

## ASSESSING THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF PATRIOTISM AMONG UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN EKITI AND ONDO STATES, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

**T**he study assessed the challenges, institution and prospects of patriotism among university undergraduates in Ekiti and Ondo states, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all the undergraduates in state owned universities in Ekiti and Ondo States. The sample of 162 was selected using a simple random sampling technique. Questionnaire was used to elicit responses. The reliability of the instrument was ensured through Cronbach's Alpha result yielded 0.78. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while Pearson Product Moment Correlation and regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The finding revealed that both institutional support and national values orientation has a significant and positive influence on the development of patriotism. In concluded, address socio-economic poverty and reinforce national ideals will be vital for raising a more patriotic and active citizenry.

**Keywords:** Institutional Support, National Values Orientation, Patriotism, Nigeria

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### Introduction

**T**he education system in Nigeria has been used historically as one of the most important factors leading to unity and patriotism of the Nigerians. As Lee (2022) mentioned that education is considered an important driver of national unity and loyalty of the population that is varied and diverse in the country. The national education system is supposed to ensure that students develop a sense of patriotism in minds despite the fact that there are emerging issues about the declining patriotism among undergraduates in universities which have become alarming particularly due to the various value systems, globalization, and other significant socio-economic issues that

affect attitudes and behaviours of students.

The issues concerning the challenges and prospects of patriotism among university undergraduates are critical in comprehending the processes of the national identity and civic participation in higher education institutions. The difficulties encountered by undergraduates may consist of economic disadvantages, political distrust, and the effects of globalization that may give rise to a lack of national pride and preference of the global or cosmopolitan over the patriotic identity. Moreover, the constantly changing university curriculum and social environment might occasionally ignore or alienate the issues of patriotic education, which might result in the

lack of knowledge in students and emotional attachment to the country (Urien 2024).

Patriotism can be expressed as a sense of national loyalty, a liking of national symbols, the faith in the superiority of a nation, and a necessary element of the civilized development of a mature nation (Huddy and Khatib, 2017). Patriotism is a complex of belonging, love, pride and care to the country. As a political concept, it refers to fidelity to the country without making any particular emphasis on the morality aspect. Therefore, social and political expression of patriotism may yield good or bad results, depending on the attitude to citizenship education. On the one hand, patriotism can be negatively defined as obedience blindly, and on the other hand, it can be interpreted as positive because of its democratic, constructive, and critical aspects (Ozturk, Malkoc and Ersoy, 2016).

In the view of Burlakova et al. (2020), patriotism helps contemporaries understand the value and significance of notions and symbols such as 'Motherland', 'statehood', 'Fatherland', 'homeland', and 'social justice', as well as their roles in unifying the country and contributing to its self-determination in the past, present, and future. Patriotism is a culture in which a person demonstrates his/her affection towards the society and nation he/she is born in. Another definition of patriotism as developed by Jideofor (2016) is an emotional connection to a country that people acknowledge as a home country. Patriotism is other times referred to as national feeling or national pride. He noted further that the main characteristics of patriotism are special affection for one's own nation (country) and that he/she identifies with the well-being of the nation and is willing to sacrifice to serve the good of the nation (Jimoh, et.al 2024).

In this dispensation, it is observed that patriotisms of university undergraduates are been affected due to some challenges. The significant obstacles are the distrust of government institutions and national narratives and particularly where students think of corruption or inefficiency, this removes the loyalty they have to their national values. The social media and the global cultural flows also

assist in the development of attitudes that oppose the traditional patriotism, tending to support individualism and negativity towards nationalism. These aspects form a complex terrain in which the promotion of patriotism must be done with subtle and complex methods in universities (Nurdin, 2017).

The issue of patriotism among citizens, especially the undergraduates in universities, has many complex aspects and is seems closely connected with socio-economic, political, institutional support and cultural problems. Unemployment, inflation and financial insecurity are the causes of economic instability that seem promotes loss of trust in the government and other institutions hence killing patriotic sentiments. Poor governance and corruption also seem push youths further away in the sense that they will not identify with the nation even as they will develop disillusionment rather than national pride. Most students see their governments as ineffective or corrupt and that is why their motivation in achieving patriotism is reduced.

Daerego, (2017) argued that the effects of waning economy on the perception and attitudes of university students towards patriotism could not be stressed. Unemployment, inflation and economic uncertainty because of economic instability destroy confidence in institutions and government. The national pride is ruined through corruption, governance and weak governance. Disillusionment is caused by social inequality and injustice including differences in education, medical care, and economic prospects (Aniza, 2018). Differences are enhanced in political polarization in the name of divisive politics and social media which undermine national unity. Okpara (2022) argued that because of the deteriorating economy, students feel that being patriotic is a waste of time. They see patriotism as outdated or irrelevant. Globalization and cultural exchange challenge traditional patriotism. Okpara (2022) noted that economic struggles overshadowing national loyalty. That is basic needs take precedence over national pride. Government accountability and transparency as key to patriotism, students demand effective governance. Social justice and equality as

essential to national pride, students prioritize inclusivity and fairness.

The issue of patriotism among undergraduates in Nigerian universities is still under serious threat, as economic stagnation, corruption, and a lack of social cohesion have ruined national pride and confidence in the institutions, causing the rise of cynicism, disillusionment, and the urge to emigrate to increase among students (Urien, 2024). Patriotism is often viewed as old-fashioned and unimportant by many undergraduates, and such factors as economic hardship, corruption, religious and ethnic conflicts, and lack of personal and professional growth dishearten their feelings of patriotism and national duty (Ariya, 2020). Such an environment is dangerous to the development of the cohesive national identity and direct involvement of younger generations in the nation-building process. The patriotism of the university undergraduates seen to affected by the national value orientation because the decision between good and bad is made with reference to national values, which are the foundation or guiding principles. It suggests behaviour and attitudes displayed and promoted by the people of the society because they are both good and desirable to humanity in general as opposed to the behaviours that are condemned and discouraged (Osalusi & Ajayi, 2021).

Kar (2022) observed a gradual erosion of value in all aspects of education. This is in turn a loss of value in every aspect of human life. Jimoh, et.al (2024) revealed that secondary school students in Niger state have a higher level of national values awareness and level of value erosion have significant influence on patriotism. The trending news and social media are awash with reports of anti-social behaviours such as murder, rape, corruption, and cybercrime; these are impacts of value erosion. Regrettably, the fact that the rates of value degeneration and collapse are high has cast doubt on the development of patriotism among university undergraduates in Nigeria. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate critically the challenges to and the prospects of patriotism among university undergraduates to promoting the true spirit of patriotic values in Ekiti and Ondo states.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Patriotism is regarded all over the world as an essential and powerful factor for national unity, civil responsibility and sustainable development. University undergraduates are expected to play a crucial role in promoting of patriotic values among youths. However, current political and social conditions such as economic hardship, insecurity, ethnic and religion tensions and youths' dissatisfaction have raised serious concerns about the level and expression of patriotism among university undergraduates in Ekiti and Ondo States.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the major challenges affecting the development and expression of patriotism among university undergraduates in Ekiti and Ondo States.
2. What is effect of National values orientation and institutional support on the prospects of patriotism among university undergraduates in Ekiti and Ondo states

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significant.

**H01:** There is no significant relationship between social economic challenges and level of patriotism among university undergraduates in Ekiti and Ondo states.

**H02:** National values orientation and institutional support do not significantly influence the development of patriotism among university undergraduates in Ekiti and Ondo states

### **Research Method**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of this study comprised all the undergraduates in state owned universities in Ekiti and Ondo States. The sample of 162 was selected using a using a simple random sampling technique out of which 78 respondents filled and returned survey instrument in Ekiti while 84 respondents completed and returned the instrument. Questionnaire titled "Challenges and

Prospects of Patriotism among University Undergraduates” (CPPUU) was used to elicit response from the respondents. The validity and the reliability of the instrument was ensured Cronbach's Alpha method was used to checked the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answered the research questions.

while Pearson Product Moment Correlation and regression analysis were used to test the

**Table 1:** Respondents' Views on the challenge affecting the development and expression of patriotism among university undergraduates in Ekiti and Ondo States.

S/N	Statement	N	Mean	St.D	Remarks
1	The extent of corruption by the Nigerian political leaders is affecting my national pride.	162	3.51	1.12	Agreed
2	High unemployment among the youth in Nigeria make me feel disconnected from my country	162	3.78	1.13	Agreed
3	The insecurity and banditry often experienced in Nigeria, makes me unwilling to attend or contribute to national events.	162	3.69	1.13	Agreed
4	Economic hardship and inflation have diminished my enthusiasm for promoting Nigerian products	162	3.77	0.94	Agreed
5	In Nigeria, ethnic and religious differences undermine my patriotism towards the entire country	162	3.82	0.90	Agreed
6	Social med ia and world cultures influence me, which makes Nigerian traditions appear to me outdated and irrelevant	162	3.71	0.87	Agreed
7	Poor funding and strikes in higher institutions of learning create negativity towards the Nigerian education system.	162	3.72	1.17	Agreed
8	The way youth are unable to participate in the national development, this demoralises me to serving Nigeria	162	3.83	1.08	Agreed
9	The lack of integrity exhibited by corrupt governments and leaders diminishes my respect for national symbols including the flag and anthem.	162	3.75	1.17	Agreed
<b>Grand Mean Value</b>			<b>3.73</b>	<b>1.05</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

The result presented in Table 1 revealed the views of the respondents on the challenge affecting the development and expression of patriotism towards Nigeria. The respondents were of the opinion that corruption (3.51), high unemployment (3.78), insecurity (3.69), economic hardship (3.77), ethnic and religious divisions (3.82), the influence of global culture (3.71), poor funding and strike in institutions of learning (3.72), youth unable to participate in the national development (3.83) and lack of integrity in government (3.75) are the challenges affecting their development and expression of patriotism in Ekiti and Ondo state. The grand mean value of

3.73 and standard deviation of 1.05 further justify the claim that there is a general agreement that such challenges have a huge influence on their patriotism. This analysis indicates that a large proportion of the respondents are disillusioned with the prevailing state of the country, which makes the sense of patriotism weak.

**Research Question 2:** What are the effects of National values orientation and institutional support on the prospects of patriotism among university undergraduates in Ekiti and Ondo states?

**Table 2:** Respondents' Views on the prospects of patriotism among university undergraduates in Ekiti and Ondo states

S/N	Institutional Support	N	Mean	St.D	Remark
10	The inclusion of the history of Nigeria and the culture in the university curriculums would enhance my national pride	162	3.23	1.18	Agreed
11	I believe patriotism can be encouraged in me through the influence of the digital campaigns via social media and influencers	162	3.32	1.09	Agreed
12	Factitive unemployment programmes being driven by the youths can rebuild my confidence in the future of Nigeria	162	3.46	1.09	Agreed
13	My support for Nigerian products would improve by promoting the Buy Naija campaigns and local innovations	162	3.52	1.04	Agreed
14	Effective transparency and efficacy of anti - corruption campaigns by the leaders would increase my desire to engage in civic activities	162	3.56	1.02	Agreed
15	I believe Youth opportunities and scholarships offered by the government would enhance my commitment towards Nigeria.	162	3.64	0.92	Agreed
<b>National Value Orientation</b>					
16	I believe having the sense of responsibility towards Nigeria	162	3.50	1.00	Agreed
17	Youth must be allowed to express their feelings in Nigeria	162	3.49	1.13	Agreed
18	Youth must be encouraged to act in the best interest of Nigeria	162	3.84	0.80	Agreed
<b>Grand Mean Value</b>			<b>3.50</b>	<b>1.03</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

The results of the analysis presented in Table 2 revealed the respondents views on how National values orientation and institutional support could influence the development of patriotism among university undergraduates. In respect of institutional support, the respondents agreed that the inclusion of the history of Nigeria and the culture in the university curriculums would enhance their national pride (3.23), as well as the influence of the digital campaigns via social media (3.32). The respondents indicates that factitive unemployment programmes driven by the youths can rebuild confidence in the future of Nigeria (3.46). Also, the respondents believed that Nigerian products would improve by promoting the Buy Naija campaigns and local innovations (3.52), this implies that the

respondents believe that youth-based programmes and local innovations have a positive impact on national pride. The result showed that effective transparency and efficacy of anti-corruption campaigns by the leaders would increase desire to engage in civic activities (3.56), it means they respondents agreed support the idea that transparency and leadership efficacy positively influence civic engagement and patriotism. The respondents were of the opinion that Youth opportunities and scholarships offered by the government would enhance commitment towards Nigeria (3.64), meaning that respondents place high value on such initiatives as a means to enhance commitment to Nigeria.

Regarding the national value orientation, the

respondents were of the opinion that they have the sense of responsibility towards Nigeria (3.50) as well as the respondents indicate that youth must be allowed to express their feelings in Nigeria (3.49). Respondents agreed that youth must be encouraged to act in the best interest of Nigeria (3.84), this reflecting strong support for active youth involvement in national development. The grand mean of 3.50 and

standard deviation of 1.03 shows that there is general agreement that the level of institutional support and national value orientation are significant factors in creating patriotism.

**Test of Hypotheses**

H01: There is no significant relationship between social economic challenges and level of patriotism among university undergraduates in Ekiti and Ondo states.

**Table 3:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing relationship between social economic challenges and level of patriotism among university undergraduates

Variables	N	Mean	St.D	r <sub>cal</sub>	P.value	Decision
Social Economic challenges	162	13.86	3.29	.840**	.000	Significant
Level of Patriotism		7.30	1.86			

**P<0.05 Significant**

The result in Table 3 indicated that there exists a strong relationship that is statistically significant between the level of patriotism among the undergraduates in the university and socio-economic challenges. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient shows that socioeconomic challenges are greatly related to the change in level of patriotism among students (r = 0.840, p = 0.000). Since the p-value is lower than 0.05, the correlation is statistically significant, and thus, the null hypothesis is

rejected. This means that unemployment, economic hardship, insecurity, and governance-related issues, among other factors, have a significant impact on the level of patriotism felt by the undergraduates.

H02: National values orientation and institutional support do not significantly influence the development of patriotism among university undergraduates in Ekiti and Ondo states

**Table 4:** Multiple Regression showing the influence of National values orientation and institutional support on the development of patriotism

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	R-Square	Adj. R Square	F-statistics (P.value)
	B	Std. Error						
(Constant)	10.137	1.087		9.323	.000			
1 Institutional Support	1.845	.182	1.397	10.126	.000	.402	.394	53.365 (.000)
National Values Orientation	2.068	.207	1.376	9.980	.000			

Table 4 results indicated that national values orientation and institutional support have a joint and significant influence on the development of patriotism among university undergraduates. The regression model is statistically significant, as indicated by the F statistic of 53.365, with a p-value of 0.000, which in turn proves that variations in patriotism are reliably explained by the predictors. The value of R-squared of 0.402 with adjusted R-squared of 0.394 implies that it is the institutional support and national values orientation that explained about 39 to 40 per cent of the variation in patriotism. The effect of institutional support on patriotism is positive and significant ( $B = 1.397$ ), which means that an increase in the policies, educational support, youth programmes and government initiatives has a significant and positive impact on the development of patriotism. National value orientation, on the other hand, implies also show positive a statistically significant coefficient ( $B = 1.376$ ), the result indicates that enhanced and well-internalised national values, such as a sense of responsibility to the country, respect for national symbols, civic awareness, and commitment to the greater good, significantly influence the patriotic commitment of undergraduates.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Finding showed that corruption, high unemployment, insecurity, economic hardship, ethnic and religious divisions, the influence of global culture, poor funding and strike in institutions of learning, youth unable to participate in the national development, and lack of integrity in government are the challenges affecting development and expression of patriotism in Ekiti and Ondo state. The result showed that there was a significant relationship between social economic challenges and level of patriotism among university undergraduates. The finding supports the study of Urien, (2024) who found that economic stagnation, corruption, and a lack of social cohesion have ruined national pride and confidence in the institutions, causing the rise of cynicism, disillusionment, and the urge to emigrate among students. The study support Okpara (2022) who found that economic struggles overshadowing national loyalty.

The finding revealed that both institutional support and national values orientation have a significant and positive influence on the development of patriotism. This could be because they value institutional support which include the inclusion of Nigerian history in the curriculum, digital campaigns, and the support of the youth-led initiatives, like Buy Naija. They also appreciated the transparency and anti-corruption campaign and young people's chances of enhancing their commitment to Nigeria. Concerning national values, it could be because youth need to be able to voice their opinions and take an active part in the development of the country. The finding is in agreement with the study of Jimoh, et.al (2024) who revealed that secondary school students in Niger state, level of value erosion have significant influence on patriotism.

### **Conclusion**

The study has been able to identify the intertwined nature of socio-economic issues and the formation of patriotism among university students in Ekiti and Ondo States. Although the socio-economic factors such as corruption, unemployment, and insecurity hinder the manifestation of patriotism, the results indicate that institutional support and a strong national value orientation can significantly address these issues. Cultural promotion through programmes which promote the Nigerian culture, youth-led programmes, and transparency in terms of governance will be necessary in instilling national pride. The research also showed that giving youth a way to express their views and help shape the nation is vital. Finally, a complex strategy to address socio-economic poverty and reinforce national ideals will be vital for raising a more patriotic and active citizenry.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendation are made:

1. To enhance the spirit of patriotism among university students, education stakeholders need to focus on introducing Nigerian history, culture, and values in their learning programmes. This will assist in making students feel more attached to their

national heritage and be responsible towards nation building. Moreover, universities need to include pragmatic programmes, which would motivate students to work and contribute to the growth of this country.

2. To boost the national pride and make young people feel more involved in the national development, it is also necessary to sponsor and promote

youth-led cultural activities, including entrepreneurship and youth-orientated campaigns like Buy Naija. The government and other interested parties must avail more opportunities to the youth to participate in decision-making and development of projects in the country as well as the availability of transparent and efficient anti-corruption campaigns to facilitate trust and participation by the young generation.

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