

EXPLORING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN PREVENTING YOUTH RADICALIZATION IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Citizenship education and national integration have been widely recognised as essential educational strategies for fostering unity, democratic values, and resilience against extremist ideologies. However, despite policy emphasis on their role in preventing violent extremism, there is limited empirical evidence on how teachers in Nigeria perceive these approaches in practice. In keeping with this gap, the present study was designed to explore teachers' perceptions of citizenship education and national integration as tools for preventing youth radicalisation in secondary schools in Kwara State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined overall perceptions and whether significant differences exist based on gender and years of teaching experience. The study adopted a quantitative descriptive survey design, using a researcher-designed questionnaire—the Teachers' Perception of Citizenship and National Integration in Preventing Youth Radicalisation Scale (TPCNIPYR)—administered to 200 teachers selected through stratified random sampling. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (independent t-test and one-way ANOVA) at the 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that teachers generally hold positive perceptions of citizenship education and national integration in fostering democratic values, promoting tolerance, and reducing susceptibility to extremist ideologies among students. However, moderate ratings were recorded for curriculum adequacy and prioritisation, suggesting perceived gaps in implementation. The t-test and ANOVA results showed no significant differences in perceptions based on gender or years of teaching experience. The findings are discussed in relation to Social Identity Theory and Contact Theory, highlighting the influence of shared professional identity and intergroup collaboration in shaping uniform teacher perceptions. Practical recommendations include strengthening curriculum integration, enhancing teacher training, promoting participatory pedagogies, and providing adequate resources for effective delivery of citizenship education and national integration programmes.

Keywords: Citizenship Education, Teachers' Perceptions, National Integration, Curriculum, Radicalization

Introduction

The rise of violent extremism and the radicalisation of youth constitute pressing global challenges, with significant implications for national security, social cohesion, and sustainable development. Radicalisation, particularly when it culminates in violent extremism, has been defined as the process by which individuals come to accept violence as a legitimate means of pursuing ideological, political, or religious goals (Last, Mustapha, & Meagher, 2020; Sklad & Park, 2017). While this process may be driven by a diverse range

of ideological motivations, the acceptance of violence as a justifiable tool is its most critical and dangerous dimension. Across different regions of the world, young people have been both the most vulnerable to radicalising influences and the most instrumental in either promoting or resisting extremist narratives (Fayoyin, 2019; Cachalia, Salifu, & Ndung'u, 2016).

In the Nigerian context, youth radicalisation has assumed complex forms, largely influenced by socio-economic, political, and ethno-religious dynamics. Over the past two decades, insurgent groups such as

Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the North-East, as well as various militant, separatist, and cultist groups across other regions, have exploited grievances linked to poverty, unemployment, perceived injustice, and identity-based exclusion (Onuoha & Owonikoko, 2022; Tangül & Soykan, 2021). These groups often recruit adolescents and young adults, capitalising on their search for belonging, identity, and purpose—factors identified in the literature as central psychological mechanisms in the radicalisation process (Garcet, 2021; Benevento, 2020; Trip et al., 2019). Preventing this process requires more than security interventions, it demands proactive educational approaches that strengthen resilience, promote critical thinking, and foster inclusive social identities.

Citizenship education and national integration represent two interrelated frameworks with strong potential for addressing the root causes of radicalisation. Citizenship education equips learners with the knowledge, skills, and values needed for active, responsible participation in democratic society, while national integration fosters unity across ethnic, religious, and cultural divides (Ugobueze, 2024; Ehiane, 2021). When effectively implemented, these approaches can counter extremist narratives by promoting empathy, perspective-taking, and respect for diversity, thereby undermining the “us versus them” worldviews that often underpin violent extremism (Campelo et al., 2018; Lemmer & Wagner, 2015).

Teachers occupy a central position in delivering these educational objectives. Their perceptions about radicalisation, their confidence in addressing sensitive issues, and their ability to foster inclusive classroom environments all influence the success of preventive efforts (Edinyang et al., 2020; Sklad & Park, 2017). International models such as the Universal Curriculum against Radicalization in Europe (UCARE) demonstrate that embedding civic and social competence training into everyday teaching can enhance students’ resilience to extremist ideologies (Sklad & Park, 2016). Although it was designed

European context, the underlying principles such as identity affirmation, grievance management, and democratic empowerment etc are adaptable to Nigeria, where cultural, political, and religious diversity present both challenges and opportunities for prevention.

Education systems are uniquely positioned to address the root causes of radicalisation through the promotion of citizenship values and national integration. Citizenship education seeks to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to participate actively and responsibly in democratic society (Ugobueze, 2024; European Commission, 2006). In the Nigerian policy context, the National Policy on Education underscores citizenship education as a vehicle for inculcating the values of unity, mutual respect, and democratic participation (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Similarly, national integration, understood as the process of uniting diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural groups into a cohesive national identity, serves as a critical bulwark against the divisive narratives exploited by extremist actors (Ehiane, 2021).

Empirical research indicates that fostering civic competences such as critical thinking, empathy, perspective-taking, and tolerance, can reduce susceptibility to extremist ideologies by countering “us versus them” worldviews and promoting peaceful conflict resolution (Ajaps & sObiagu, 2021; Campelo et al., 2018; Lemmer & Wagner, 2015). By creating safe spaces for dialogue, schools can facilitate intergroup understanding and help young people develop positive social identities that are not dependent on exclusionary group norms.

Teachers play a pivotal role in implementing citizenship education and fostering national integration, and their perceptions directly influence the effectiveness of such programmes. Teachers’ beliefs about the causes of radicalisation, their confidence in addressing controversial topics, and their ability to foster inclusive classroom environments all affect their willingness and capacity to engage in prevention work (Edinyang et al., 2020; Sklad & Park, 2017). In

Nigeria, where classrooms often reflect the country's ethno-religious diversity, teachers are at the frontline of mediating tensions, challenging stereotypes, and modelling civic virtues. However, without adequate training, resources, and institutional support, they may struggle to integrate prevention objectives into everyday teaching (Tangül & Soykan, 2021).

Internationally, preventive education frameworks such as the Universal Curriculum against Radicalization in Europe (UCARE) have demonstrated that embedding social and civic competence training into regular classroom activities can strengthen resilience to extremist narratives (Sklad & Park, 2016). The UCARE model targets six interrelated psychological mechanisms—belonging, positive identity formation, group norm resistance, grievance management, belief in legitimate democratic means, and rejection of “us versus them” thinking—through interactive, problem-based learning approaches (Okonkwo & Brief, 2025; Trip et al., 2019). Though designed in a European context, the principles underlying UCARE—such as fostering inclusive citizenship and addressing identity-based grievances are transferable to Nigeria, with appropriate cultural adaptation.

Despite global policy emphasis on education's role in countering violent extremism (UNESCO, 2015; United Nations, 2016), empirical research on Nigerian teachers' perceptions remains limited. This study addresses that gap by exploring how teachers interpret and enact their roles in preventing youth radicalisation through citizenship education and national integration. Hence, the research seeks to inform teacher education programmes, curriculum development, and policy interventions aimed at strengthening schools as proactive agents of peace-building and national unity.

Statement of the Problem and Research Gap

Despite ongoing citizenship education and national integration programs in schools, cases of youth radicalization continue to surface. This raises questions about the adequacy of these educational strategies and how teachers perceive their relevance and

effectiveness. Without empirical evidence on teachers' perceptions, efforts to strengthen preventive education may be misdirected or ineffective. While global and regional policy frameworks emphasise the role of education in preventing violent extremism (UNESCO, 2015; United Nations, 2016), empirical studies focusing on Nigeria remain limited, especially those examining teachers' perspectives on integrating citizenship and national integration goals into prevention strategies. Most existing research has centered on security and counterterrorism measures, with less attention given to the pedagogical and institutional dimensions of prevention (Onuoha & Owonikoko, 2022; Lucas, 2020). This gap is significant, given that adolescence is a critical period for identity formation, value development, and susceptibility to ideological influence (Cachalia, Salifu, & Ndung'u, 2016; Feddes et al., 2015).

By exploring teachers' perceptions, this study seeks to illuminate how educators interpret their role in preventing radicalisation through the lenses of citizenship and national integration, the challenges they encounter, and the opportunities for strengthening their capacity. Such an inquiry is vital for informing teacher education programmes, curriculum design, and policy interventions that aim to position schools as proactive agents of peace building and social cohesion. In sum, preventing youth radicalisation in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach in which teachers are not merely implementers of externally designed programmes but active partners in cultivating informed, empathetic, and engaged citizens. Understanding their perceptions is therefore both a practical necessity and a scholarly imperative for advancing national and global agendas on education for peace, security, and sustainable development.

Research Objectives

The general aim of the study was to explore the teachers' perceptions of citizenship and national integration in preventing youth radicalization. The specific objectives are to examine:

- i. teachers' perceptions of citizenship education as a tool for preventing youth radicalization.
- ii. if there is significant difference in teachers' perceptions based on gender and years of teaching experience on youth radicalization.

Research Questions

This study answers the following questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of citizenship education as a tool for preventing youth radicalization?
2. Is there significant differences in teachers' perceptions based on gender and years of teaching experience?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is no significant difference in teachers' perceptions of citizenship education and national integration in preventing youth radicalization based on years of teaching experience.
2. There is no significant difference in teachers' perceptions of citizenship education and national integration as a tool for preventing youth radicalization based on years of teaching experience.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two interrelated theoretical perspectives, the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Contact Theory (Allport, 1954), which together provide a conceptual basis for understanding teachers' perceptions of citizenship and national integration as preventive strategies against youth radicalisation. Social Identity Theory posits that individuals derive part of their self-concept from membership in social groups, which can foster in-group solidarity but also out-group bias and conflict when group boundaries are perceived as threatened. Radicalisation processes often exploit these identity dynamics, framing societal relations in terms of "us versus them" (Okonkwo & Brief, 2025; Trip et al., 2019). Citizenship education can counteract such tendencies by promoting inclusive, supra-ordinate identities rooted in democratic values and national unity, thereby

reducing the appeal of extremist narratives (Campelo et al., 2018). Teachers' perceptions of their role in fostering such inclusive identities are therefore central to the preventive function of education.

Contact Theory, on the other hand, argues that under appropriate conditions—such as equal status, common goals, cooperation, and institutional support—intergroup contact can reduce prejudice and foster positive relations between diverse groups (Allport, 1954; Tropp et al., 2022). In the context of Nigerian classrooms, where ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity is common, teachers can create structured opportunities for meaningful interaction that challenge stereotypes and promote mutual understanding. This aligns directly with the goals of national integration, which seeks to transcend divisions and strengthen the sense of collective belonging. By integrating these two perspectives, this study views teachers not simply as transmitters of curriculum content but as facilitators of identity transformation and intergroup understanding. The framework suggests that their perceptions of citizenship education and national integration—shaped by personal beliefs, professional training, and sociocultural context—will influence how effectively these strategies are enacted in preventing radicalisation. Examining these perceptions is thus critical for designing teacher education programmes and policies that position schools as frontline actors in promoting peace, social cohesion, and democratic resilience.

Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey design to investigate teachers' perceptions of citizenship education and national integration as strategies for preventing youth radicalisation in Nigeria. The descriptive survey approach was considered appropriate for systematically gathering quantifiable information from a defined population to describe existing attitudes, beliefs, and practices. This design also allowed for the examination of differences in perceptions across demographic variables such as gender and years of teaching experience, in line with

the study's research questions. The target population comprised secondary school teachers in Kwara State, Nigeria. This group is particularly relevant given their role in implementing citizenship education and fostering national integration at the classroom level. From this population, a sample of approximately 200 teachers were selected using stratified random sampling. Stratification ensured proportional representation across school types (public and private) and other demographic categories, thereby improving the generalisability of findings (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

Data were collected using a structured, researcher-designed questionnaire titled the Teachers' Perception of Citizenship and National Integration in Preventing Youth Radicalization Scale (TPCNIPYR). The instrument consisted of Likert-scale items organised into dimensions such as: perceived importance of citizenship education and national integration in preventing radicalisation; perceived relevance of these approaches to the Nigerian socio-political context and perceived effectiveness in reducing the appeal of extremist narratives among youth. Likert scaling is widely used in attitudinal research as it allows for the measurement of perceptions along a continuum (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, & Pal, 2015).

To ensure content validity, the draft questionnaire was subjected to expert review by specialists in educational measurement, citizenship education, and peace studies. Feedback was used to refine the wording, structure, and coverage of items. A pilot study was then conducted with a small group of teachers outside the main sample to test the clarity and functionality of the instrument.

Internal consistency reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with a value of 0.76 considered acceptable for social science research.

Questionnaires were administered in person by the researcher and trained assistants to enhance participation and reduce non-response bias. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion to ensure a high response rate, a strategy recommended for educational survey research (Bryman, 2016). Participants were briefed on the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and informed that participation is voluntary in line with ethical research practice.

Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) summarised teachers' perceptions across the identified dimensions. Inferential statistics was employed to address the subsequent research hypotheses. Independent sample t-test was used to examine differences in perceptions based on gender while One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for differences based on years of teaching experience. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results and Findings

This section deals with the analyses and results of the data collected for this study. The data were collected from teachers of citizenship education in secondary schools in Kwara State, Nigeria. The data collected were analysed using percentages to describe the demographic data of the respondents. Descriptive statistics of mean was used to answer research question while the hypotheses were tested using independent T-test and ANOVA analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: Demographic Data of the Participants

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	94	47.0%
Female	106	53.0%
Total	200	100.0%
Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
NCE	34	17.0%
B.Ed./B.A. (Ed)/B.Sc. (Ed)	85	42.5%
PGDE	53	26.5%
Master's Degree (M.Ed./M.A. Ed)	27	13.5%
PhD	1	0.5%
Total	200	100.0%
School Types	Frequency	Percentage
Public	114	57.9%
Private	86	43.0%
Total	200	100.0%
Years of Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 years	33	16.5%
5–9 years	95	47.5%
10–14 years	51	25.5%
15 years and above	21	10.5%
Total	200	100.0%

The demographic profile of the 200 teachers surveyed reveals a fairly balanced gender distribution, with 47.0% male and 53.0% female respondents, providing a solid basis for gender-based comparisons in line with the study's objectives. In terms of academic qualifications, the majority held a B.Ed./B.A. (Ed)/B.Sc. (Ed) degree (42.5%), followed by PGDE holders (26.5%) and NCE holders (17.0%), while only 13.5% had a master's degree and 0.5% a PhD. This indicates that while most participants possess the requisite professional qualifications for teaching, relatively few have advanced training, which may influence the depth of their understanding of citizenship education and radicalisation prevention. A larger proportion (57.0%) taught in public schools compared to 43.0% in private schools, offering the opportunity to compare perspectives across these different institutional contexts. Regarding teaching experience, almost half (47.5%) had 5–9 years' experience, 25.5% had 10–14 years, 16.5% had less than five years, and only 10.5% had 15 years or more. This mid-career dominance suggests that many

respondents have sufficient classroom exposure to observe trends in student behaviour and curriculum implementation, but fewer bring the long-term historical perspective of more experienced educators. Overall, these characteristics indicate a diverse and moderately experienced sample, enabling meaningful analysis of differences in teachers' perceptions based on gender, experience, and school type.

Research Questions One: What are teachers' perceptions of citizenship education as a tool for preventing youth radicalization?

In order to answer this research question, responses on teachers' perceptions of citizenship education as a tool for preventing youth radicalization from the questionnaire were collated. The data collected were analyzed using summated mean. A cut-off point of 2.50 was used as the baseline for answering the research questions since the questionnaire was structured in a four-response-type. Therefore, items found with the mean scores equal or above 2.50 were affirmed while item with mean score below 2.50 was

remarked otherwise. The summary of the results are as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Teachers’ Perceptions of Citizenship Education as a Tool for Preventing Youth Radicalization

Items’ Perceptions of Citizenship Education as a Tool for Preventing Youth Radicalization	Mean	S.D.	Remark	
Perceived Importance of Citizenship Education				
1	Citizenship education is essential in equipping students with democratic values that counter extremist ideologies.	3.40	.596	Affirmed
2	Promoting civic values in schools is a key step towards preventing youth radicalization.	3.29	.611	Affirmed
3	Citizenship education fosters tolerance and respect for diversity among students.	3.33	.770	Affirmed
4	Schools have a responsibility to teach students about peaceful conflict resolution through citizenship education.	3.39	.746	Affirmed
5	Citizenship education is as important as other core subjects in addressing societal problems.	2.91	.893	Affirmed
Perceived Relevance to Nigerian Context				
6	Citizenship education addresses the root causes of radicalization in Nigeria.	3.49	.682	Affirmed
7	The Nigerian curriculum adequately integrates topics on citizenship and national integration.	3.25	.709	Affirmed
8	Citizenship education helps students understand their rights and responsibilities in a multicultural society.	3.09	.821	Affirmed
9	Citizenship education is relevant to addressing the challenge of ethno-religious division in Nigeria.	3.37	.577	Affirmed
10	Citizenship education prepares students to be active participants in promoting peace and unity.	3.12	.791	Affirmed
Perceived Effectiveness in Preventing Youth Radicalization				
11	Citizenship education reduces the likelihood of students adopting violent extremist ideologies.	3.46	.699	Affirmed
12	Discussing citizenship topics in class encourages students to reject “us versus them” thinking.	3.00	.774	Affirmed
13	Citizenship education builds resilience among students against peer influence towards radicalization.	3.28	.701	Affirmed
14	Citizenship education empowers students to use legitimate democratic means to address grievances.	3.13	.847	Affirmed
15	Teachers can significantly influence students’ civic attitudes through effective citizenship education.	3.20	.758	Affirmed

The results in Table 2 indicate that teachers generally hold positive perceptions of citizenship education as a tool for preventing youth radicalisation, as evidenced by the fact

that all mean scores are above the neutral point of 2.50 on the 5-point scale, and each item was “affirmed.” Across the perceived importance dimension, teachers agreed most strongly that citizenship education is essential in equipping students with democratic values to counter extremist ideologies (M = 3.40, SD = 0.596) and that schools have a responsibility to teach peaceful conflict resolution through it (M = 3.39, SD = 0.746). Although still affirmed, the lowest mean in this category was for the item stating that citizenship education is as important as other core subjects (M = 2.91, SD = 0.893), suggesting some teachers may not yet fully view it as equal in curricular priority to subjects like mathematics or science.

In terms of perceived relevance to the Nigerian context, the highest mean score was for the belief that citizenship education addresses the root causes of radicalisation in Nigeria (M = 3.49, SD = 0.682). Teachers also affirmed its relevance in addressing ethno-religious divisions (M = 3.37, SD = 0.577) and in helping students understand their civic rights and responsibilities in a multicultural society (M = 3.09, SD = 0.821). However, perceptions were more moderate regarding the adequacy of citizenship and national integration topics in the Nigerian curriculum (M = 3.25, SD = 0.709), indicating possible concerns about content depth or implementation.

For perceived effectiveness in preventing radicalisation, teachers strongly endorsed citizenship education’s role in reducing the likelihood of students adopting violent extremist ideologies (M = 3.46, SD = 0.699) and building resilience against peer

influence towards radicalisation (M = 3.28, SD = 0.701). They were less emphatic, though still affirmative, about the role of classroom discussions in helping students reject “us versus them” thinking (M = 3.00, SD = 0.774) and in empowering them to address grievances through democratic means (M = 3.13, SD = 0.847). Overall, the data suggest that teachers perceive citizenship education as both important and relevant for fostering democratic values, unity, and resilience against extremist ideologies among Nigerian youths. Nevertheless, moderate ratings on curriculum adequacy and curricular prioritisation imply that while teachers value citizenship education’s preventive potential, they may see a need for stronger integration into the school curriculum and more robust implementation strategies.

Hypotheses Testing

Two research hypotheses postulated for this study were tested using the t-test and ANOVA statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in teachers’ perceptions citizenship education and national integration as a tool for preventing youth radicalization based on gender.

In order to test this research hypothesis, responses to the teachers’ perceptions citizenship education and national integration as a tool for preventing youth radicalization from the questionnaires were collated based on gender. The data collected from the study was analysed with t-test and the result was shown in Table 3.

Table 3: t-test Statistics Showing the Difference in teachers’ perceptions of citizenship education and national integration as a tool for preventing youth radicalization based on Gender

Gender	No	Mean	S. D.	df	t-value	Sig	Remark
Male	94	65.15	5.13	198	1.408	.160	Not Rejected
Female	106	64.19	5.41				

*Insignificant at $p > 0.05$

The result in Table 3 shows that male teachers (n = 94) had a slightly higher mean perception score (M = 65.15, SD = 5.13) than female teachers (n = 106; M = 64.19, SD = 5.41) regarding citizenship education and

national integration as tools for preventing youth radicalisation. However, the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant ($t(198) = 1.408, p = .160$), as the p-value is greater than the 0.05 significance level.

This finding indicates that gender does not significantly influence teachers' perceptions of citizenship education and national integration in this context. In other words, both male and female teachers share broadly similar views on the importance, relevance, and effectiveness of these educational approaches in preventing youth radicalisation.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in teachers' perceptions of citizenship education and national integration

as a tool for preventing youth radicalization based on years of teaching experience.

In order to test this research hypothesis, responses to teachers' perceptions of citizenship education and national integration as a tool for preventing youth radicalization were collated based on years of teaching experience. The data collected from the study was analyzed with ANOVA analysis and the result was shown in Table 4

Table 4: Analysis of the Difference in Teachers' Perceptions of Citizenship Education and National integration as a tool for preventing youth radicalization based on years of teaching experience.

Source of Variance	Sum Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	130.423	4	32.606			
Within Groups	6639.428	238	27.897	1.169	.325	Not Rejected
Total	6769.852	242				

P > 0.05

The ANOVA result in Table 4 shows that there was no statistically significant difference in teachers' perceptions of citizenship education and national integration as tools for preventing youth radicalisation based on years of teaching experience ($F(4, 238) = 1.169, p = .325$). Although slight variations existed in the mean perception scores among the different experience groups, the p-value was greater than the 0.05 significance threshold, indicating that these differences were not statistically significant. This finding suggests that teaching experience does not substantially influence how teachers perceive the role of citizenship education and national integration in preventing youth radicalisation. Teachers, regardless of whether they have fewer than five years of experience or over 15 years, generally hold similar views on the importance, relevance, and effectiveness of these educational strategies.

Discussion of Findings

The findings indicate that teachers in Kwara State generally perceive citizenship education as an important and relevant tool for preventing youth radicalisation, particularly in fostering democratic values, promoting unity, and building resilience against extremist

ideologies. These results are consistent with previous studies showing that structured civic education programmes can enhance tolerance, critical thinking, and peaceful conflict resolution skills among students, thereby reducing susceptibility to extremist narratives (Sklad & Park, 2022; Ajaps&Obiagu, 2021). Similar to the evaluation of the Universal Curriculum against Radicalization in Europe (UCARE), respondents in this study affirmed that citizenship education addresses the root causes of radicalisation and supports social cohesion, aligning with international evidence on the preventive role of civic competences in education (INEE, 2017).

However, moderate ratings on curriculum adequacy and prioritisation suggest that while teachers value citizenship education's preventive potential, they may see limitations in its current implementation. These reservations echo earlier research highlighting gaps in curriculum integration, insufficient teacher training on sensitive topics, and competing academic priorities that often push civic education to the margins (Edinyang et al., 2020; Summerell et al., 2020). In the Nigerian context, such concerns may be exacerbated by socio-economic and security challenges that

extend beyond the classroom, meaning teachers may view education as necessary but insufficient in isolation (United States Institute of Peace, 2014).

The positive perceptions reported can be understood through Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which explains how fostering inclusive, superordinate identities—such as a shared national identity—can reduce intergroup bias and weaken “us versus them” thinking. Citizenship education that emphasises common civic values and multiple group memberships works to recategorise students’ identities, thereby undermining the exclusivist identities exploited by extremist groups (Campelo et al., 2018). Similarly, Allport’s Contact Theory (1954) supports the idea that structured, cooperative intergroup activities within citizenship education can reduce prejudice when conditions such as equal status, common goals, and institutional support are met. Evidence from meta-analyses shows that combining direct contact with perspective-taking exercises significantly improves intergroup relations (Tropp et al., 2022).

In sum, teachers’ broadly favourable perceptions align with global evidence that well-designed citizenship education, grounded in identity-inclusive principles and intergroup contact opportunities, can contribute meaningfully to preventing youth radicalisation. Nonetheless, to translate these perceptions into impact, policy efforts should strengthen curriculum integration, enhance teacher capacity through targeted training, and provide resources for participatory, dialogue-driven pedagogies that fulfil the conditions for bias reduction and identity transformation.

The hypotheses tested whether there was a significant difference in teachers’ perceptions of citizenship education and national integration as tools for preventing youth radicalisation based on gender and years of teaching experience. The result indicates that gender and years of teaching experience does not substantially influence teachers’ views on the importance, relevance, and effectiveness of citizenship education and national integration in countering youth radicalisation. These results align with earlier

studies reporting that demographic factors such as gender and years of experience often have limited impact on teachers’ attitudes toward peace and civic education (Edinyang et al., 2020; Kaya & Kaya, 2017). Instead, perceptions appear to be shaped more by shared professional training, exposure to a common curriculum, and similar encounters with youth-related challenges in the school environment (Choudhury & Karam, 2021; Obidike & Ezeokoli, 2020). In the Nigerian context, teacher preparation programmes and policy frameworks emphasise national unity, civic values, and anti-extremism principles, which may create a relatively uniform understanding across demographic groups.

The findings can also be explained through Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which posits that individuals derive part of their self-concept from membership in social groups. Here, the professional identity of being a teacher serves as an “in-group” identity that may override personal characteristics such as gender or length of service. Teachers’ shared commitment to educating for national integration and peaceful coexistence likely fosters similar perceptions, regardless of individual differences. Likewise, Contact Theory (Allport, 1954) suggests that sustained, cooperative interaction among teachers from diverse backgrounds—common in Nigerian schools—promotes attitudinal convergence. Equal status in the workplace, shared objectives in delivering the curriculum, and frequent collaboration create the conditions necessary for reducing perceptual differences, even in areas as complex as counter-radicalisation education.

In summary, the absence of significant differences by gender and teaching experience underscores that teachers’ perceptions of citizenship education and national integration are shaped more by shared professional norms, curricular mandates, and collective exposure to Nigeria’s socio-political realities than by demographic characteristics. This homogeneity suggests that policy and training interventions to strengthen citizenship education for radicalisation prevention can be

uniformly targeted across teacher demographics without the need for extensive subgroup differentiation.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed for policymakers, curriculum planners, and teacher educators:

- i. **Strengthen curriculum integration:** Embed citizenship education and national integration topics more explicitly and comprehensively into the Nigerian secondary school curriculum, ensuring they are given equal priority alongside other core subjects.
- ii. **Enhance teacher training:** Provide pre-service and in-service training focused on preventing youth radicalisation through identity-inclusive pedagogy, intergroup contact strategies, and conflict resolution skills. Training should include practical classroom activities that align with Allport's conditions for reducing prejudice.
- iii. **Promote participatory pedagogies:** Encourage teaching methods such as problem-based learning, cooperative group projects, and perspective-taking exercises that foster empathy, critical thinking, and inclusive social identities among students.
- iv. **Allocate time and resources:** Ensure that schools have sufficient instructional time, teaching materials, and institutional support to implement citizenship education effectively, without competing pressures from exam-oriented subjects.
- v. **Foster intergroup contact opportunities:** Organise school and community programmes that bring together students from diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds to work on shared goals, thereby reinforcing the unifying values promoted in the classroom.
- vi. **Monitor and evaluate implementation:** Establish mechanisms to regularly assess how citizenship education is taught, including teacher feedback, student outcomes, and community perceptions, to guide continuous improvement and policy refinement.

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