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Relationship among Emotional Intelligence, Self-Esteem, and Civic Competence among Secondary School Students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study examined the relationship among emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria. A correlational research design was adopted. The population comprised Senior Secondary School II (SS II) students in public secondary schools, from which a sample of 378 respondents was selected using a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using the Emotional Intelligence, Self-Esteem and Civic Competence Questionnaire (EISCCQ), which was validated by experts and found to be reliable through Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients. The data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression analysis at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and civic competence ($r = .642$, $p < .05$), indicating that students with higher emotional intelligence tended to exhibit higher civic competence. The study also found a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and civic competence ($r = .587$, $p < .05$). Furthermore, emotional intelligence and self-esteem jointly made a significant contribution to civic competence ($R = .632$, $R^2 = .399$, $F(2, 375) = 124.630$, $p < .05$), explaining 39.9% of the variance in civic competence. Emotional intelligence emerged as the stronger predictor, followed by self-esteem. The study concluded that emotional intelligence and self-esteem are significant determinants of civic competence among secondary school students. It was recommended that schools

integrate emotional intelligence development and self-esteem enhancement programmes into counselling services and Civic Education to promote responsible citizenship among students.

Keywords: Civic competence, Emotional intelligence, Gusau Local Government Area, Secondary school students, Self-esteem.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing demand for responsible, active, and democratic citizenship has made civic competence one of the major educational outcomes expected of secondary school students across the world. Civic competence encompasses the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and behaviours that enable individuals to participate effectively in civic and democratic life while respecting human rights, cultural diversity, social justice, and the rule of law. In Nigeria, concerns over youth involvement in electoral violence, cybercrime, intolerance, drug abuse, insecurity, examination malpractice, and other anti-social behaviours have heightened the need to strengthen students' civic competence through formal education. Consequently, researchers have argued that schools should not only provide academic knowledge but also cultivate psychological and social attributes that encourage responsible citizenship and positive civic engagement (Adediran & Otubanjo, 2025; Abayomi et al., 2025; OECD, 2023).

One psychological factor that has attracted considerable scholarly attention is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and effectively utilize emotions in personal and social interactions. Students with high emotional intelligence are generally more capable of demonstrating empathy, emotional regulation, effective communication, cooperation, tolerance, and conflict resolution, all of which are essential components of civic competence. Recent empirical studies indicate that emotional intelligence enhances adolescents' interpersonal relationships, prosocial behaviour, social responsibility, leadership capacity, and participation in community activities, thereby contributing to positive citizenship development (Keefer et al., 2023; MacCann et al., 2020; Sánchez-Álvarez et al., 2020).

Self-esteem has also been recognized as an important predictor of adolescents' psychological adjustment and social functioning. Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of personal worth, competence, and self-confidence. Students who possess positive self-esteem are more likely to participate confidently in classroom discussions, leadership roles, volunteer services, school governance, and community development programmes. Such students tend to express their opinions responsibly, respect others' views, and demonstrate commitment to societal values. Conversely, students with low self-esteem often experience social withdrawal, poor interpersonal relationships, fear of criticism, and reduced civic participation. Recent studies have consistently reported that healthy self-esteem contributes significantly to

adolescents' social competence, psychological well-being, resilience, and civic engagement (Orth et al., 2022; Donnellan et al., 2023; Mann et al., 2024).

The relationship between emotional intelligence and self-esteem has equally received increasing empirical attention because both constructs complement one another in promoting positive behavioural outcomes. Emotional intelligence enables students to regulate emotions and establish healthy interpersonal relationships, while self-esteem strengthens self-confidence, motivation, and willingness to contribute positively to society. Together, these psychological characteristics are believed to encourage responsible decision-making, empathy, cooperation, and active civic participation. Recent educational and psychological studies have demonstrated that emotionally intelligent students with healthy self-esteem are more likely to display social responsibility, collaborative behaviour, moral reasoning, and civic-mindedness than their counterparts with lower levels of these attributes (Brackett et al., 2021; Extremera et al., 2023; Zysberg & Schwabsky, 2021).

Despite growing international evidence on emotional intelligence and self-esteem, empirical studies examining their combined relationship with civic competence among secondary school students remain limited, particularly within developing countries such as Nigeria. Existing Nigerian studies have predominantly focused on academic achievement, emotional adjustment, leadership skills, democratic values, civic education, and students' behavioural outcomes without adequately examining how emotional intelligence and self-esteem jointly relate to civic competence. Furthermore, socio-economic challenges, insecurity, youth restiveness, and declining civic values in many parts of northern Nigeria, including Zamfara State, underscore the need for empirical evidence capable of informing educational interventions aimed at promoting responsible citizenship among adolescents (Adeyemi & Salami, 2022; Adediran & Otubanjo, 2025; UNESCO, 2024).

Gusau Local Government Area, as one of the educational centres in Zamfara State, has witnessed various social and developmental challenges that require young people to possess not only civic knowledge but also emotional maturity and positive self-worth to contribute meaningfully to society. Schools remain strategic institutions for developing these competencies among adolescents. However, there is limited empirical evidence regarding whether emotionally intelligent students with positive self-esteem exhibit higher levels of civic competence than their peers. Addressing this knowledge gap is essential for counsellors, teachers, curriculum planners, educational administrators, and policymakers who seek evidence-based strategies for promoting responsible citizenship among secondary school students.

Therefore, this study investigates the relationship among emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examines the relationship between emotional intelligence and civic competence, the relationship between self-esteem and civic competence, and the joint contribution of emotional intelligence and self-esteem to civic competence. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on educational psychology

and civic education while providing practical recommendations for strengthening civic competence among Nigerian secondary school students.

Statement of the Problem

The acquisition of civic competence among secondary school students is a major objective of secondary education because it prepares young people to become responsible, law-abiding, and active citizens who contribute positively to national development. Civic competence enables students to demonstrate respect for democratic values, human rights, social responsibility, peaceful coexistence, and community participation. Despite the inclusion of Civic Education in the Nigerian secondary school curriculum, concerns persist regarding students' declining civic values, increasing involvement in examination malpractice, cybercrime, drug abuse, political thuggery, intolerance, violent behaviour, and other forms of anti-social conduct. These trends suggest that many students may not be developing the expected level of civic competence required for effective citizenship.

Scholars have argued that psychological characteristics such as emotional intelligence and self-esteem play significant roles in shaping adolescents' social behaviour, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, and responsible citizenship. Students who possess high emotional intelligence are expected to regulate their emotions, empathize with others, resolve conflicts peacefully, and interact positively within their communities. Similarly, students with positive self-esteem are more likely to demonstrate confidence, social responsibility, leadership, and active participation in civic activities. However, not all secondary school students possess these psychological attributes to the same degree, and this variation may influence their civic competence.

Although previous studies have examined emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and civic-related outcomes separately, most have concentrated on academic achievement, psychological well-being, leadership, or behavioural adjustment. Few studies have investigated the combined relationship among emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and civic competence, particularly among secondary school students in Zamfara State. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence on whether emotional intelligence and self-esteem are associated with students' civic competence or whether the two variables jointly contribute to the development of civic competence in this context.

In Gusau Local Government Area, the need to promote responsible citizenship among adolescents has become increasingly important due to emerging social challenges that require emotionally stable, confident, and civically responsible young people. However, empirical evidence explaining how emotional intelligence and self-esteem relate to civic competence among secondary school students in the area remains scarce. This gap in knowledge creates uncertainty for educators, school counsellors, curriculum planners, and policymakers in designing effective interventions that foster civic competence. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine the relationship among emotional intelligence, self-esteem,

and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Research Objective

Main Objective is to examine the relationship among emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Specific Objectives

1. To determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria.
2. To determine the relationship between self-esteem and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria.
3. To determine the joint contribution of emotional intelligence and self-esteem to civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between self-esteem and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria?
3. What is the joint contribution of emotional intelligence and self-esteem to civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria.
3. Emotional intelligence and self-esteem do not jointly make a significant contribution to civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a correlational research design to examine the relationship among emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria. The design

was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to determine the nature and strength of the relationships among the study variables without manipulating them. The population comprised all Senior Secondary School II (SS II) students in public secondary schools in Gusau Local Government Area during the 2025/2026 academic session. A sample of 378 students was selected using a multistage sampling technique involving simple random and proportionate sampling procedures. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Emotional Intelligence, Self-Esteem and Civic Competence Questionnaire (EISCCQ). The questionnaire contained items adapted from standardized emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and civic competence scales and was rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4). The instrument was validated by experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation, while its reliability was established through a pilot study using Cronbach's alpha, which produced coefficients above the acceptable benchmark of .70, indicating that the instrument was reliable.

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant educational authorities and school principals. The questionnaires were administered personally by the researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants, and respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and that their responses would be treated confidentially. The completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion. Data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the first and second hypotheses, and multiple regression analysis was employed to test the third hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One: H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Civic Competence

Variables	N	r - value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Emotional Intelligence and Civic Competence	378	.642	.000	Reject H_{01}

The result in Table 1 shows a Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient of r = .642 with a p-value of .000, which is less than the .05 level of significance. This indicates a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The finding implies that students with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to exhibit higher civic competence.

Hypothesis Two H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Self-Esteem and Civic Competence (N = 378)

Variables	N	r - value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Emotional Intelligence and Civic Competence	378	.587	.000	Reject H_{02}

Table 2 indicates a Pearson correlation coefficient of r = .587 and a p-value of .000, which is below the .05 significance level. The result reveals a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between self-esteem and civic competence among the respondents. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. This suggests that students with higher self-esteem tend to demonstrate greater civic competence.

Hypothesis Three H_{03}: Emotional intelligence and self-esteem do not jointly make a significant contribution to civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis of the Joint Contribution of Emotional Intelligence and Self-Esteem to Civic Competence

Variable	R	R^2	F	B	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Constant	.632	.399	124.630	1.214	-	6.852	.000
Emotional Intelligence				.421	.463	9.724	.000
Self-Esteem				.287	.319	6.702	.000

The results in Table 3 reveal that emotional intelligence and self-esteem jointly made a significant contribution to civic competence among secondary school students. The regression model produced a multiple correlation coefficient of R = .632 and a coefficient of determination of R^2 = .399, indicating that the two predictor variables jointly explained 39.9% of the variation in civic competence, while 60.1% was attributable to other variables not included in the model. The ANOVA result further showed that the regression model was statistically significant, F(2, 375) = 124.630, p = .000, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Furthermore, emotional intelligence (β = .463, t = 9.724, p < .05) and self-esteem (β = .319, t = 6.702, p < .05) each made significant positive contributions to civic competence. This implies that improvements in students' emotional intelligence and self-esteem are associated with higher levels of civic competence.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the first hypothesis revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State. This implies that students with higher emotional intelligence were more likely to demonstrate higher levels of civic competence. The finding agrees with MacCann et al. (2020), who reported that emotional intelligence significantly predicts students' social competence and positive behavioural outcomes. It is also consistent with the findings of Keefer et al. (2023), who found that emotional intelligence enhances empathy, collaboration, conflict resolution, and responsible behaviour among students. Similarly, Brackett et al. (2021) concluded that emotionally intelligent students exhibit better interpersonal relationships and responsible decision-making, while a recent systematic review confirmed that emotional intelligence plays a protective role in adolescents' psychological well-being and social functioning. These findings support the view that emotional intelligence is an important factor in developing civic competence among secondary school students.

The findings of the second hypothesis indicated a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and civic competence. This suggests that students with positive self-esteem are more likely to participate responsibly in civic and social activities than those with lower self-esteem. The finding supports Orth et al. (2022), who reported that adolescents with high self-esteem demonstrate better psychological adjustment and stronger social relationships. It also agrees with Donnellan et al. (2023), who found that healthy self-esteem promotes confidence, social competence, and active participation in school activities. Furthermore, Huang et al. (2023) reported that self-esteem positively predicts prosocial behaviour and civic-related outcomes among students, while Doğan and Metin (2023) found that self-esteem strengthens adolescents' social competence and positive life outcomes. These findings suggest that strengthening students' self-esteem can contribute to improved civic competence.

The findings of the third hypothesis showed that emotional intelligence and self-esteem jointly made a significant contribution to civic competence among secondary school students. This indicates that the combined influence of the two psychological variables is important in explaining students' civic competence. The finding is consistent with Barragán Martín et al. (2021), who found that emotional intelligence positively influences self-esteem, thereby enhancing positive educational outcomes. It also supports Huang et al. (2023), who reported that self-esteem serves as an important mechanism through which educational experiences promote prosocial behaviour and civic-related outcomes. Similarly, UNESCO (2024) emphasized that schools should simultaneously develop learners' emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and civic values to prepare them for responsible citizenship, while the OECD (2023) maintained that social-emotional competencies are essential for civic engagement and democratic participation. These findings therefore suggest that improving both emotional intelligence and self-esteem simultaneously is likely to enhance civic competence among secondary school students.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship among emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and civic competence among secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that emotional intelligence had a significant positive relationship with civic competence, indicating that students who are better able to understand and manage their emotions tend to demonstrate higher levels of responsible citizenship. The study also established a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and civic competence, suggesting that students with positive self-worth are more likely to participate actively and responsibly in civic activities. Furthermore, emotional intelligence and self-esteem jointly made a significant contribution to civic competence, implying that both psychological attributes are important determinants of responsible civic behaviour among secondary school students. The study therefore concludes that enhancing students' emotional intelligence and self-esteem can significantly improve their civic competence and promote responsible citizenship.

Recommendations

1. School administrators should integrate emotional intelligence development programmes into school activities to help students improve emotional regulation, empathy, and interpersonal relationships.
2. Guidance counsellors should organize regular counselling sessions and self-esteem enhancement programmes to build students' confidence, resilience, and positive self-worth.
3. Civic Education teachers should adopt learner-centred instructional strategies that promote emotional intelligence, self-esteem, teamwork, leadership, and active civic participation.
4. Parents, teachers, and community leaders should collaborate in creating supportive home and school environments that encourage responsible behaviour, mutual respect, and civic responsibility among students.
5. The Zamfara State Ministry of Education should organize periodic training and capacity-building programmes for teachers and school counsellors on effective strategies for promoting emotional intelligence, self-esteem, and civic competence among secondary school students.

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