

**DIGITAL EXPOSURE, INFORMATION ACCESS, AND CIVIC EDUCATION:
ASSESSING IMPACT ON PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND STUDY HABITS IN UYO,
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of digital exposure and access to information in Civic Education on the attitudes and learning habits of private primary school pupils in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Anchored in Bandura's Social Learning Theory, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and the Information Processing Model, the study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A purposive sample of 120 Primary Five pupils was drawn from six private primary schools in Uyo LGA, using stratified random and proportionate sampling techniques. Data were collected with a structured researcher-developed instrument — the Digital Exposure and Access to Information in Civic Education Questionnaire (DEAICEQ) — comprising 20 items on a modified four-point Likert scale. Content validity was established through expert review and a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.72 confirmed internal consistency. Data were analysed using mean scores, with a decision benchmark of 2.50 (Positive ≥ 2.50 ; Negative < 2.50). Findings revealed that digital exposure positively influenced pupils' civic attitudes (overall mean = 3.19) and study habits (overall mean = 2.85). Similarly, access to civic information had a positive effect on both attitudes (overall mean = 3.21) and learning habits (overall mean = 2.64). The study concludes that digital tools and civic information resources, when appropriately mediated by teachers and parents, can reinforce positive civic dispositions and productive academic routines among young learners. It recommends equitable provision of school-based digital infrastructure and integration of ICT-aligned civic content into the primary school curriculum.

Keywords: civic education, digital exposure, access to information, learning habits, civic attitudes, primary school pupils, Nigeria

Introduction

Civic Education is an important subject in Nigerian primary schools. It introduces young children to the basic ideas that shape life in a community, such as respect for others, responsibility, cooperation, and an understanding of their rights. Many countries around the globe have recognised the need to educate citizens, especially young people, in order to secure the future of society. This requires the imparting of skills and knowledge that shape and nurture the values necessary to drive national development (Chanda, 2023). Civic Education, also known as citizenship education, facilitates the development of knowledge, understanding, social skills, disposition, virtues, and values that personally fulfil individuals and render them socially constructive citizens (Chanda, 2023).

Harnessing Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Civic Education teaching and learning presents a transformative opportunity to reshape the educational landscape. Through a comprehensive review of available literature, it is evident that integrating ICT tools and platforms into civic education fosters an enriched learning environment, enabling students to engage actively with democratic principles, governance structures, and civic responsibilities. Educators can create interactive and dynamic lessons that transcend traditional boundaries, offering immersive experiences such as simulations, virtual debates, and multimedia resources. ICT also facilitates access to a wide range of authentic civic-related information, enabling pupils to critically analyse diverse perspectives and develop informed opinions. Additionally, ICT enhances collaboration among students and educators, fostering a participatory learning culture that mirrors democratic processes (Chanda & Zohaib, 2024).

Effective implementation, however, requires addressing challenges such as the digital divide, ensuring equitable access to technology, and providing adequate training for educators. Chanda (2023) explains that a true civics education encompasses three interrelated components: virtue, knowledge, and skills. Civic virtues are the traits of character necessary for the preservation and improvement of democratic governance and citizenship, including respect for the worth and dignity of each person, civility, integrity, self-discipline, tolerance, and compassion. Civic knowledge includes principles of democratic theory, operations of democratic governance, and behaviours of democratic citizenship. Civic skills are the cognitive and participatory operations that enable learners to understand, compare, evaluate, and act on principles and practices of governance and citizenship.

In many classrooms, these lessons feel simple and familiar. Children listen to stories about honesty or fairness, learn the meaning of national symbols, and hear teachers explain why citizens should obey rules and contribute to the wellbeing of others. These early ideas form the foundation of later

civic values, long central to the Nigerian curriculum (Akajiri & Akor, 2024). However, the environment in which Civic Education is delivered is no longer as predictable as it once was. Many children now encounter information from the internet before they fully understand what it means. Some watch short videos on their parents' phones or hear conversations shaped by online sources. In Uyo, teachers sometimes observe that pupils arrive at school with impressions formed from these online encounters, exposing Civic Education to new and complex influences (Bessong et al., 2024).

Digital exposure offers new possibilities for learning. Pupils can watch visual explanations or see images that make civic concepts easier to grasp. Some teachers have found that these digital materials help pupils engage more actively with lessons, and several studies suggest that digital resources can improve attention and interest when used carefully (Moses, 2024). At the same time, digital exposure can create challenges. Children may find information that is false or misleading, and some become accustomed to quick bursts of content that may hinder reflective classroom engagement. Recent studies in Nigeria show that digital habits can influence how pupils learn and how much attention they give to schoolwork (Ibijola & Okunade, 2023).

Across Nigeria, the use of digital tools in primary schools varies. Private schools in Uyo Local Government Area tend to have better access to devices, though this depends on the resources and priorities of each school. Some schools integrate digital activities into lessons confidently, while others move cautiously out of concern about risks or uncertainty about best practices (Bello, 2024). These differences shape both the delivery of Civic Education and how pupils respond to it. Primary school pupils today grow up in a world where information is abundant and often unfiltered. A child can encounter civic discussions, political commentary, or social criticism online without understanding the background behind them. This sometimes creates tension, as teachers encourage respect for institutions while pupils may already have encountered contrasting opinions online, making it harder to predict how children form attitudes towards authority, cooperation, and national identity (Demarest, 2025).

Although a number of studies explore digital learning, most focus on older students or on general ICT use. Very few examine how digital exposure and access to civic information affect young primary school pupils specifically, and fewer still examine private schools in Uyo, which are shaped by unique cultural, economic, and parental expectations. Yet early attitudes and learning habits often form at this age, making it important to understand whether digital exposure supports or weakens the aims of Civic Education (Li, 2025). This study responds to this gap by exploring how digital exposure and access to civic information influence the attitudes and learning habits of private primary school pupils in Uyo LGA. The goal is not to assume that technology is either helpful or harmful, but to understand how it operates in the daily lives of pupils, teachers, and parents, so that findings can guide more intentional teaching and digital integration practices.

The theoretical perspectives of Bandura's Social Learning Theory, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and the Information Processing Model collectively suggest that children do not simply consume digital content — they interpret it, imitate it, and integrate it into their understanding of society. These theories underscore that digital exposure and information access influence pupils' civic attitudes and study habits through processes of observation, social interaction, and cognitive filtering. They also indicate that adult mediation remains essential, especially for primary school learners still developing critical judgment. The conceptual review further revealed that digital exposure extends beyond device availability to include the type, frequency, purpose, and context of content engagement. Access to information similarly encompasses the reliability, appropriateness, and volume of civic-related materials encountered online. Together, these dimensions interact with civic attitudes — such as respect for rules, sense of responsibility, and perception of public institutions — and with learning habits, including attention, persistence, homework routines, and task organisation.

Empirical studies reinforce these insights across Nigerian and international contexts. Digital exposure has been associated with both positive civic engagement and premature scepticism, depending on the nature of content and the presence of adult guidance (Aminu, S. & Chukwu, 2022; Okoye & Adigun, 2022). Research on access to information indicates that guided engagement with credible, curriculum-aligned civic resources improves understanding and pro-social attitudes, whereas unfiltered content often leads to confusion or distorted civic impressions (Bello, 2024; Musa & Danjuma, 2023). Studies on learning habits consistently report that structured educational digital use enhances task organisation and engagement, while unregulated recreational exposure contributes to distraction and inconsistent study routines (Imhanyehor, 2021; Moses, 2024). These gaps justify the present study, which aims to provide context-specific evidence on how digital exposure and access to civic information influence pupils' attitudes and learning habits in Uyo's private primary schools.

Statement of the Problem

Civic Education in Nigerian primary schools is intended to build early foundations of responsible citizenship, yet these aims now unfold in a learning environment where many children are already shaped by digital exposure. Pupils encounter civic messages, opinions, and behaviours online before they meet structured lessons in class. Studies show that digital tools can support civic engagement, but they also reveal that children can be distracted by fast, unfiltered content and may struggle to separate reliable information from misleading materials. These mixed findings create uncertainty for teachers who want to use digital resources while preserving the reflective habits that Civic Education is meant to develop.

Existing Nigerian studies focused mostly on older learners or general digital literacy, leaving unanswered questions about younger children — particularly digital natives — whose attitudes and study routines are still being formed. Private schools in Uyo vary widely in their access to devices, parental expectations, and classroom practices. Yet there is no established evidence showing how these differences affect pupils' civic understanding or their approach to learning. Without such knowledge, schools may adopt digital practices that unintentionally undermine the goals of Civic Education. If this problem continues to be overlooked, pupils may develop confused civic values and unstable learning habits shaped more by online impressions than by deliberate classroom guidance. This study therefore examines how digital exposure and access to online civic information shape the attitudes and learning habits of primary school pupils in private schools in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Purpose of the Study

The main aim of this study is to critically examine the influence of digital exposure and access to information in Civic Education on private primary school pupils' attitudes and learning habits in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. This study is purely descriptive in design; it does not test hypotheses or establish causal relationships. All findings should be understood as associations rather than evidence of directional impact. The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. Ascertain the influence of digital exposure to information on private primary school pupils' attitudes in Civic Education.
- ii. Determine the influence of access to information on private primary school pupils' attitudes in Civic Education.
- iii. Find out how digital exposure influences the study habits of private primary school pupils in Civic Education.
- iv. Investigate whether access to information influences the study habits of private primary school pupils in Civic Education.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the influence of digital exposure to information on private primary school pupils' attitudes in Civic Education?
- ii. What is the influence of access to information on private primary school pupils' attitudes in Civic Education?
- iii. How does digital exposure influence the study habits of private primary school pupils in Civic Education?
- iv. How does access to information influence the study habits of private primary school pupils in Civic Education?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for this study comprised all pupils enrolled in private primary schools within Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A sample of 120 Primary Five pupils was drawn from six private primary schools using stratified random sampling, with 20 pupils selected from each school. The sample size of 120 was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table, which is widely used for descriptive survey studies in educational research; given the limited and bounded nature of the target population within six private schools in a single LGA, this sample was deemed adequate for the purposes of the study. The stratified approach ensured that the sample was representative with respect to school location and availability of digital facilities. Primary Five was selected because pupils at this level (approximately 10–11 years) have sufficient literacy to engage meaningfully with the questionnaire items, and are at a developmentally important stage for civic attitude formation.

Research Instrument

The instrument used was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers, titled the Digital Exposure and Access to Information in Civic Education Questionnaire (DEAICEQ). It comprised two sections: Section A collected bio-data, while Section B contained 20 items distributed equally across the four research questions. A modified four-point Likert scale was used: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. A four-point rather than five-point scale was deliberately chosen to eliminate the neutral midpoint, thereby encouraging respondents to commit to a directional response; this approach is appropriate for primary school populations where a neutral option is frequently selected as a default rather than as a genuine expression of ambivalence. A decision benchmark of 2.50 was adopted, whereby a mean score of 2.50 and above was interpreted as Positive (Agreed) and a mean score below 2.50 as Negative (Disagreed). Although some questionnaire items involve relatively abstract civic concepts, language was reviewed and simplified during the validity process (see Validity section below). Items were administered with teacher facilitation: class teachers read each item aloud and clarified any unfamiliar terminology before pupils marked their responses, thereby managing reading comprehension demands for the target age group.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Content validity was established by submitting the questionnaire to three experts in Educational Technology, Civic Education, and Tests and Measurement. Feedback focused on ensuring items accurately reflected the research constructs, eliminating redundant or ambiguous items, and simplifying language for the target age group. Items were revised accordingly before administration.

Reliability of the Research Instrument

To establish reliability, a pilot study was conducted with 15 Primary Five pupils from a different Local Government Area within Akwa Ibom State. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.72 was obtained, indicating acceptable internal consistency for the instrument. It is acknowledged that a

pilot sample of 15 respondents is at the lower boundary recommended for Cronbach's Alpha computation; this is noted as a limitation of the study, and the reliability coefficient should be interpreted with appropriate caution.

Ethical Considerations

Given that the study involved minors (children aged approximately 10–11 years), ethical safeguards were observed throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, written approval was obtained from the authorities of each of the six participating private primary schools. Informed consent was sought from the parents or guardians of all participating pupils through a consent letter distributed via the schools; only pupils whose parents or guardians returned signed consent forms were included in the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and pupils were informed that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. The anonymity of all participants was maintained throughout: no names or identifying information were recorded on the questionnaire forms, and data were reported only in aggregate. The research was conducted in accordance with standard ethical principles for educational research involving children.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, specifically mean scores for each item and each research question. The decision rule was set at a benchmark mean of 2.50: means at or above this threshold were interpreted as indicating a positive (agreed) response, while means below it indicated a negative (disagreed) response.

Results

Research Question One: What is the influence of digital exposure to information on private primary school pupils' attitudes in Civic Education?

Table 1: Influence of Digital Exposure to Information on Private Primary School Pupils' Attitudes in Civic Education

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Decision</i>
1	Using digital tools like videos and games in class helps pupils find civic education more interesting and fun.	43 (37%)	69 (59%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)	3.33	Positive
2	Pupils who can access the internet at home often know more about civic topics than those who cannot.	47 (41%)	58 (50%)	7 (6%)	4 (3%)	3.28	Positive
3	Social media can teach pupils good values like being honest, but	69 (59%)	47 (41%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.59	Positive

	it needs adult monitoring so they learn the right things.						
4	If pupils do not learn how to use digital information wisely, they might feel stressed or confused by too much information online.	38 (33%)	48 (41%)	17 (15%)	13 (11%)	2.96	Positive
5	Pupils who learn civic education using interactive digital tools tend to have better attitudes about helping in their community.	36 (31%)	39 (33%)	23 (20%)	18 (16%)	2.80	Positive
Overall Mean & Decision						3.19	Positive

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2025

Table 1 presents findings on the influence of digital exposure on pupils' civic attitudes. All five items attracted positive mean scores ranging from 2.80 to 3.59. The overall mean of 3.19 exceeds the benchmark of 2.50, indicating that digital exposure to information has a notable positive influence on private primary school pupils' attitudes in Civic Education in Uyo Local Government Area.

Research Question Two: What is the influence of access to information on private primary school pupils' attitudes in Civic Education?

Table 2: Influence of Access to Information on Private Primary School Pupils' Attitudes in Civic Education

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Decision</i>
1	Having access to different sources of information, like the internet and books, can increase pupils' interest in Civic Education topics.	69 (59%)	47 (41%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.59	Positive
2	Pupils who can find information easily are more likely to discuss social issues with their friends and family.	41 (35%)	68 (59%)	5 (4%)	2 (2%)	3.26	Positive
3	Access to information on their rights and responsibilities helps pupils feel more confident in expressing their opinions in class.	71 (61%)	45 (39%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.61	Positive

4	Utilising digital tools and the internet for projects can lead to more positive attitudes toward learning about democracy.	32 (28%)	41 (35%)	24 (21%)	19 (16%)	2.74	Positive
5	Pupils with good access to information sources are better at thinking critically about public issues.	38 (33%)	36 (31%)	28 (24%)	14 (12%)	2.84	Positive
Overall Mean & Decision						3.21	Positive

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2025

Table 2 presents findings on the influence of access to information on pupils' civic attitudes. All five items yielded positive mean scores ranging from 2.74 to 3.61. The overall mean of 3.21 exceeds the decision benchmark of 2.50, indicating that access to civic information has a positive influence on the attitudes of private primary school pupils in Civic Education. Notably, Item 5 (mean = 2.84), which concerns pupils' capacity for critical thinking about public issues, returned the lowest score, suggesting that while general attitude improvement is evident, the cultivation of critical civic reasoning may require more deliberate instructional scaffolding.

Research Question Three: How does digital exposure influence the study habits of private primary school pupils in Civic Education?

Table 3: Influence of Digital Exposure on Study Habits of Private Primary School Pupils in Civic Education

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Decision</i>
1	Increased exposure to interactive digital tools positively impacts pupils' engagement and motivation in Civic Education lessons.	26 (22%)	29 (25%)	25 (22%)	36 (31%)	2.39	Negative
2	The use of social media platforms for non-academic activities is associated with reduced concentration during private study time.	56 (48%)	37 (32%)	14 (12%)	9 (8%)	2.72	Positive
3	Pupils who use educational apps and websites for Civic Education homework tend to show better	31 (27%)	39 (34%)	29 (25%)	17 (14%)	2.72	Positive

	information-gathering skills compared to those relying solely on textbooks.						
4	Excessive or unregulated social media use among pupils can lead to poor time management and procrastination of their Civic Education assignments.	69 (59%)	47 (41%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.59	Positive
5	Pupils with greater digital literacy skills are more likely to critically evaluate online sources of civic information.	36 (31%)	43 (37%)	21 (18%)	16 (14%)	2.85	Positive
Overall Mean & Decision						2.85	Positive

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2025

Table 3 presents findings on how digital exposure influences pupils' study habits. Four of the five items returned positive mean scores. Notably, Item 1 (mean = 2.39) fell below the benchmark of 2.50, indicating that respondents were not fully agreed that digital tool exposure straightforwardly improves engagement and motivation in Civic Education lessons — a finding that reflects the mixed and context-dependent nature of digital influence on learning. The overall mean of 2.85 nevertheless exceeds the benchmark, indicating that, taken together, digital exposure influences the study habits of private primary school pupils in Civic Education in a generally positive direction.

Research Question Four: How does access to information influence the study habits of private primary school pupils in Civic Education?

Table 4: Influence of Access to Information on Study Habits of Private Primary School Pupils in Civic Education

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Decision</i>
1	Having access to many books and the internet helps us to complete our Civic Education homework more effectively.	18 (15%)	25 (22%)	36 (31%)	37 (32%)	2.21	Negative
2	Using educational websites makes learning about our community more interesting than using a textbook alone.	33 (28%)	38 (33%)	24 (21%)	21 (18%)	2.72	Positive

3	When we can find information easily, we learn to study on our own instead of always needing the teacher's help.	36 (31%)	31 (27%)	26 (22%)	23 (20%)	2.69	Positive
4	Too much time spent on non-educational internet activities can prevent us from concentrating on our Civic Education studies.	48 (41%)	56 (49%)	7 (6%)	5 (4%)	3.27	Positive
5	Access to online news and current events helps us discuss being a good citizen more actively in class.	21 (18%)	29 (25%)	32 (28%)	34 (29%)	2.32	Negative
Overall Mean & Decision						2.64	Positive

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2025

Table 4 presents findings on how access to information influences pupils' study habits. Three items returned positive mean scores (2.69–3.27), while two items — Item 1 (mean = 2.21) and Item 5 (mean = 2.32) — fell below the 2.50 benchmark and were rated Negative. This suggests that respondents were less convinced that broad access to books and the internet directly improves homework performance, or that online news exposure straightforwardly promotes classroom civic discussion. The overall mean of 2.64 nevertheless exceeds the benchmark, indicating that access to information has a generally positive influence on the study habits of private primary school pupils in Civic Education. The two negative items point to the need for guided and purposefully structured information access.

Discussion of Findings

Digital Exposure and Civic Attitudes (Research Question One)

The finding that digital exposure has a notable positive influence on pupils' civic attitudes (overall mean = 3.19) is consistent with prior research. Children often imitate linguistic styles, emotional reactions, or behavioural tendencies displayed by online personalities, and when civic-themed content is presented positively and in age-appropriate ways, children may show increased enthusiasm, curiosity, and confidence in civic discussions (Okoye & Adigun, 2022; Livingstone, Byrne & Carr, 2020). Digital exposure affects attitudes also through emotional storytelling: fast-paced animations or dramatised civic commentary can shape how children feel about national issues before they encounter these in formal lessons (Livingstone, Byrne & Carr, 2020).

However, unrestricted exposure introduces risks. Some children may internalise civic misinformation or confusing interpretations of concepts such as freedom, justice, or national loyalty. Others may develop cynical attitudes when exposed to content that normalises disrespect

toward leaders or public institutions. The present findings reflect a sample of private school pupils with relatively structured digital environments, which may explain the predominantly positive overall picture. These results echo the observation that the direction of digital influence on civic attitudes depends critically on the quality of content and the presence of adult mediation (Aminu, S. & Chukwu, 2022; Okoye & Adigun, 2022).

Access to Information and Civic Attitudes (Research Question Two)

The overall mean of 3.21 for Research Question Two indicates that access to information positively influences pupils' civic attitudes. This is aligned with findings that access to compelling civic stories or animations can promote interest, empathy, and engagement, and that children with broader information access become more expressive and aware of social issues (Aminu, S. & Chukwu, 2022). On the other hand, the comparatively lower score for critical civic reasoning (Item 5, mean = 2.84) is consistent with research showing that pupils frequently mistake opinionated posts or satirical content for factual civic information, leading to distorted civic attitudes (Spires & Bartlett, 2021). This finding underscores that access to information is beneficial to civic attitudes, but that the quality of content and the level of instructional guidance are decisive moderating factors.

Digital Exposure and Study Habits (Research Question Three)

The overall positive finding (mean = 2.85) that digital exposure influences study habits is consistent with international and Nigerian literature showing that structured educational digital use enhances task organisation and engagement (Spires & Bartlett, 2021; OECD, 2023). Pupils who use educational apps and websites show better information-gathering skills — a pattern observed in this study in Items 3 and 5. The high mean for Item 4 (3.59), confirming that unregulated social media use leads to poor time management, aligns with Musa and Danjuma (2023), who found that Nigerian primary school pupils who rely on viral online content often arrive in class with fragmented civic understanding. The below-threshold score for Item 1 (mean = 2.39) is particularly instructive: it reveals that the relationship between digital tool exposure and motivation is not straightforward. This is consistent with evidence that access to devices alone does not produce engagement; purposeful pedagogical integration is required (Moses, 2024).

Access to Information and Study Habits (Research Question Four)

The positive overall finding (mean = 2.64) that access to information influences study habits concurs with international classroom studies emphasising that when teachers scaffold how pupils search for and evaluate information, pupils develop stronger research habits and greater persistence (Spires & Bartlett, 2021). However, the two below-threshold items in this research question are noteworthy. Item 1 (mean = 2.21) suggests that respondents do not fully associate broad access to books and the internet with improved homework completion, and Item 5 (mean = 2.32) shows limited agreement that online news exposure promotes in-class civic discussion. These findings are analytically significant: they indicate that access to information, in the absence of structured guidance, does not automatically translate into productive study habits. The negative responses on

these items may reflect pupils' tendency to use digital resources for entertainment rather than purposeful academic tasks. This corroborates Bello and Ajao (2024), who note that many Nigerian pupils default to quick online searches rather than sustained reading, and Musa and Danjuma (2023), who observed that primary school pupils sometimes arrive with shallow or fragmented civic interpretations drawn from viral clips. Without structured guidance, access to information shifts pupils toward fast but shallow learning habits.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be noted when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the sample of 120 pupils drawn from six private primary schools within a single Local Government Area limits the generalisability of the findings to other school types, geographic contexts, and socio-economic settings. Public schools, in particular, operate under different resource conditions and may yield substantially different patterns of digital exposure and information access. Second, data were collected exclusively through a self-report questionnaire, which is susceptible to social desirability bias; pupils may have responded in ways they perceived to be expected rather than reflective of actual behaviour. Third, the pilot reliability study used only 15 respondents, which is at the lower boundary for Cronbach's Alpha computation; the reliability coefficient of 0.72, while acceptable, should be interpreted with this constraint in mind. Fourth, the restriction of the sample to private schools in one LGA means the findings cannot be generalised to public schools or to other LGAs in Akwa Ibom State or Nigeria more broadly. Future studies should seek to address these limitations through larger, more diverse samples and, where feasible, mixed-methods designs that complement self-report data with classroom observations or teacher assessments.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that digital exposure and access to information both exert measurable positive influences on the civic attitudes and learning habits of private primary school pupils in Uyo Local Government Area. The findings are consistent with theoretical predictions from Bandura's Social Learning Theory, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and the Information Processing Model: children actively interpret and internalise digitally encountered civic content, and the quality of mediation by teachers and parents is decisive in determining whether that influence is constructive or disruptive. The predominantly positive picture observed in this private school sample should not obscure the fact that several items pointed to risks — particularly in areas of critical reasoning, homework engagement, and the tendency toward superficial information processing.

Children enrolled in primary school between 2014 and 2025 belong to the Generation Alpha cohort — a group characterised by early, deep, and pervasive exposure to smartphones, tablets, and AI-powered platforms. Their civic learning is inevitably shaped by this context, and educators, curriculum planners, and policymakers must respond with intentional strategies that harness the benefits of digital exposure while guarding against its documented risks. This study contributes to the literature on digital civic education at the primary school level in Nigeria by providing the first context-specific evidence on how digital exposure and access to online civic information jointly

shape the attitudes and learning habits of private primary school pupils in Uyo LGA. Unlike existing Nigerian studies that focused on older learners or on general digital literacy, this work foregrounds the formative years of civic attitude development and demonstrates that, even within a predominantly positive pattern of influence, critical gaps persist in reasoning skills and structured information use — gaps that require deliberate pedagogical intervention rather than simply increased device access.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Private school proprietors should ensure equitable provision of age-appropriate digital devices — including computers and tablets — to support classroom use of ICT in Civic Education and other subjects.
- School administrators and curriculum developers should integrate ICT tools and civic-relevant digital resources into the Civic Education curriculum, with clear pedagogical guidelines to distinguish structured academic digital use from unregulated recreational exposure.
- Teachers should receive targeted professional development on how to scaffold pupils' digital information-seeking behaviours, including how to evaluate the credibility and civic relevance of online content.
- Parents and guardians should be sensitised through parent-teacher engagements on the importance of monitoring and guiding their children's digital activities at home, particularly as they relate to civic content.
- Government bodies and education policy institutions — including the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Education, and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) — should prioritise curriculum reform to formally integrate digital civic literacy competencies into the National Primary School Curriculum. Complementary investment in school-based digital infrastructure, particularly in underserved and public school settings, is essential to ensure equitable access across socio-economic divides.
- Future research should seek to replicate this study in public primary schools to compare patterns of digital exposure and civic attitude formation across school types. Studies that include Primary Four and Primary Six pupils would enable comparison across year groups within the upper primary band. Longitudinal designs tracking the same cohort of pupils over two to three academic years would provide more robust evidence on how digital exposure cumulatively shapes civic attitudes and study habits over time.

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