

# KNOWLEDGE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND AGITATION FOR SECESSION IN NIGERIA

**AYODELE Margaret Olanireti Ayodele (PhD)**

Department of Social Science Education, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere –Ekiti (BOUESTI), Ekiti State, Nigeria  
[ayodele.margret@bouesti.edu.ng](mailto:ayodele.margret@bouesti.edu.ng) , +2347030079462

**OKUNADE Helen Funmilola (PhD)**

Department of Social Science Education, Ekiti State University (EKSU), Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

[helen.okunade@eksu.edu.ng](mailto:helen.okunade@eksu.edu.ng), +2348035036492

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**ABIMBOLA Motunrayo Mary (M.Ed.)**

Department of Early Childhood and Educational Foundations, University of Ibadan (UI), Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

[bellaayomide123@gmail.com](mailto:bellaayomide123@gmail.com), +2348140273907

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## **Abstract**

*This study examined university students' knowledge of human rights and their involvement in secessionist agitation in Nigeria. A sample of 300 students from Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere Ekiti, including both male and female participants from the College of Education, College of Science, and College of Technology, formed the study's population. One hundred students from each college were selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected via questionnaires, and three hypotheses were formulated to guide the investigation. The analysis employed descriptive statistics, specifically frequency counts, percentages, and mean values. The findings indicated that students possess a substantial understanding of human rights, related privileges, and issues surrounding agitation for secession. It was concluded that this knowledge could be attributed to academic instruction. The study recommended that university administrations further strengthen human rights education, exercising prudence to ensure students comprehend their rights and responsibilities. Additionally, organising seminars and conferences was advised to enhance stakeholder awareness and comprehension of human rights issues.*

**Keywords:** *Knowledge, University, Human Rights, Agitation, Secession, Nigeria.*

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## **Introduction**

The concept of human rights is widely recognised and accepted by individuals because of its unique fundamentals. These fundamentals address individual freedom. Various social institutions recognise the importance of freedom, especially in societies marked by oppression, violence, and human rights abuses. Scholars have written numerous articles and books on

fundamental human rights. Freedom is a particular area of interest for policymakers, researchers, social reformers, and international organisations. Human freedom is also important in education. In this sector, students learn to exercise their rights without prejudice, discrimination, abuse, or violation. Human rights are freedoms and privileges that everyone is entitled to enjoy as human beings. These

universal rights are protected by the constitutions of all nations. They include freedom of religion, association, right to education, life, liberty, security, and freedom from torture or discrimination. This study will investigate students' knowledge of human rights education, both on- and off-campus. On-campus students organise evening seminars, raise awareness, and create privileges to guide student behaviour.

In Nigeria, human rights are enshrined in the constitution and international treaties. One example is the African Charter on the Rights of the Person. Ongoing violations raise questions about the effectiveness of school-based human rights education in empowering individuals (Carraro, 2019). The large scale of abuses during the Second World War led the United Nations General Assembly to adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, as cited by Mbada, Anthony, Adegbite, and Chidozie (2024). [Mbada et al. \(2024\)](#) stated that Nigeria, like most African countries, faces serious human rights violations despite constitutional protections for civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights. According to Mbada (2024), Nigeria's worst record of rights violations occurred under military rule. The regime of General Sani Abacha was the most severe. Onuh (2021) stated that human rights violations remain common and increased during the government's COVID-19 lockdown measures. Makinde (1999), cited by Ayodele (2025), noted that human rights teaching is practised in schools. In these settings, students learn key rights to prevent abuse and misuse.

Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups and diverse cultures. The country is experiencing various forms of agitation and secessionist movements. These result from feelings of marginalisation, economic disparity, poverty, and cultural differences. Each of these issues

poses challenges to development and national unity. Constitutional freedom promotes justice, dignity, and equality. These principles are important in addressing the grievances that drive nationalist movements.

Frequent agitations for secession threaten Nigeria's unity, sovereignty, and integrity. These threats have been linked to growing awareness of the rights listed in the Constitution. According to Bello (2025), several secessionist agitations have occurred, especially the recurring Biafra agitation. Ikenga (2023) stated that secession is unlawful solely because the constitution forbids any attempt to dismember Nigeria. However, no law imposes criminal penalties for secession attempts, although such acts are unlawful. This may drive some groups to agitate for secession. Student agitation for secession, grounded in human rights knowledge, is significant. Secessionist movements are linked to political exclusion, economic deprivation, ethnic discrimination, and cultural suppression, as noted by Akinyemi (2016). Students' knowledge of human rights education can prompt them to seek information on how to properly implement these rights. This, in turn, may help make society safer.

This paper aims to clarify rights as defined in the Nigerian constitution. It also aims to provide guidance on agitation within constitutional limits, since today's students are tomorrow's leaders.

The investigation aimed to determine students' knowledge at Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology regarding Human Rights and Secession Agitation.

### **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant relationship between students' knowledge of human rights and agitation for secession.

2. There is no significant difference between the on-campus and off-campus students' knowledge about Human Rights and agitation for secession.
3. There is no significant difference between male and female students' knowledge of Human Rights and agitation for secession.

### Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A total of 300 students were selected through simple random sampling for the study. One hundred male and female students were selected from each of the three colleges of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere Ekiti, as the target population. A structured questionnaire titled Knowledge and Attitude of University

Students towards Human Rights and Agitation for Secession (KAUSHRAS) was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A, consisting of 5 items, collected biodata, while Section B, consisting of 15 questions, collected information on Human Rights and Agitation for Secession. The instrument's reliability was ensured through the test-retest method. It was administered to fifty students who were not part of the study population at two-week intervals. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used, and the coefficient was obtained at a 0.05 level of significance. The collected data were analysed using regression and t-test statistics, and the hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

### Results

**Hypothesis 1** - There is no significant relationship between students' knowledge of human rights and agitation for secession.

**Table 1:** Correlation Analysis between Human Rights and Agitation for Secession.

| Variables               | N   | X     | SD   | t-cal | t-table |
|-------------------------|-----|-------|------|-------|---------|
| Human Rights Educatio   | 292 | 19.74 | 2.98 | 0.472 | 0.195   |
| Agitation for Secession | 292 | 9.98  | 1.76 |       |         |

P<0.05 (Significant Result)

Table 1 shows that t-calculated was 0.472, while its corresponding table value at the 0.05 level of significance was 0.195. Since the t-value exceeded the table value, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship was rejected, indicating a significant relationship

between students' knowledge of Human Rights and their agitation for secession.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference between the on-campus and off-campus students' knowledge about Human Rights and agitation for secession

**Table 2:** t-test summary of on-campus and off-campus students' knowledge towards Human Rights and Agitation for Secession

| Variables  | N   | X    | SD   | Df  | t-cal | t-table |
|------------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|---------|
| On-Campus  | 173 | 9.72 | 1.79 | 290 | 10.69 | 1.96    |
| Off-Campus | 119 | 9.08 | 1.64 |     |       |         |

P<0.05 (Significant Result)

Table 2 shows that t-calculated was 10.69, while its corresponding value at the 0.05

level of significance was 1.96. Since t-calculated is higher than t-table, the hypothesis was

rejected. It means that there is a significant difference in the knowledge of on-campus and off-campus students on Human Rights and agitation for secession.

**Hypothesis 3:** Gender does not determine students' knowledge of Human Rights or their agitation for secession among College of Education students.

**Table 3:** t-test of the summary of the knowledge of Human Rights and agitation for secession

| Variables | N   | X     | SD   | Df  | t-cal | t-table |
|-----------|-----|-------|------|-----|-------|---------|
| Male      | 173 | 22.25 | 2.76 | 290 | 3.57  | 1.96    |
| Female    | 119 | 19.01 | 3.13 |     |       |         |

Table 3 shows that t-calculated was 3.57 while its corresponding table value at the 0.05 level of significance was 1.96. Since t-calculated was greater than t-table, the hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected. It means there is a significant difference in the knowledge of Human Rights and in the agitation for secession between male and female students. Male students have greater knowledge of Human Rights and a stronger sense of agitation for secession than female students.

### Discussions

The responses and observations gathered from this study showed that students at the University have a good understanding of Human Rights, the privileges associated with them, and the agitation for secession. The knowledge may be traced to classroom lectures or to social media campaigns on human rights education. This finding agrees with Oluwafoise's (2003) finding that students learn mostly through lectures and the internet. It was also discovered that the null hypothesis 1 was rejected. This means that students' knowledge of Human Rights significantly influenced their agitation for secession. The study agreed with Makinde's (1999) findings, which stated that knowledge of human rights exposes learners to other areas, some of which may be responsible for students' agitation for secession. Also, the various campaigns by human rights activists may also be one of the reasons for such findings. The result

also showed a significant relationship between students' knowledge of Human Rights and their agitation for secession. This means that college students are aware of their freedom to request a breakup, as they feel they are not getting anything from the current state of Nigeria. This agrees with Alexandra (1996), who wrote that there are many examples throughout history of the breakup of an existing state into several small state entities as a result of knowledge of fundamental Human Rights. The result also showed a significant difference in the knowledge of on-campus and off-campus students regarding Human Rights and secession agitation.

Hypothesis 3 was rejected because the findings showed that students' sex (male or female) significantly influenced their knowledge of human rights and their agitation for secession. This finding corroborates Fayemi's (2017) finding that boys perform better than girls in environmental education. The finding did not align with Bilesanmi's (2006) finding that both male and female students have equal proficiency in Biology. Based on the findings of this study, it can be deduced that students have misconstrued their rights; fundamental rights do not authorise segregation; they are to protect the image of the country as one united Nation. Students' agitation for secession is a violation of human rights. There should be caution while students exercise these rights.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This study established that University students have good knowledge of Fundamental Human rights. This is evident from the three hypotheses that were rejected, indicating that the students understand the rights they are entitled to. From the results, both male and female, on-campus and off-campus students showed good knowledge of Fundamental Rights and also supported text agitation for secession. The study also shows that students misconstrued the concept of Human Rights by supporting agitation for secession, which is against the unity of the country.

To this end, it is recommended that:

1. The authority of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere Ekiti, should ensure that the teaching of human rights privileges is accorded its rightful place in the teaching and learning process.
2. School management should organise seminars, workshops, and conferences to raise awareness of human rights and privileges.
3. University staff should be trained to teach human rights principles appropriately in the classroom.
4. The Student Union Government should also be trained on human rights and their privileges to ensure proper dissemination of information to other students and to prevent their violation.
5. Curriculum developers should ensure that the teaching of human rights is compulsory and properly included in the curriculum for all students in society.

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