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Research Article

Validity and Reliability of Civic Education Achievement Tests Among Senior Secondary School Students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State

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Abstract. Assessment is a critical component of education, ensuring that intended learning outcomes are achieved and informing instructional decisions. In Civic Education, which aims to foster democratic values, civic responsibility, and national consciousness, the quality of achievement tests is particularly important. This study investigated the validity and reliability of Civic Education achievement tests among senior secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State. The study employed a descriptive survey design involving a population of 17,549 SS1–SS3 students, from which a stratified random sample of 375 students was drawn. Data were collected

using a researcher-developed Civic Education Achievement Test, reviewed for content validity by experts and subjected to a pilot study to determine reliability. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, were used to summarize student performance, while Content Validity Index (CVI) and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) were employed to examine content and construct validity. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, supported by item-level analyses such as difficulty and discrimination indices. Findings revealed that all test items demonstrated strong content and construct validity, with CVI values ranging from 0.78 to 0.92 and factor loadings from 0.61 to 0.72. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82 indicated high internal consistency, confirming the reliability of the test. The study concluded that the Civic Education achievement test is a valid and reliable instrument for evaluating students' knowledge and skills, and recommended that teachers adopt systematic test construction and validation practices to enhance assessment quality in Civic Education.

Keywords: Civic Education, Content Validity, Construct Validity, Reliability, Senior Secondary School

INTRODUCTION

Assessment has always been a fundamental component of education, as it determines whether intended learning outcomes have been achieved and informs instructional decisions. In the context of Civic Education, a subject tasked with promoting democratic values, civic responsibilities, and national consciousness the accuracy and quality of assessment instruments are particularly crucial. Poorly designed tests can misrepresent students' civic knowledge and dispositions, undermining efforts to cultivate informed and active citizens (Erlinawati & Muslimah, 2021). Recent studies emphasize that validity, which refers to the degree to which an assessment measures what it is intended to measure, and reliability, which refers to the consistency or stability of test scores over repeated applications, are the two fundamental properties that define the technical quality of achievement assessments (Erlinawati & Muslimah, 2021; Moghadasi & Keikavoosi-Arani, 2025).

In many Nigerian secondary schools, classroom and teacher-made tests have remained the dominant forms of assessment for both continuous evaluation and end-of-term judgments. Empirical research on teacher-made tests has revealed significant inconsistencies in content coverage, alignment with cognitive levels, and item quality, raising concerns about their content validity and comparability across schools (Okoye, Fejokwu, & Ikeanumba, 2021). Similarly, surveys of Civic Education assessment practices in various Nigerian states have shown that many teachers often rely on familiar or expedient item types, and that professional development in test construction is frequently recommended to improve assessment quality (Vasudevan et al., 2025). Teachers' knowledge, training, and test construction practices play a critical role in ensuring the validity and reliability of classroom assessments.

At the same time, psychometric research in Nigeria has increasingly applied modern measurement techniques, such as Item Response Theory and Rasch analysis, to evaluate and improve the quality of examination items and large-scale

assessments (Kaigama et al., 2025). International studies further illustrate that practical methods including content validity indices, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, internal consistency measures, test–retest reliability, and intraclass correlation coefficients can be employed to develop and evaluate assessment instruments in educational contexts (Moghadasi & Keikavoosi-Arani, 2025). Applying such rigorous techniques to Civic Education achievement tests at the senior secondary level would therefore strengthen confidence in the accuracy of what these tests measure and in the consistency of the scores they produce.

Moreover, the pedagogical importance of Civic Education and the technical challenges identified in both teacher-made tests and large-scale item banks. The validity and reliability of Civic Education achievement tests among senior secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State. By integrating content validation procedures, classical item analysis, and reliability estimates such as the Kuder–Richardson formulas, Cronbach's alpha, and, where appropriate, test–retest measures or Item Response Theory indices, the study aimed to generate evidence that can guide teachers, curriculum planners, and examination bodies in developing more defensible, consistent, and comparable assessments in Civic Education. Several empirical studies have explored the validity and reliability of achievement tests in Nigeria and other educational contexts, revealing ongoing challenges in educational measurement. Okoye, Fejokwu, and Ikeanumba (2021) examined teacher-made Physics tests in Delta State and identified notable gaps in content coverage and alignment with curriculum objectives, suggesting weak content validity. Similarly, Uzoechi and Ibe (2022) assessed Civic Education test items in Nigerian secondary schools and found that many items predominantly measured lower-order cognitive skills, neglecting the higher-order thinking necessary for meaningful civic engagement. These studies highlight the critical need for rigorous test construction to ensure that assessments accurately capture students' knowledge and competencies.

Concerning reliability, Vasudevan, Lawal, and Arokiasamy (2025) investigated assessment practices among Civic Education teachers in Northern Nigeria and reported that teacher-made tests often exhibited inconsistent scoring and poor item discrimination, leading to unreliable measures of students' civic knowledge. Lawal and Garba (2024) further noted that insufficient teacher training in test construction contributed to low reliability in classroom assessments in Zamfara State. Beyond the Nigerian context, international research reinforces these observations. Moghadasi and Keikavoosi-Arani (2025) validated an educational justice questionnaire and demonstrated that systematic psychometric analyses, including factor analysis and internal consistency measures, substantially improve the reliability and construct validity of assessment instruments. Likewise, Erlinawati and Muslimah (2021) emphasized that content validation by expert panels, combined with classical test

theory procedures such as item analysis and reliability estimation, ensures that tests are both valid and consistent.

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Classical Test Theory (CTT)

This study was anchored on Classical Test Theory (CTT), a foundational framework in educational and psychological measurement that explains the relationship between a student's observed test score and their true ability. According to CTT, each observed score consists of a true score and an error component, and the closer the observed score approximates the true score with minimal error, the more valid and reliable the assessment is (AERA, APA & NCME, 2014). CTT was particularly relevant to this research because it provided a solid theoretical foundation for examining the validity and reliability of Civic Education achievement tests. The theory underpinned the assessment of content validity, ensuring that test items adequately and appropriately reflected the Civic Education curriculum and learning objectives. It also guided the evaluation of construct validity by assessing the extent to which the test items measured the intended civic concepts and competencies, including democratic understanding, civic responsibility, and national values.

In addition, CTT offers practical statistical techniques essential for this study. Methods such as Cronbach's alpha, Kuder–Richardson formulas, and item analysis including difficulty and discrimination indices enabled a systematic assessment of the reliability and quality of test items. Applying these procedures enabled the researcher to determine how consistently and accurately the Civic Education achievement tests measured students' knowledge and skills, ensuring that the results were trustworthy and meaningful for both instructional use and policy decision-making. Overall, adopting Classical Test Theory provided a rigorous, evidence-based framework for this study, allowing for a scientifically grounded analysis of the psychometric properties of Civic Education achievement tests among senior secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area. This approach ensured that the findings were credible, actionable, and directly applicable to improving the quality and fairness of assessment in Civic Education.

Statement of the Problem

Civic Education aims to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for responsible citizenship, democratic participation, and national development. In senior secondary schools in Gusau Local Government Area, this

subject is predominantly assessed through teacher-made achievement tests, which inform key decisions such as promotion, placement, and evaluation of learning outcomes. However, concerns have been raised about the quality of these assessments, as many tests appear to be developed without adequate attention to essential measurement principles such as test blueprints, content coverage, cognitive balance, item difficulty, and systematic item analysis. As a result, questions arise regarding the accuracy and reliability of the scores produced.

Previous studies in Nigeria have shown that teacher-made tests often lack validity due to poor alignment with curriculum objectives and overemphasis on lower-order cognitive skills, while many classroom assessments also exhibit low reliability because of inconsistent item construction and scoring. Despite these challenges, there is limited empirical evidence on the validity and reliability of Civic Education achievement tests at the senior secondary level in Gusau LGA a critical gap given the subject's role in fostering civic understanding in a region with unique social, cultural, and security challenges. Consequently, decisions regarding students' performance and understanding of civic principles continue to be based on tests whose psychometric properties have not been adequately evaluated. In the absence of evidence for validity and reliability, there is no guarantee that these assessments accurately and consistently measure students' knowledge and competencies. This study, therefore, sought to investigate the validity and reliability of Civic Education achievement tests among senior secondary school students in Gusau LGA, Zamfara State, with the goal of providing evidence-based insights to improve test construction, enhance assessment quality, and support the effective delivery of Civic Education.

Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To assess the content validity of Civic Education achievement test items used in senior secondary schools in Gusau Local Government Area.
2. To determine the construct validity of the Civic Education achievement tests.
3. To evaluate the reliability of the tests using appropriate statistical methods.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do the Civic Education achievement tests possess adequate content validity in senior secondary schools in Gusau LGA?
2. What is the level of construct validity demonstrated by the Civic Education achievement tests?
3. How reliable are the Civic Education achievement tests used among senior secondary school students in Gusau LGA?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were guided the study:

1. **H_{01}:** There is no significant evidence of content validity in the Civic Education achievement tests used in senior secondary schools in Gusau LGA.
2. **H_{02}:** There is no significant evidence of construct validity in the Civic Education achievement tests used in senior secondary schools in Gusau LGA.
3. **H_{03}:** The Civic Education achievement tests do not demonstrate significant reliability among senior secondary school students in Gusau LGA.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is ideal for investigating the characteristics, practices, and perceptions of a defined population without manipulating any variables. This design was deemed appropriate as it allowed the systematic collection of quantitative data on the validity and reliability of Civic Education achievement tests among senior secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State, and facilitated robust statistical analysis. The population for the study comprised all senior secondary school students enrolled in public secondary schools within Gusau Local Government Area. Based on official records from the State Ministry of Education and typical enrollment patterns, the total population of SS1, SS2 and SS3 students was estimated at 17,549, which formed the basis for selecting a representative sample.

A sample of 375 students was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (2006) table, ensuring a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. To ensure proportional representation across all three grade levels (SS1, SS2, and SS3) and all public schools in the study area, a stratified random sampling technique was employed. Within each school, simple random sampling was used to select participants proportionally from each class, reducing selection bias and ensuring that the sample accurately reflected the population. The primary instrument for data collection was a Civic Education Achievement Test, developed by the researcher based on the senior secondary school Civic Education curriculum. The test covered key areas including understanding democracy, civic knowledge, and national values. To establish content validity, the items were reviewed by experts in Civic Education and educational measurement. In addition, a pilot study involving 30 students from a non-participating school was conducted to evaluate clarity, appropriateness, and the reliability of the test items.

The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency. Further item analysis was conducted to calculate difficulty indices, discrimination indices, and distractor efficiency, ensuring that each item effectively distinguished between high- and low-performing students. Data were collected through face-to-face administration of the achievement test in the selected schools. Approval and

permission were obtained from the State Ministry of Education and the school authorities. Students were briefed on the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and instructed to complete the test independently. The completed tests were coded and entered into SPSS version 25 for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, were computed to summarize student performance on each test item and address the research questions. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to evaluate the construct validity of the instrument, while the Content Validity Index (CVI) was used to assess the adequacy of content coverage. Consequently, the Reliability was further examined using Cronbach's alpha, complemented by item-level analyses. Collectively, these procedures provided empirical evidence regarding the validity and reliability of Civic Education achievement tests administered to senior secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Content Validity of Civic Education Achievement Test Items

S/N	Test Item	Rating Mean	SD	Content Validity Index	Decision
1	Understanding the concept of Democracy	3.67	0.49	0.92	Valid
2	Knowledge of Civic Responsibility and Rights	3.50	0.55	0.88	Valid
3	Awareness of National Values and Symbols	3.33	0.62	0.83	Valid
4	Participation in Community and School Civic Activities	3.17	0.71	0.79	Valid
5	Application of Civic Education Principles in Real-Life Scenarios	3.10	0.75	0.78	Valid
	Overall	**3.35**	**0.62**	**0.87**	**Valid**

The findings presented in Table 1 indicate that all five Civic Education test items showed high content validity based on expert evaluations. Mean expert ratings ranged from 3.10 to 3.67, suggesting strong agreement that each item accurately represented the intended curriculum content. The Content Validity Index (CVI) values, which fell between 0.78 and 0.92, further support that all items met the required standard for content validity. Items such as Understanding the Concept of Democracy and Knowledge of Civic Responsibility and Rights recorded the highest

CVIs (0.92 and 0.88), reflecting very strong expert consensus on their relevance. Some items had CVI values on the lower end (0.78–0.79), yet they remained above the acceptable threshold, suggesting that they were still considered suitable and relevant. With an overall CVI of 0.87, the Civic Education achievement test exhibits strong content validity, indicating that the items collectively cover essential curriculum components and effectively measure the intended learning outcomes.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Construct Validity of Civic Education Achievement Test Items (Factor Analysis)

S/N	Factor/Construct	Item Number	Mean Factor	SD	Decision
1	Democracy Understanding	4,5,6	0.72	0.09	Valid
2	Civic Knowledge	1,2,3	0.68	0.10	Valid
3	National Values	7,8,9	0.61	0.12	Valid
	Overall	**3.35**	0.62	0.87	Valid

The results in Table 2 indicate that the three identified constructs of the Civic Education Achievement Test Democracy Understanding, Civic Knowledge, and National Values all showed acceptable construct validity. The factor loadings for the items under each construct ranged from 0.61 to 0.72, demonstrating that the items were strongly related to the constructs they were designed to measure. The construct Democracy Understanding recorded the highest mean factor loading (0.72), showing a strong relationship between its items and the underlying concept. Civic Knowledge demonstrated a good level of validity with a factor loading of 0.68, while National Values, though slightly lower at 0.61, still fell within the acceptable range for factor analysis. Overall, the results confirm that the test items are well-structured and successfully represent the core constructs of Civic Education, making the instrument valid for measuring students' understanding in these key areas.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Reliability of Civic Education Achievement Test Items

S/N	Test Item	Mean Score	SD	Difficult Index (P)	Discrimination Index (DI)	Decision
1	Understanding the concept of Democracy	2.45	0.65	0.63	0.41	Acceptable
2	Knowledge of Civic	2.70	0.58	0.69	0.44	Acceptable

	Responsibility and Rights					
3	Awareness of National Values and Symbols	2.55	0.61	0.65	0.39	Acceptable
4	Participation in Community and School Civic Activities	2.40	0.72	0.60	0.42	Acceptable
5	Application of Civic Education Principles in Real-Life Scenarios	2.50	0.66	0.62	0.43	Acceptable
	Cronbach' Alpha	**-**	**-**	**-**	**0.82**	**Reliable**

The results in Table 3 show that all five Civic Education test items demonstrated acceptable reliability based on their difficulty and discrimination indices. The difficulty index values ranged from 0.60 to 0.69, indicating that the items were moderately difficult and appropriate for assessing students' abilities. The discrimination index values, which ranged between 0.39 and 0.44, show that each item was able to distinguish effectively between high-performing and low-performing students. All items were rated as "Acceptable," indicating that they met the standard criteria for quality test items in educational measurement. The overall reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha = 0.82) indicates a high level of internal consistency for the entire test. This indicates that the items assess the same underlying construct and yield consistent and dependable results when administered to students. Overall, the Civic Education Achievement Test is considered reliable and suitable for evaluating students' performance in the subject.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 4: Hypothesis 1 (H_{01}): There is no significant evidence of content validity in the Civic Education achievement tests used in senior secondary schools in Gusau LGA

S/N	Test Item	Mean Score	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
1	Understanding the concept of Democracy	3.67	0.49	15.12	< .001	Reject H_0
2	Knowledge of Civic Responsibility and Rights	3.50	0.55	13.25	< .001	Reject H_0

3	Awareness of National Values and Symbols	3.33	0.62	11.35	< .001	Reject H_0
4	Participation in Community and School Civic Activities	3.17	0.71	9.88	< .001	Reject H_0
5	Application of Civic Education Principles in Real-Life Scenarios	3.10	0.75	9.00	< .001	Reject H_0
	Overall	**3.35**	**0.62**	**11.92**	**< .001**	**Reject H_0**

The results in Table 4 show that all five test items significantly exceeded the expected threshold for content validity. Each item recorded high t-values ranging from 9.00 to 15.12, with p-values less than .001, indicating strong statistical significance. This means the expert ratings for all items were consistently higher than the neutral benchmark value. Because all p-values are below 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{01}), which states that there is no significant evidence of content validity in the Civic Education achievement tests, was rejected for each item and for the overall test. The overall t-value of 11.92 with $p < .001$ further confirms that the test, as a whole, demonstrates strong content validity. This implies that the items accurately represent the key concepts in the Civic Education curriculum and are appropriate for measuring students' learning outcomes. Thus, the Civic Education achievement test possesses significant content validity.

Table 5: Hypothesis 2 (H_{02}): There is no significant evidence of construct validity in the Civic Education achievement tests used in senior secondary schools in Gusau LGA

S/N	Factor/Construct	Items Number	Mean Factor	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
1	Democracy Understanding	3	0.72	0.09	14.20	< .001	Reject H_0
2	Civic Knowledge	3	0.68	0.10	12.45	< .001	Reject H_0
3	National Values	3	0.61	0.12	10.05	< .001	Reject H_0
	Overall	**9**	**0.67**	**0.10**	**12.90**	**< .001**	**Reject H_0**

The results in Table 5 indicate strong evidence of construct validity for all three factors assessed through factor analysis. Each construct Democracy Understanding, Civic Knowledge, and National Values recorded high mean factor loadings ranging from 0.61 to 0.72, well above the acceptable threshold for valid construct representation. The t-values for all constructs (between 10.05 and 14.20) are large and statistically significant, with p-values less than .001, confirming that each factor loading is significantly different from zero. This means the items under each

construct reliably represent the underlying Civic Education concepts they were designed to measure. The overall factor loading of 0.67, along with a significant t-value (12.90, $p < .001$), further confirms that the items collectively exhibit strong construct validity. Since all p-values are below 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{02}), which posits no significant evidence of construct validity, is rejected. Thus, the Civic Education achievement test shows strong and statistically significant construct validity, indicating that the items effectively measure the intended theoretical constructs within the subject.

Table 6: Hypothesis 3 (H_{03}): The Civic Education achievement tests do not demonstrate significant reliability among senior secondary school students in Gusau LGA

Reliability Statistic	No of Items	Cronbach Alpha (α)	SD	Decision
Civic Education Achievement Test	25	0.82	0.07	Reject H_0

The result presented in Table 6 shows that the Civic Education achievement test has a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82, based on 25 test items. This value is well above the commonly accepted reliability benchmark of 0.70, indicating that the test items are internally consistent and measure the construct reliably. The standard deviation of 0.07 further suggests stability in the reliability estimate, showing minimal fluctuation in item consistency. Given the high reliability coefficient and its strong internal consistency, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) which states that the Civic Education achievement tests do not demonstrate significant reliability is rejected. This means the Civic Education achievement test is highly reliable, and students' scores are consistent, dependable, and stable across the items.

Discussion of Findings

The study set out to examine the validity and reliability of Civic Education Achievement Tests among senior secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area, Zamfara State. The analysis was guided by three hypotheses concerning content validity, construct validity, and reliability. The findings provide important insights for assessment practices in Civic Education.

The first hypothesis (H_{01}) stated that there is no significant evidence of content validity in the Civic Education achievement tests. Results showed that all test items recorded high mean expert ratings, ranging from 3.10 to 3.67, with Content Validity Index (CVI) values between 0.78 and 0.92, and overall CVI of 0.87. The t-tests for each item were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), leading to the rejection of H_{01}. This indicates that the test items adequately reflect the intended curriculum content. These findings align with the work of Erlinawati and Muslimah (2021), who

emphasize that expert review and careful item selection are crucial for establishing content validity in educational assessments.

The second hypothesis (H_{02}) posited that the Civic Education achievement tests lack significant construct validity. Factor analysis revealed three clear constructs Democracy Understanding, Civic Knowledge, and National Values with mean factor loadings of 0.72, 0.68, and 0.61, respectively. Each factor was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), leading to the rejection of H_{02}. This finding demonstrates that the test items successfully measure the intended theoretical dimensions of Civic Education. Moghadasi and Keikavoosi-Arani (2025) similarly highlighted that robust factor structures and meaningful factor loadings serve as crucial evidence of construct validity in educational assessments.

The third hypothesis (H_{03}) suggested that the Civic Education achievement tests are not significantly reliable. Reliability analysis showed a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82, which exceeds the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating high internal consistency. The difficulty indices (0.60–0.69) and discrimination indices (0.39–0.44) of individual items were also within acceptable ranges, confirming that the items consistently differentiated between high- and low-performing students. These results led to the rejection of H_{03}, supporting the conclusion that the test is reliable. This supports the findings of Vasudevan, Lawal, and Arokiasamy (2025), who observed that well-constructed achievement tests in social science subjects can attain both high reliability and effective discrimination among students.

Collectively, the findings from the three hypotheses indicate that the Civic Education Achievement Test used in this study is both valid and reliable. The test demonstrates strong content coverage, effectively measures the underlying constructs of Civic Education, and produces consistent scores across items. These results suggest that the instrument can serve as a dependable tool for assessing students' civic knowledge, skills, and values in senior secondary schools. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of careful test design, expert validation, and statistical evaluation in producing assessment instruments that are psychometrically sound, supporting the development of informed and responsible citizens in Gusau Local Government Area.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the Civic Education Achievement Test used among senior secondary school students in Gusau Local Government Area is both valid and reliable. The test items demonstrated strong content and construct validity, while reliability analysis showed consistent and dependable measurement of students' civic knowledge and skills. These findings indicate that the instrument can effectively support assessment, teaching, and learning in Civic Education, contributing to the development of informed and responsible citizens.

Recommendations

1. Teachers should ensure that Civic Education achievement tests are constructed based on clear test blueprints and aligned with the curriculum to enhance content validity.
2. Regular training and professional development programs should be provided for Civic Education teachers on test construction and psychometric evaluation.
3. Schools and education authorities should adopt systematic procedures, including expert review and pilot testing, to validate and refine assessment instruments before administration.
4. Assessment practices should incorporate statistical analyses, such as item analysis and reliability testing, to ensure that tests consistently measure students' knowledge and skills.
5. Curriculum planners and examiners should consider revising Civic Education test items periodically to maintain relevance, accuracy, and alignment with evolving civic competencies.

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