

Role of General Studies in Promoting National Unity Among Students in Eha-Amufu, Enugu State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of General Studies in promoting national unity among students of the Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu, Enugu State, Nigeria. Grounded in social identity theory and the intergroup contact hypothesis, the investigation treated three General Studies components, Nigerian Peoples and Culture, Peace and Conflict Resolution, and Citizenship and Civic Values, as predictors of students' national unity orientation. A descriptive correlational survey design was adopted. The target population comprised 2,486 NCE and degree students who had completed at least one General Studies course during the 2024/2025 academic session. A sample of 341 usable questionnaires was obtained from 360 instruments distributed on the basis of the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, with an allowance for nonresponse. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .79 to .88 across constructs and reached .91 for the full instrument. Descriptive statistics showed that students rated both General Studies engagement ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 0.48$) and national unity orientation ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.46$) above the 2.50 criterion on a four-point scale. Pearson correlation indicated a significant positive relationship between composite General Studies engagement and national unity orientation, $r(339) = .58$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .336$. An independent-samples t test showed that degree students reported significantly higher national unity scores than NCE students, $t(339) = 3.05$, $p = .002$, Cohen's $d = 0.33$. Multiple regression demonstrated that the three General Studies components jointly predicted national unity orientation, $R = .61$, $R^2 = .372$, adjusted $R^2 = .366$, $F(3, 337) = 66.54$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $f^2 = 0.59$. Peace and Conflict Resolution made the largest unique contribution ($\beta = .31$). The findings support the continued use of General Studies as a structured curricular instrument for civic socialization in a multi-ethnic teacher-education setting and point to the need for more interactive, contact-rich pedagogy.

Keywords: *General Studies, national unity, Nigerian Peoples and Culture, peace education, teacher education, Eha-Amufu*

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Nigeria remains one of Africa's most internally diverse states. More than 250 ethnolinguistic groups, a roughly balanced Christian-Muslim population, and a federal structure that concentrates political competition along regional lines have made national cohesion a persistent public-policy problem (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005; Mustapha, 2006). Recurring episodes of communal violence, indigene-settler disputes, and identity-based electoral mobilization illustrate that formal independence did not automatically produce a shared civic identity. Education has therefore been assigned a nation-building function that extends beyond literacy and manpower training. The National Policy on Education states that one purpose of the system is to forge and cement national unity and to promote national and international understanding (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

General Studies (GS), also styled General Studies Education or the General Studies Programme, is the most explicit curricular expression of that nation-building mandate in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Pioneered at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in the early 1960s and later generalized by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), the programme requires every undergraduate, irrespective of department, to take a common set of courses in language, Nigerian peoples and culture, philosophy, peace studies, and entrepreneurship (Anyadike, 2013; National Universities Commission, 2022). Under the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS), Nigerian Peoples and Culture and related civic courses remain compulsory, even though the total GS load was reduced from 36 to 12 credit units (National Universities Commission, 2022). The official rationale is that specialists who lack a shared civic vocabulary cannot sustain a multi-ethnic republic.

Eha-Amufu (also rendered Ehamufu on institutional letterheads) occupies a distinctive place in this discussion. The town lies in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area of Enugu State, about 64 kilometres northeast of Enugu metropolis, and shares borders with Ebonyi and Benue States (Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu, 2024). It is historically associated with the Nigerian Civil War because of its rail corridor and later became the site of a federal teacher-training college established in 1981 and taken over by the Federal Government in 1993. The Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu (FCE Eha-Amufu) now runs Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) programmes and bachelor's degrees in affiliation with the

University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Its student body is majority Igbo and Christian, yet it draws Hausa, Yoruba, Igala, Idoma, and other students through federal character admission and the dual NCE-degree mandate. In a college that prepares teachers who will later work in Unity Colleges, state schools, and local communities, the capacity of General Studies to shape national unity orientations is not a peripheral question.

Method

Research Design

A descriptive correlational survey design was used. The design is appropriate when the aim is to estimate levels of constructs, test associations, compare intact groups, and model prediction without manipulating treatment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). No General Studies course was experimentally withheld; all respondents had already been exposed to at least one focal course, and variation in engagement scores provided the independent-variable spread.

Population of the Study

The population comprised all NCE Year II and Year III students and all degree students in 200 to 400 levels at the Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu, Enugu State, who had completed at least one of Nigerian Peoples and Culture, Peace and Conflict Resolution, or Citizenship and Civic Values during the 2024/2025 academic session. Official nominal rolls obtained from the Academic Office and the Degree Unit yielded 2,486 eligible students. First-year NCE and 100-level degree students were excluded because many had not yet completed a civic GS course at the time of data collection. Sandwich and PDE students were excluded to keep the sampling frame within regular full-time programmes. The college's public profile lists approximately 2,000 undergraduate students on the degree track and a larger NCE enrolment; the cleaned sampling frame of 2,486 regular students who had taken the relevant courses is consistent with that profile (Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu, 2024).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Sample size was determined with the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for a finite population at 95% confidence and 5% margin of error. For a population of 2,400 the table recommends 331; for 2,600 it recommends 335. Linear interpolation for $N = 2,486$ produces a recommended n of 333. The computational form of the same rule is

$$n = X^2NP(1 - P) / [d^2(N - 1) + X^2P(1 - P)],$$

where $X^2 = 3.841$ (chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at .05), $N = 2,486$, $P = .50$, and $d = .05$. Substitution yields $n = 333.26$, which rounds to 333. Twenty-seven additional copies (an 8.1% oversample) were printed to absorb nonresponse and unusable returns, giving a distribution target of 360. Proportionate stratified random sampling was applied. Strata were programme type (NCE = 1,438, 57.8% of the frame; degree = 1,048, 42.2%) and sex as recorded on the nominal roll. Within strata, respondents were selected with a random-number function applied to matriculation lists. Of 360 questionnaires distributed, 348 were returned and 341 were usable after listwise deletion of cases with more than 10% missing Likert items, for a usable response rate of 94.7% of instruments issued and 102.4% of the minimum Krejcie-Morgan target. The achieved sample preserved the population programme split (NCE = 197, 57.8%; degree = 144, 42.2%).

Instrument for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire titled General Studies and National Unity Questionnaire (GSNUQ) was developed from the literature and from CCMAS and NCCE course specifications. Section A captured sex, programme, level, state of origin, ethnicity, and religion. Section B contained 18 items on General Studies engagement, six items for each component: Nigerian Peoples and Culture (NPC), Peace and Conflict Resolution (PCR), and Citizenship and Civic Values (CCV). Section C contained 18 items on national unity orientation, six items for each dimension: inter-ethnic tolerance (IET), national identity and patriotism (NIP), and inter-religious harmony (IRH). All Likert items used a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1), with four negatively worded items reverse-scored. A four-point scale was chosen to eliminate a midpoint that Nigerian student respondents often use as a non-attitude refuge. The criterion mean was set at 2.50.

Validity of the Instrument

Face and content validity were established by three experts: one Senior Lecturer in Social Studies Education at FCE Eha-Amufu, one Senior Lecturer in Measurement and Evaluation at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and one GS course coordinator in the Degree Unit. Experts rated item relevance, clarity, and representativeness of CCMAS/NCCE content on a four-point scale. The item-level content validity index (I-CVI) ranged from .78

to 1.00; the scale-level CVI (S-CVI/Ave) was .91 for Section B and .89 for Section C. Two items with I-CVI below .78 were rewritten and two were dropped before the pilot.

Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot test was conducted with 40 NCE and degree students of the nearby Federal College of Education, Pankshin, contact-session unit hosted for a short academic activity in Enugu, and with 12 sandwich students of FCE Eha-Amufu who were outside the main sampling frame ($n = 40$ usable). Cronbach's alpha was computed in IBM SPSS Statistics 27. Table 1 reports pilot and main-study coefficients. All main-study alphas met or exceeded the .70 convention (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The full 36-item Likert instrument yielded $\alpha = .91$ in the main sample.

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients by Construct

Table 1

Construct	Items	Pilot α ($n = 40$)	Main study α ($n = 341$)
Nigerian Peoples and Culture (NPC)	6	.77	.81
Peace and Conflict Resolution (PCR)	6	.80	.84
Citizenship and Civic Values (CCV)	6	.74	.79
General Studies composite	18	.86	.88
Inter-ethnic tolerance (IET)	6	.78	.83
National identity and patriotism (NIP)	6	.82	.86
Inter-religious harmony (IRH)	6	.76	.80
National unity composite	18	.87	.88
Full GSNUQ Likert sections	36	.89	.91

Note. All coefficients were computed on listwise complete cases for the relevant subscale.

Method of Data Collection

Ethical clearance was obtained from the College Research Ethics Committee. The Provost's Office issued an introduction letter. Trained research assistants administered the instrument in GS lecture halls and departmental common rooms over two weeks in May 2025, after mid-semester assessments, so that course exposure would be reasonably complete.

Participation was voluntary. No name or matriculation number was collected. Completed forms were checked on the spot for blank pages.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed with IBM SPSS Statistics 27. Research Question 1 was answered with means and standard deviations (criterion $M = 2.50$). Research Question 2 and Hypothesis 1 were addressed with Pearson's product-moment correlation. Research Question 3 and Hypothesis 2 were addressed with an independent-samples t test and Cohen's d . Research Question 4 and Hypothesis 3 were addressed with simultaneous multiple linear regression, standardized betas, and Cohen's f^2 . Assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were inspected with histograms, P-P plots, scatterplots of residuals, and variance inflation factors. An additional one-way ANOVA by academic level was reported as a supplementary analysis. All tests were two-tailed at $\alpha = .05$.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 341)

Table 2

Variable	Category	n	%
Sex	Male	148	43.4
	Female	193	56.6
Programme	NCE	197	57.8
	Degree (UNN affiliation)	144	42.2
Level	NCE II / 200 level	112	32.8
	NCE III / 300 level	128	37.5
	400 level	101	29.6
Ethnicity	Igbo	241	70.7
	Yoruba	28	8.2
	Hausa/Fulani	19	5.6
	Other (Igala, Idoma, Efik, etc.)	53	15.5
Religion	Christianity	289	84.8
	Islam	38	11.1

Traditional / other

14

4.1

Note. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place and may not sum to 100.0 because of rounding. Level percentages: 32.8 + 37.5 + 29.6 = 99.9.

Research Question 1: Levels of General Studies Engagement and National Unity Orientation

Means, Standard Deviations, and Distributional Indices of Study Constructs (N = 341)

Table 3

Construct	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Decision
Nigerian Peoples and Culture	3.21	0.54	-0.41	0.12	High
Peace and Conflict Resolution	3.08	0.61	-0.28	-0.19	High
Citizenship and Civic Values	3.14	0.57	-0.33	-0.08	High
GS composite	3.14	0.48	-0.36	0.09	High
Inter-ethnic tolerance	3.18	0.52	-0.39	0.04	High
National identity / patriotism	3.26	0.49	-0.61	0.37	High
Inter-religious harmony	3.02	0.63	-0.18	-0.44	High
National unity composite	3.15	0.46	-0.31	0.11	High

Note. Scale anchors: 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Decision rule: $M \geq 2.50$ = high (above criterion). The GS composite is the mean of 18 GS items; the national unity composite is the mean of 18 unity items. Weighted check: $(3.21 + 3.08 + 3.14) / 3 = 3.143 \approx 3.14$; $(3.18 + 3.26 + 3.02) / 3 = 3.153 \approx 3.15$.

Hypothesis 1: Relationship Between General Studies Engagement and National Unity

Pearson Correlations Among General Studies Components and National Unity Dimensions (N = 341)

Note. NPC = Nigerian Peoples and Culture; PCR = Peace and Conflict Resolution; CCV = Citizenship and Civic Values; IET = inter-ethnic tolerance; NIP = national identity and patriotism; IRH = inter-religious harmony; NU = national unity. GS composite intercorrelations with components are part-whole coefficients. $**p < .001$ (two-tailed), $df = 339$.

Hypothesis 2: Difference Between NCE and Degree Students

Independent-Samples t Test of National Unity Orientation by Programme Type

Note. Equal variances assumed (Levene's $F = 1.86$, $p = .174$). Mean difference = 0.15, $SE = 0.049$, 95% CI [0.05, 0.25]. Weighted grand mean = $[(197 \times 3.09) + (144 \times 3.24)] / 341 = 3.15$.

Hypothesis 3: Joint Prediction of National Unity by General Studies Components

Multiple Regression of National Unity Orientation on General Studies Components (N = 341)

Note. Dependent variable = national unity composite. $R = .61$; $R^2 = .372$; adjusted $R^2 = .366$; SE of estimate = 0.366; $F(3, 337) = 66.54$, $p < .001$; Cohen's $f^2 = 0.59$. Durbin-Watson = 1.94. Predicted mean = $1.246 + 0.179(3.21) + 0.234(3.08) + 0.194(3.14) = 1.246 + 0.575 + 0.721 + 0.609 = 3.15$, matching the observed composite mean.

Supplementary Analysis: Academic Level

A one-way ANOVA on national unity by academic level produced a small but significant overall effect, $F(2, 338) = 3.71$, $p = .025$, $\eta^2 = .021$. Means increased monotonically with level: NCE II/200 level $M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.49$, $n = 112$; NCE III/300 level $M = 3.16$, $SD = 0.45$, $n = 128$; 400 level $M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.42$, $n = 101$. Tukey HSD showed that the 400-level mean differed from the NCE II/200-level mean ($p = .019$); the adjacent-level contrasts were not significant. The pattern is consistent with a cumulative-exposure interpretation but cannot, in a cross-sectional design, rule out cohort differences.

One-Way ANOVA of National Unity Orientation by Academic Level

Note. Weighted grand mean = $[(112 \times 3.07) + (128 \times 3.16) + (101 \times 3.24)] / 341 = 3.15$. Sum of squares between = 1.54; sum of squares within = 70.24; $\eta^2 = 1.54 / (1.54 + 70.24) = .021$. Mean square between = 0.77; mean square within = 0.208; $F = 3.71$.

DISCUSSION

The first major finding is that students of FCE Eha-Amufu reported high engagement with General Studies and a high national unity orientation. Means between 3.02 and 3.26 on a four-point scale sit in the same band as patriotic-attitude items reported by Ikwumelu et al. (2025) and as the unity ratings obtained by Adegbite (2023). The result does not prove that GS caused those orientations, selection into a federal college already filters for students willing to live away from home, but it does contradict the more pessimistic claim that GS is universally dismissed as irrelevant. Oguejiofor's (2016) observation that South-East undergraduates accept the importance of GS is replicated here in a college-of-education population.

The second finding is the substantial positive association between GS engagement and national unity orientation, $r = .58$, $r^2 = .336$. In Cohen's terms the effect is large; in the more conservative metric of educational field research it is at least medium-to-large. The coefficient is higher than Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) mean contact-prejudice correlation, which is expected because the present predictor is not raw contact but self-reported

engagement with an explicitly civic curriculum. It is also consistent with Adesina and Lawal's (2025) internalization-behaviour correlation among Social Studies undergraduates. Social identity theory interprets the association as evidence that students who attend more closely to a superordinate Nigerian narrative assign more weight to that identity when they later rate tolerance and patriotism items (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

CONCLUSION

Among 341 NCE and degree students of the Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu, General Studies engagement and national unity orientation were both high. The two composites shared 33.6% of their variance. Degree students outscored NCE students by a small-to-medium margin. Nigerian Peoples and Culture, Peace and Conflict Resolution, and Citizenship and Civic Values jointly explained 37.2% of national unity variance, with peace content contributing the largest unique share. All three null hypotheses were rejected, and all associated effect sizes were at least small-to-medium and, for the focal association and the regression, large. General Studies, as currently experienced in this college, is not a ceremonial residue of the post-civil-war curriculum. It is a statistically detectable correlate of the civic orientations that Nigerian education policy has asked it to produce. Detectable is not the same as sufficient, and cross-sectional self-report is not the same as causal proof. Within those limits, the evidence supports the continued institutional investment in General Studies as a promoter of national unity among students in Eha-Amufu.

Recommendations

1. The School of General Studies should reorganize at least 30% of contact hours in Peace and Conflict Resolution and Nigerian Peoples and Culture into mixed-ethnicity cooperative tasks that satisfy Allport's common-goal condition.

2. NCCE and the Degree Unit should retain Peace and Conflict Resolution as a compulsory rather than elective civic course, given its $\beta = .31$ unique contribution.

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