

Original Research

Influence of Visual Art Activities on Pupils' Awareness of Insecurity and Civic Responsibility in Religion and National Values

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of visual art activities on pupils' awareness of insecurity and understanding of civic responsibility in the subject of Religion and National Values among basic schools in Gusau Metropolis, Zamfara State. Guided by Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the study adopted a quasi-experimental design involving 381 Basic Five pupils selected from six public schools (three experimental and three control). Pupils in the experimental group participated in structured visual art activities, including drawing, poster-making, and mural design, integrated into Religion and National Values lessons, while the control group received conventional instruction. Data collected through a validated questionnaire titled Visual Art and Civic Awareness Questionnaire (VACAQ) were analyzed using descriptive statistics and independent samples t-tests. Findings revealed that pupils exposed to visual art activities demonstrated significantly higher awareness of insecurity ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.51$) and greater understanding of civic responsibility ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.58$) than those in the control group ($p < 0.05$). The results confirm that visual art activities enhance pupils' engagement, emotional reflection, and internalization of civic values. The study concludes that integrating art-based pedagogies into Religion and National Values instruction promotes peace education, moral development, and civic consciousness among pupils. It recommends curriculum enrichment, teacher training, and adequate resource provision to strengthen art-based learning for peacebuilding and civic education in basic schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Insecurity has become one of the most pressing social challenges confronting contemporary Nigerian society, with particularly severe implications for education in conflict-affected states such as Zamfara. In recent years, the prevalence of banditry, kidnappings, communal clashes, and armed violence has disrupted normal school life, instilled fear among pupils, reduced school attendance, and negatively affected learning outcomes. For children at the basic school level, these experiences often go beyond physical danger to include emotional trauma, anxiety, and confusion about social order and civic responsibility. As Chinagorom and Emenike (2024a) and Familugba and Olumilua (2024) observe, insecurity has increasingly raised questions about the role of education not only as a means of transmitting academic knowledge but also

as a platform for nurturing moral consciousness, civic awareness, and peaceful dispositions among young learners.

However, Religion and National Values (RNV) occupies a strategic position in Nigeria's basic education curriculum. The subject is designed to instill moral discipline, character development, civic responsibility, national unity, and respect for societal norms. Ideally, RNV lessons should equip pupils with values that help them understand social challenges, respond responsibly to threats, and contribute positively to peaceful coexistence. However, classroom realities often fall short of these expectations. Instruction in RNV remains largely teacher-centred and examination-oriented, relying heavily on verbal explanations and rote memorization. Such approaches frequently fail to engage pupils emotionally or help them internalize abstract concepts such as peace, security, empathy, and civic duty, particularly in environments where insecurity is part of pupils' lived experiences (Casas Arias et al., 2024).

Furthermore, in response to these limitations, scholars have increasingly emphasized the need for innovative, learner-centred pedagogies that make moral and civic education more meaningful and contextually relevant. Visual art activities have emerged as one such promising pedagogical approach. Research indicates that visual arts and cultural practices are being used across Nigeria to promote peace education, social transformation, and justice by engaging learners and communities in reflective and expressive processes (Familugba & Olumilua, 2024). Through artistic expression, learners are able to explore social realities, communicate emotions, and reflect on moral dilemmas in ways that verbal instruction alone may not achieve. Neef et al. (2024) further demonstrate that visual art exhibitions have been successfully employed to mirror societal issues and promote moral awareness, civic identity, and political stability.

Empirical studies have also shown that the use of visual materials in teaching enhances learners' retention, higher-order thinking, and emotional engagement, especially at the basic and early childhood education levels where abstract reasoning is still developing (Cai, 2024). In relation to insecurity education, García Cano et al., (2025) found that students exposed to visual multimedia interventions such as posters, illustrations, and guided discussions demonstrated significantly higher awareness and preventive behavioural intentions regarding kidnapping compared with those taught using conventional methods. Similarly, Zhang (2024) reported that structured visual materials improved learners' comprehension and memory retention in lessons related to personal and community safety, making insecurity-related concepts more vivid and accessible to children. Beyond classroom-based studies, complementary evidence from clinical and therapeutic research further underscores the power of art-based interventions. Zhao (2024) and Deng (2024) revealed that art and music therapy significantly reduced trauma symptoms and improved emotional coping skills among children affected by violence and insecurity. Although these studies were conducted outside formal classroom settings, they demonstrate that visual and creative activities can positively reshape children's emotional and cognitive responses, thereby creating a psychologically safe foundation for learning about insecurity, peace, and civic responsibility.

Program evaluations of community-based initiatives such as "Peace Through Art" further reinforce these findings. Studies by Onuorah (2024) and Chinagorom and Emenike (2024b) show that participatory art activities, including mural painting, school poster competitions, and peace exhibitions, enhanced pupils' awareness of local security challenges and strengthened their civic attitudes. These programs enabled pupils to collaboratively reflect on violence, empathy, non-violence, and civic duty, suggesting that visual art activities can be effectively integrated into value-based school subjects such as Religion and National Values. Cross-African reviews also provide strong empirical support for art-based civic education. Abdul Rahman et al., (2024) concluded that visual arts interventions consistently promote prosocial attitudes, empathy, and understanding of social responsibilities among children, particularly when art creation is combined with structured reflection and civic learning. Similar findings were reported in recent Nigerian studies on graffiti and civic education, where participants involved in community art projects demonstrated stronger commitment to civic responsibilities such as respect for laws, environmental responsibility, and participation in public awareness campaigns. These studies collectively suggest that art-based pedagogies are more effective than conventional lecture methods in fostering civic understanding and moral internalization.

Despite these encouraging findings, significant gaps remain in the existing literature. Most previous studies have focused on secondary school students, community programs, or therapeutic interventions, with limited emphasis on basic school pupils within formal classroom settings. Moreover, many studies relied on qualitative or descriptive designs without rigorous quantitative validation. There is therefore limited empirical evidence on how structured visual art activities integrated into Religion and National Values lessons can influence basic school pupils' awareness of insecurity and their understanding of civic responsibility, particularly in insecurity-prone areas such as Gusau Metropolis, Zamfara State. The role of the present study is to address this gap by conducting a quantitative quasi-experimental investigation that provides empirical data on the educational value of visual art activities in RNV instruction. By doing so, the study aims to inform teachers, curriculum planners, and policymakers on how creative visual pedagogy can be used to promote peace

education and responsible citizenship among young learners. This study aims to examine the influence of visual art activities on pupils' awareness of insecurity issues in basic schools in Gusau Metropolis, and determine the effect of visual art activities on pupils' understanding of civic responsibility in the subject of Religion and National Values.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura (1977), which posits that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling within a social environment. Bandura argued that individuals acquire knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours not only through direct experience but also by observing others and interpreting the consequences of their actions. The theory identifies four key processes: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation which explain how observed behaviours are learned and translated into action (Bandura, 1986). However, Social Learning Theory provides a strong explanatory framework for understanding how visual art activities can enhance pupils' awareness of insecurity and civic responsibility. When pupils engage in creative tasks such as drawing, poster-making, painting, and mural design that emphasize peace, safety, and civic duties, they observe symbolic representations of moral and civic values (Xu, 2024). Through repeated exposure and guided reflection, pupils learn to associate these visual symbols with positive social behaviours such as empathy, tolerance, cooperation, and respect for life (Kolbay, 2025). This process helps to concretize abstract concepts taught in Religion and National Values, making them more meaningful and relatable to pupils' lived experiences.

Furthermore, the relevance of Social Learning Theory to art-based and civic education. Adesina and Akinbobola (2023) found that learners who participated in visual and performing arts demonstrated higher moral reasoning and empathy as a result of observing and imitating positive behaviours within collaborative learning environments. Similarly, Chinagorom and Emenike (2024b) reported that art-based peace education programs enabled pupils to internalize civic values and non-violent behaviours by interpreting peace-related artistic symbols. By grounding this study in Social Learning Theory, it is assumed that exposure to visual art activities embedded with moral and civic themes will not only enhance pupils' understanding of insecurity but also foster emotional engagement and responsible citizenship. The theory therefore provides a robust foundation for explaining how visual art-based instruction in Religion and National Values can nurture pupils' awareness, empathy, and commitment to peace in insecurity-affected communities such as Gusau Metropolis.

3. METHOD

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design using a non-equivalent control group format to compare the effects of visual art activities on pupils' learning outcomes. According to Campbell and Stanley (1963), the non-equivalent control group design is suitable for educational research where random assignment is impractical, as it allows the investigation of cause-and-effect relationships while acknowledging potential threats to internal validity. Pupils in the experimental group were exposed to creative visual art activities such as drawing, poster-making, and mural production integrated into Religion and National Values lessons, while those in the control group were taught using the conventional lecture approach. This design enabled the researcher to determine the extent to which visual art activities enhanced pupils' awareness of insecurity and their understanding of civic responsibility. The study population comprised all Basic Five pupils enrolled in public basic schools within Gusau Metropolis, Zamfara State, during the 2024/2025 academic session. According to the Zamfara State Universal Basic Education Board (2025), the total population consisted of about 4,820 pupils distributed across 23 schools. Basic Five pupils were targeted because they possessed adequate cognitive maturity to engage meaningfully in art-based learning experiences and grasp civic and security-related topics.

A sample of 381 pupils was drawn using the Research Advisors (2006) sample size determination table at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. The sampling process involved three stages: stratification of schools into upper and lower primary categories, random selection of six schools (three experimental and three control), and systematic selection of pupils from Basic Five classes. This produced 190 participants in the treatment group and 191 in the control group, ensuring fair representation of the target population. Data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire titled "Visual Art and Civic Awareness Questionnaire (VACAQ)". The instrument consisted of three sections: Section A gathered demographic information; Section B measured pupils' awareness of insecurity through ten items; and Section C assessed their understanding of civic responsibility through another ten items. All items were rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). In designing and validating the instrument, considerations of reliability and internal consistency were guided by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), who recommended rigorous psychometric evaluation to ensure the accuracy of measurement

instruments in social research. Sample statements included “Through drawing, I understand how insecurity affects my community” and “Designing posters about peace helps me learn to be a responsible citizen.”

The questionnaire underwent expert validation by three specialists in Educational Psychology, Measurement and Evaluation, and Fine Arts from Federal University Gusau to ensure content relevance, clarity, and alignment with study objectives. A pilot test conducted with 40 pupils from two non-participating schools yielded a Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.85, confirming high internal consistency and reliability of the instrument. Data collection took place in three phases: pre-intervention, intervention, and post-intervention. During the intervention, pupils in the experimental group participated in six structured visual art sessions over three weeks, focusing on creative projects such as peace posters and community murals that addressed civic and security issues. In contrast, pupils in the control group received conventional instruction without art integration. After the intervention, the same questionnaire was re-administered to assess changes in awareness and understanding.

The data obtained were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and range) were used to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics using the independent samples t-test tested the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. A p-value of less than or equal to 0.05 led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating a statistically significant effect of visual art activities on pupils’ awareness and civic responsibility.

Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the appropriate educational authorities before the commencement of data collection. Permission was also sought from the management of the selected primary schools to ensure compliance with institutional and professional research standards. Informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians of the pupils involved in the study. They were adequately informed about the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, and their right to withdraw their children from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. Data confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the study. Participants’ identities were not disclosed, and all information collected was used solely for academic purposes. The data were handled with utmost care and stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive results of Table 1 indicate that pupils exposed to visual art activities ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.51$) reported a higher level of awareness of insecurity than those not exposed ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.52$). This suggests that visual art activities positively influence pupils’ awareness of insecurity in basic schools within Gusau Metropolis.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on the Influence of Visual Art Activities on Pupils’ Awareness of Insecurity in Basic Schools in Gusau Metropolis

Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Dev.	Remark
Treatment Group	190	1.80	4.00	3.15	0.51	High Extent
Control Group	191	1.60	3.90	2.73	0.62	Moderate Extent
Total	381	1.60	4.00	2.94	0.84	Fairly High Extent

From the analysis of Table 2, pupils in the treatment group ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.58$) demonstrated a greater understanding of civic responsibility compared to their counterparts in the control group ($M = 2.59$, $SD = 0.61$). This implies that participation in visual art activities enhances pupils’ civic awareness and responsibility as taught in Religion and National Values.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics on the Effect of Visual Art Activities on Pupils’ Understanding of Civic Responsibility in Religion and National Values

Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Dev.	Remark
Treatment Group	190	1.80	4.00	2.96	0.58	High Extent
Control Group	191	1.60	3.90	2.59	0.61	Moderate Extent
Total	381	1.60	4.00	2.78	0.60	Fairly High Extent

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the influence of visual art activities on pupils’ awareness of insecurity (see Table 3). The results revealed a statistically significant difference between the treatment group ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.51$) and the control group ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.52$), $t(379) = 8.03$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) was rejected, indicating that visual art activities significantly influence pupils’ awareness of insecurity in basic schools.

Table 3. Independent Samples t-Test Showing the Influence of Visual Art Activities on Pupils' Awareness of Insecurity in Basic Schools in Gusau Metropolis

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-Cal	P-Value	Decision	Remark
Treatment Group	190	3.15	0.51	379	8.03	0.000	Sign.	Reject H ₀₁
Control Group	191	2.73	0.52					

An independent-samples t-test was used to determine whether visual art activities have a significant effect on pupils' understanding of civic responsibility in Religion and National Values (see Table 4). The findings show a significant difference between the treatment group (M = 2.96, SD = 0.58) and the control group (M = 2.59, SD = 0.61), $t(379) = 6.17$, $p < .001$. Hence, the null hypothesis (H₀₂) was rejected, implying that visual art activities positively affect pupils' understanding of civic responsibility.

Table 4. Independent Samples t-Test Showing the Effect of Visual Art Activities on Pupils' Understanding of Civic Responsibility in Religion and National Values

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-Cal	P-Value	Decision	Remark
Treatment Group	190	2.96	0.58	379	6.17	0.000	Sign.	Reject H ₀₂
Control Group	191	2.59	0.61					

The first hypothesis tested showed that visual art activities had a significant effect on pupils' awareness of insecurity. Pupils who participated in drawing, poster-making, and mural design exhibited greater awareness and understanding of local security challenges compared to those in the control group. This aligns with the Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977), which emphasizes that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling. By observing artistic representations of security and peace, pupils were able to internalize messages about safety and non-violence, leading to behavioral awareness. This outcome corroborates the findings of Obodo et al. (2021), who reported that students exposed to visual multimedia campaigns on kidnapping prevention demonstrated higher preventive awareness and behavioral change than those not exposed. Similarly, Ikechukwu-Illomuanya (2021) found that visual illustrations significantly enhanced pupils' retention and comprehension of community safety topics in Nigerian primary schools. The present study also supports the work of Andersen et al. (2019), who reported that art-based interventions improved emotional stability and awareness among children affected by conflict. In their quasi-experimental study, art activities such as painting and drawing served as reflective tools that helped children process their experiences and develop preventive coping skills. The current study's findings are consistent with these results, indicating that structured visual art experiences can stimulate emotional engagement and cognitive understanding of insecurity-related concepts.

The second hypothesis revealed a significant positive effect of visual art activities on pupils' understanding of civic responsibility. Pupils in the treatment group displayed greater civic consciousness and a sense of moral responsibility compared to their peers in the control group. This result suggests that art-based learning facilitates the internalization of civic values by making abstract concepts such as peace, empathy, and social duty more concrete and relatable. The finding supports the argument of Chinagorom and Emenike (2024a), who reported that integrating visual arts in peace education enhanced pupils' moral reasoning, empathy, and civic participation in Nigerian basic schools. Similarly, Adesina and Akinbobola (2023) found that students who engaged in visual and performing arts demonstrated higher levels of moral development and prosocial behavior, emphasizing that artistic engagement fosters observation, reflection, and imitation of socially acceptable behavior key processes outlined in Bandura's social learning model. Furthermore, this finding aligns with Familugba and Olumilua (2024), who asserted that visual art and culture play a vital sociological role in promoting peace education, social transformation, and justice in Nigeria. They argued that when learners participate in expressive art activities that mirror societal values, they develop a deeper understanding of their civic roles and responsibilities. The current study also resonates with Nhengu's (2024) cross-African review, which found that art-based peace education significantly improved children's empathy, cooperation, and civic understanding across various cultural contexts.

However, while the findings affirm the positive role of visual arts in fostering civic and moral learning, some researchers caution that the success of such interventions depends largely on how art is integrated into the curriculum. For instance, Saribas et al. (2023) and Lee (2022) state that without adequate teacher training and proper curriculum alignment, visual arts may become mere decorative exercises rather than transformative learning experiences. This underscores the need for teachers to possess the necessary pedagogical skills to guide reflective discussions linking creative art activities to real-life civic issues, as implemented in the present study. Overall, the findings confirm that visual art-based learning strategies are effective tools for promoting security awareness and civic responsibility among pupils in basic schools. By combining creativity with moral and civic instruction, pupils not only engage their imagination but also develop emotional intelligence, empathy, and social responsibility. These results have strong implications for

curriculum designers and educators, suggesting that incorporating art-based pedagogies into Religion and National Values can enhance both cognitive understanding and character formation critical for fostering peaceful coexistence and responsible citizenship in insecurity-prone communities such as Gusau Metropolis.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that visual art activities significantly enhance pupils' awareness of insecurity and understanding of civic responsibility in Religion and National Values. Pupils exposed to art-based learning demonstrated greater sensitivity to security issues and stronger civic values than those taught through conventional methods. The findings affirm that visual art serves as an effective pedagogical tool for promoting peace education, moral development, and responsible citizenship among basic school pupils in Gusau Metropolis. Therefore, integrating visual art into civic and moral instruction can foster creativity, empathy, and social awareness essential for building a secure and cohesive society.

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

1. The Ministry of Education should incorporate visual art activities such as drawing, poster-making, and mural design into the Religion and National Values curriculum to enhance pupils' awareness of insecurity and civic responsibility.
2. Teachers should be trained through workshops and seminars on how to effectively use visual art as a teaching tool for promoting peace, security awareness, and moral development among pupils.
3. Government and school administrators should provide adequate instructional materials and art resources to support creative learning and ensure effective implementation of art-based lessons.
4. Curriculum planners should revise and enrich the Religion and National Values curriculum to include creative and participatory teaching strategies that link visual art with real-life social and security issues.
5. Educational policymakers should develop and enforce policies that promote the integration of arts-based methods in basic education, particularly in areas affected by insecurity, as a strategy for peacebuilding and civic reorientation.
6. Parents and community leaders should support school-based art projects that promote peace and civic values, helping to extend the lessons learned in classrooms into the wider community.
7. Future studies should explore the long-term impact of visual art-based learning on pupils' behavioral change, social adjustment, and community participation to strengthen evidence-based educational practices.

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest in this study.

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ETHICAL STATEMENT

The research work was conducted with the permission of the school authority, parents, and guardians of the pupils.

AI USE STATEMENT

AI is only used to analyze grammatical errors in manuscripts.

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