academic Performance in Civic Education Concept among Senior Secondary School Students in Adamawa State, Nigeria

AHMADU, Shehu

Email: ahmadu.shehu@fceyola.edu.ng

+234 803 693 2251

GWANY, D.M.

+234 901 330 5054

SA'AD, Mohammed

mohammed.saad@fceyola.edu.ng

+2347061335100

NUHU, Emmanuel Naye

nuhunaye@gmail.com

+234 816 911 2235

¹Federal Collage of Education Yola, Adamawa State, Nigeria

²Department of Educational Foundation, Modibbo Adama University, Yola, Adamawa State, Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigated the effect of the project-based teaching method on students' academic performance in Civic Education in senior secondary schools of Adamawa State, Nigeria. The research was guided by two research questions and three null hypotheses tested at a 0.05 level of significance. A quasi-experimental design, specifically the pretest-posttest non-equivalent control group design, was employed. The population of the study was 50,782 Senior Secondary School II students offering Civic Education across five education zones of Adamawa State. A sample of 265 SS II students (142 males and 123 females) was drawn from four intact classes using purposive and stratified random sampling techniques. The instrument for data collection was the Civic Education Performance Test (CEPT), consisting of 50 multiple-choice items adapted from WAEC Civic Education past questions (2020–2025). The instrument was validated through face and content validation by experts, and its reliability was established using Kuder-Richardson Formula 21 (KR-21) using the split-half method, yielding a coefficient of 0.82. The item analysis of the 50-item Civic Education Performance Test (CEPT) revealed difficulty indices (p-values) ranging from 0.33 to 0.80 and discrimination indices (D-values) ranging from 0.25 to 0.68, indicating that the majority of items were of moderate difficulty and had good to excellent discriminating power, with no items requiring major revision based on the established criteria. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions, while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 alpha level. The findings revealed that: there was a statistically significant effect of project-based teaching method and conventional method on students' academic performance, $F(1,262)=8682.93$, $p<0.001$, with students taught using project-based method performing significantly better than those taught using conventional method; gender had a statistically significant effect on academic performance, $F(1,140)=6.93$, $p=0.009$, indicating that male students performed better than female students when taught civic education using project-based method; and there was a statistically significant interaction effect between teaching method (project-based and conventional methods) and gender on students' academic performance, $F(3,260)=2918.11$, $p<0.001$. The study concluded that the project-based teaching method has a significant positive effect on students' academic performance in Civic Education in senior secondary schools of Adamawa state, but male students performed better than female students when taught civic education using the project-based method. Recommendations include that Civic Education teachers should adopt project-based learning as an instructional strategy and design inclusive project tasks that equally engage both male and female students.

Keywords: Project-Based Teaching Method, Academic Performance, and Gender

Introduction

The persistent poor academic performance of students in Civic Education at the senior secondary school level has become a major concern to educators, curriculum planners, and educational researchers in Nigeria. Examination reports and school records indicate that many students consistently perform below expectations in Civic Education, despite the subject's relevance to democratic development and national cohesion (WAEC, 2022). This situation has raised questions about the effectiveness of instructional practices used in teaching the subject. Civic Education was introduced into the Nigerian



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curriculum to instill democratic values, civic responsibility, respect for human rights, and national consciousness among young citizens (Nwankwo, 2020). However, classroom evidence suggests that these objectives are yet to be fully realized in many secondary schools. Students often demonstrate superficial understanding of civic concepts and struggle to apply learned knowledge to real-life civic situations (Falade & Adeyemi, 2020). The continued decline in students' academic performance serves as the major prompt for conducting this research. Scholars argue that ineffective teaching methods contribute significantly to this problem (Adebayo & Yusuf, 2019). Consequently, there is growing interest in exploring innovative instructional strategies capable of improving learning outcomes in Civic Education. This concern forms the foundation for the present study. From a global perspective, poor academic performance in Civic Education has been widely reported across both developed and developing countries. Studies indicate that Civic Education is frequently taught using teacher-centered approaches that emphasize theoretical content rather than practical civic engagement (Kerr & Print, 2018). As a result, students often perceive the subject as abstract, boring, and disconnected from their everyday experiences. This perception negatively affects students' motivation, comprehension, and academic performance (Hoskins et al., 2021). International assessments have revealed significant gaps in students' civic knowledge and participatory skills (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2021). In response, global education reforms emphasize learner-centered instructional strategies that promote active participation and experiential learning. Countries that have adopted innovative approaches such as project-based learning report improved student engagement and academic performance in Civic Education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020). However, in regions where traditional teaching methods remain dominant, students continue to perform poorly. The global discourse therefore highlights the need for instructional innovation. These global concerns provide a useful framework for understanding similar challenges in Nigeria. In Nigeria, over the nine-year period, the percentage of students achieving credit passes (A1-C6) has fluctuated but remained generally low, with the highest being 35.35% in 2024 and the lowest being 11.57% in 2019 and 13.23% in 2025. More alarmingly, the percentage of students recording poor achievements (D7-F9) has consistently exceeded 60% in most years, with the worst performances recorded in 2019 (88.4%), 2025 (86.8%), and 2017 (80.6%). While there was a slight improvement in 2020 (70.1%), 2022 (73.6%), and 2024 (64.7%), the overall trend indicates that a significant majority of students in Adamawa State continue to perform poorly in Civic Education. These national and regional challenges underscore the need to re-examine teaching strategies used in Civic Education classrooms.

Academic performance refers to the measurable outcomes of learning in terms of students' knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitudes, usually assessed through tests, examinations, and classroom activities. In Civic Education, academic performance extends beyond test scores to include students' ability to analyze social issues, demonstrate civic competence, and apply civic knowledge responsibly (Adeyemi, 2018). Poor academic performance, therefore, indicates a disconnect between instructional objectives and learning outcomes. Studies reveal that many students are unable to interpret civic concepts meaningfully or relate them to societal realities (Falade & Adeyemi, 2020). Academic performance is influenced by several factors, including teaching methods, learner motivation, and classroom environment. Among these factors, instructional strategy plays a critical role. When teaching methods fail to engage learners, academic performance tends to decline. Improving students' academic performance therefore requires effective and engaging teaching approaches. Civic Education is a discipline designed to prepare learners for responsible and active participation in civic and political life. It equips students with knowledge of democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law, and civic responsibilities (Nwankwo, 2020). The subject also aims to develop values such as tolerance, patriotism, accountability, and respect for diversity. In Nigeria, Civic Education serves as a tool for promoting national unity and addressing social challenges such as corruption and human rights abuses. However, the performance of these objectives depends largely on how the subject is taught. When instruction is purely theoretical, students fail to internalize civic values. Civic Education therefore requires active learner engagement to be meaningful. This highlights the importance of appropriate teaching strategies. Teaching methods refer to the systematic strategies and procedures used by teachers to facilitate learning and achieve instructional objectives. In Civic Education, teaching methods significantly influence students' understanding and value acquisition. The conventional method is the most commonly used instructional method in Nigerian secondary schools (Okeke, 2017). This method places the teacher at the center of the learning process while students remain passive recipients of information. Although it allows coverage of large content within a short time, it discourages interaction and critical thinking. Students taught primarily through conventional often exhibit low interest and poor academic performance. In contrast, learner-



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centered methods promote active participation and meaningful learning. The project-based teaching method is an instructional method that engages students in investigating and solving real-life problems through collaborative projects. It encourages inquiry, creativity, and independent learning (Bell, 2019). In Civic Education, project-based learning allows students to explore civic issues within their communities, thereby making learning relevant and practical (Eze & Obi, 2022). This method shifts the teacher's role from instructor to facilitator while learners take responsibility for their learning. Research indicates that project-based learning enhances retention, understanding of complex concepts, and academic performance (UNESCO, 2020). It also promotes teamwork and communication skills, which are essential civic competencies. These benefits make project-based teaching method suitable for Civic Education instruction. Gender is another variable that may influence students' academic performance. Some studies suggest that male students perform better in Civic Education due to greater exposure to civic activities, while others report no significant gender differences (Ahmed & Sule, 2018; Musa & Danjuma, 2021). These mixed findings indicate the need for further investigation. Gender may also affect how students respond to different teaching methods. Project-based learning provides equal opportunities for participation among male and female students. Understanding gender differences is important for achieving equitable learning outcomes. Therefore, international and regional studies further reinforce the effectiveness of project-based learning in improving students' academic performance and civic competence.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of the project-based teaching method on students' academic performance in Civic Education in senior secondary schools in Adamawa State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Determine the effect of the project-based teaching method on student academic performance when taught civic education and those taught using conventional method.
2. Determine the effect of gender on student academic performance when taught civic education using the project-based teaching method.
3. Determine the interaction effect of teaching methods and gender on students' academic performance in civic education in senior secondary schools of Adamawa State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is pretest and posttest mean score differences of the project-based teaching method on student academic performance when taught civic education and those taught using the conventional method?
2. What is the pretest and posttest mean score differences of gender on student academic performance when taught civic education using the project-based teaching method?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- H01:** There is no significant effect of project-based teaching method on student academic performance when taught civic education and those taught using conventional method.
- H02:** There is no significant effect of gender on student academic performance when taught civic education using project-based teaching method.
- H03:** There is no significant interaction effect of teaching methods and gender on students' academic performance in civic education in senior secondary schools of Adamawa state Nigeria.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental design, specifically the pretest-posttest non-equivalent control group design, to investigate the effects of teaching methods on students' academic performance in Civic Education. The independent variable was teaching method (project-based versus conventional), the dependent variable was academic performance, and gender served as a moderator variable. The research was conducted in Adamawa State, Nigeria, with a population of 50,782 SSII students across 448 public secondary schools. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 265 students from two intact classes across two schools, with 143 students in the experimental group taught using project-based methods and 122 students in the control group taught using conventional lecture methods. Data collection utilized a 50-item multiple-choice Civic Education Performance Test (CEPT) adapted from the WASSCE curriculum covering topics on Human

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Rights, Corruption, and Their Effects. The instrument underwent face and content validation by experts and demonstrated acceptable reliability (KR-21 coefficient of 0.82). The intervention lasted three weeks, with both groups receiving instruction twice weekly for 45-minute sessions. The experimental group engaged in collaborative projects, including creating charts and writing drama scripts, while the control group received traditional lecture-based instruction. Multiple extraneous variables were controlled, including selection bias, teacher effects, history, maturation, testing effects, instrumentation, and mortality, through careful design and statistical controls. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) to answer research questions, and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to test three null hypotheses at the 0.05 significance level. ANCOVA was specifically chosen to statistically adjust for any pre-existing differences between groups by using pretest scores as covariates, thereby isolating the true effect of the teaching method on posttest performance. The study established a clear decision rule: the null hypothesis would be rejected if the calculated p-value was less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant difference between teaching methods, student gender, or their interaction on Civic Education academic performance.

Presentation of Results

The results of the data analysis are presented according to the research questions and the hypotheses formulated to guide the study. Two research questions were answered and three hypotheses were tested in the study.

Research Question 1: What is the effect of the project-based teaching method on student academic performance when taught civic education and those taught using the conventional method?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of effect of project-based teaching method and conventional method on student academic performance

Teaching Method	n	Pretest		Posttest		Mean difference
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Project-Based Method	143	18.59	2.25	35.10	4.13	16.51
Conventional Method	122	18.11	1.97	24.41	2.51	6.30

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation scores of students taught Civic Education using project-based teaching method and those taught using the conventional teaching method. The results indicate that students in the project-based teaching group had a pretest mean score of 18.59 (SD = 2.25), while their posttest mean score increased to 35.10 (SD = 4.13), resulting in a mean gain of 16.51 points. Students in the conventional teaching group had a pretest mean score of 18.11 (SD = 1.97) and a posttest mean score of 24.41 (SD = 2.51), with a mean gain of 6.30 points.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the effect of gender on student academic performance when taught civic education using the project-based teaching method

Gender	N	Pretest		Posttest		Mean difference
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Male	77	18.74	2.29	35.21	4.15	3.23
Female	66	18.42	2.20	31.98	6.16	

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation scores of male and female students taught Civic Education using the project-based teaching method. The results reveal that male students had a pretest mean score of 18.74 (SD = 2.29) and a posttest mean score of 35.21 (SD = 4.15), while female students had a pretest mean score of 18.42 (SD = 2.20) and a posttest mean score of 31.98 (SD = 6.16). This suggests that although both genders benefited from the project-based teaching method, male students performed better than their female counterparts in Civic Education.

Hypothesis Testing

The null hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Covariance.

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of the project-based teaching method on student academic performance when taught civic education and those taught using conventional method.

Table 3: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (ANCOVA) for Posttest Scores by Teaching Method

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Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	10515.728 ^a	2	5257.864	7116.305	.000
Intercept	1.457	1	1.457	1.972	.161
PRETEST	2985.357	1	2985.357	4040.559	.000
METHOD	6415.362	1	6415.362	8682.931	.000
Error	193.578	262	.739		
Total	252098.000	265			
Corrected Total	10709.306	264			

Table 3 presents the ANCOVA results examining the effect of teaching method on students' posttest academic performance while controlling for pretest scores. The result shows that the teaching method had a statistically significant effect on students' academic performance in Civic Education, $F(1, 262) = 8682.931$, $p < .05$. Since the significance value (.000) is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant effect of teaching method on students' academic performance is rejected. The result further indicates that pretest scores significantly influenced posttest performance, $F(1, 262) = 4040.559$, $p < .05$. The significant effect of teaching method confirms that students taught using the project-based teaching method performed significantly better than those taught using the conventional teaching method. Therefore, the project-based teaching method is more effective in enhancing students' academic performance in Civic Education.

HO₂: There is no significant effect of gender on student academic performance when taught civic education using the project-based teaching method.

Table 4: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (ANCOVA) for Posttest Scores by Gender

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2330.813 ^a	2	1165.406	1883.728	.000
Intercept	4.639	1	4.639	7.498	.007
PRETEST	2329.046	1	2329.046	3764.601	.000
GENDER	4.288	1	4.288	6.932	.009
Error	86.614	140	.619		
Total	178644.000	143			
Corrected Total	2417.427	142			

Table 4 presents the ANCOVA results on the effect of gender on students' posttest academic performance when taught Civic Education using the project-based teaching method, controlling for pretest scores. The results show that gender had a statistically significant effect on students' academic performance, $F(1, 140) = 6.932$, $p = .009$. Since the significance value (.009) is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the academic performance of male and female students taught using project-based teaching method is rejected. This finding indicates that gender significantly influenced students' academic performance under the project-based teaching method. Based on the mean scores presented in Table 2, male students achieved a higher posttest mean score (35.21) than female students (31.98). Therefore, it can be concluded that male students performed significantly better than female students when taught Civic Education using the project-based teaching method.

HO₃: There is no significant interaction effect of teaching methods and gender on students' academic performance in civic education in senior secondary schools of Adamawa state Nigeria.

Table 5: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (ANCOVA) for Interaction of Teaching Method and Gender

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	10518.684 ^a	4	2629.671	3586.760	.000
Intercept	1.243	1	1.243	1.695	.194
METHOD * GENDER	6418.318	3	2139.439	2918.105	.000
PRETEST	2985.214	1	2985.214	4071.706	.000
Error	190.622	260	.733		
Total	252098.000	265			
Corrected Total	10709.306	264			

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Table 5 presents the ANCOVA results examining the interaction effect of teaching method and gender on students' academic performance in Civic Education while controlling for pretest scores. The result shows that the interaction between teaching method and gender had a statistically significant effect on students' posttest academic performance, $F(3, 260) = 2918.105$, $p < .05$. Since the significance value (.000) is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis that there is no significant interaction effect of teaching method and gender on students' academic performance is rejected.

Summary of Findings

The following findings were:

1. There was a statistically significant effect of teaching method on students' academic performance with $F(1,262) = 8682.93$, $p < 0.001$) showing that students taught civic education using project-based teaching method performed better than those taught using the conventional method in Adamawa state.
2. Gender had a statistically significant effect on academic performance with $F(1,140) = 6.93$, $p = 0.009$) showing that male students performed better than female students when taught civic education using the project-based teaching method.
3. There is significant interaction effect between teaching methods (project-based and conventional methods) and gender (male and female) on students' academic performance in civic education in Adamawa state, with, $F(3,260) = 2918.11$, $p < 0.001$.

Discussion of Findings

The study found a statistically significant effect of teaching method on students' academic performance, with those taught using the project-based method outperforming their counterparts in the conventional lecture group. This result aligns with a substantial body of research, including studies by Ewuga, Gunde, and Audi (2025) in Civic Education, Oreoluwa and Babatunde (2024) in Economics, and Ibrahim et al. (2023) in Ecology, all of which reported superior outcomes for project-based or problem-based learning approaches. The consistency across subjects supports the constructivist learning theory, which posits that active, inquiry-based engagement with real-world problems such as creating charts, role plays, and reports fosters deeper understanding and retention compared to passive listening and note-taking. The study also revealed a significant effect of gender on academic performance among students taught using the project-based method, with male and female students performing differently after controlling for pretest scores. This finding partially aligns with Ewuga, Gunde, and Audi (2025) but contrasts with studies by Oreoluwa and Babatunde (2024), Okoye and Osuafor (2021), and Adamu et al. (2024), which reported no significant gender differences in similar project-based learning environments. The observed disparity may be context-dependent, potentially influenced by the nature of project tasks (e.g., public presentations favoring males in Nigerian cultural settings), cultural norms affecting participation in Adamawa State, or varying resonance of topics like Human Rights and Corruption with students' life experiences, suggesting that gender-sensitive scaffolding may be necessary. The study found a significant interaction effect between teaching method and gender on students' academic performance, indicating that the project-based method did not benefit male and female students equally. While this result contrasts with Oreoluwa and Babatunde (2024) and Okoye and Osuafor (2021), who reported no such interaction, it aligns with Ewuga, Gunde, and Audi (2025), who found significant interactions with demographic factors like location. The interaction may stem from task structures favoring one gender, cultural norms in Adamawa State affecting participation, group dynamics during projects, or the method amplifying existing disparities in engagement and confidence, underscoring the need for deliberate attention to gender dynamics when implementing innovative teaching strategies.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the study concluded that, project-based teaching method has a significant positive effect on students' academic performance in Civic Education. Furthermore, gender have a significant effect on performance within the project-based group, indicating that male and female students did not benefit equally; additionally, a significant interaction between teaching method and gender revealed that the effectiveness of the teaching approach varied by gender.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made:

1. Civic Education teachers in senior secondary schools should adopt project-based learning as an instructional strategy.



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2. Civic education Teachers should design and implement project tasks that are inclusive and equally engaging for both male and female students. Teachers should ensure that project activities do not favor one gender over the other. They should give equal opportunities for participation, encourage both male and female students to take leadership roles, and monitor group dynamics to ensure that all students contribute meaningfully to project work.
3. Teachers and school administrators should adopt gender-sensitive implementation strategies. This includes forming mixed-gender project groups, rotating leadership roles among male and female students, monitoring participation patterns to ensure equity, and providing support to students who may be less confident or engaged in project activities.

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