



ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF VALUE-BASED EDUCATION IN DETERRING RADICALIZATION AND EXTREMISM AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA



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Abstract

This study assessed the effectiveness of value-based education in deterring radicalization and extremism among secondary schools in Kaduna State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with a study population of 972 social studies teachers from 574 public secondary schools. A sample size of 274 social studies teachers was taken for the study, in accordance with both Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table. Multistage sampling procedure (Purposive, proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques) was employed to select the respondents. Data were collected using the Effectiveness of Value-Based Education for Radicalization and Extremism Questionnaire (EVEREQ), which was validated by three experts at Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. A trial test yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.77. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while chi-square tests of goodness-of-fit were applied to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that value-based education is significantly effective in deterring radicalization among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Furthermore, the findings revealed that value-based education is significantly effective in deterring radicalization among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The concluded by highlighting the vital role of value-based education in preventing radicalization and extremism among secondary school students in, while warning that without urgent and consistent implementation, teacher training, and community engagement, the nation risks fostering a generation vulnerable to violence, civic decline, and social instability. It recommended among others that, the Ministry of Education and curriculum planners should embed value-based education into the secondary school curriculum by emphasizing empathy, tolerance, peacebuilding and civic responsibility across subjects, using real-life scenarios to help students resist radical ideologies.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Values, Education, Radicalization & Extremism.

Introduction

The increasing involvement of young people in violence, abductions, destruction of lives and property, and the spread of hate-fueled ideologies is a growing global concern. Families, teachers, policymakers, and communities are alarmed by the vulnerability of youth to extremist narratives and violent behaviors (UNESCO, 2023; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2022). This concern is particularly acute in educational institutions, spaces meant to shape character, instill civic values, and prepare future leaders. Instead, many schools have tragically become either direct targets of violence or breeding grounds for intolerance and radical ideologies (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack [GCPEA], 2022). The disturbing reality that children, who should be acquiring knowledge and skills for nation-building are being indoctrinated with hatred and used as agents of destruction reveals a profound moral and ethical breakdown in society (World Bank, 2023). This situation underscores the



urgent need for transformative, value-based education as a tool for peacebuilding and moral regeneration.

This alarming trend is part of a broader global wave of radicalization and violent extremism that increasingly places young people at the center of ideological conflicts. Across continents, extremist groups have stepped up efforts to recruit, radicalize, and manipulate young minds, especially in conflict-prone and socio-economically disadvantaged communities (Ogunyemi, 2021). Radicalization refers to the process by which individuals adopt extreme political, religious, or ideological positions, often culminating in support for or engagement in violence (Neumann, 2013). Borum (2011) describes it as a dynamic process where individuals or groups progressively embrace extremist ideals that reject or seek to undermine prevailing norms and freedoms, sometimes leading to violent action to achieve their goals.

Recent studies highlight the complexity and context-dependence of radicalization, particularly among youth in fragile societies. Botha (2014) reports that radicalization is frequently driven not solely by ideology, but by marginalization, unemployment and systemic neglect. Many young people who become radicalized have experienced injustice, police brutality and a lack of opportunity, conditions that make them susceptible to narratives offering identity, purpose and dignity. Similarly, Horgan (2008) argues that radicalization is seldom sudden or ideologically driven; rather, it unfolds gradually through social influence and emotional bonds. This perspective is echoed by Onuoha and Oyewole (2018), who found that in Northern Nigeria, youth are often motivated less by ideology and more by promises of empowerment, material support, and inclusion after years of exclusion from public life. This confirms that radicalization is a multifaceted process shaped by socio-economic and relational dynamics, requiring nuanced, context-sensitive responses.

Nevertheless, Adebayo (2020) cautions that not all individuals with radical views engage in violence, warning against over-securitizing dissent and thereby criminalizing legitimate grievances. Bartlett and Miller (2022) further observe that radical expressions among youth often signal identity struggles, emotional dislocation, or a search for meaning rather than violent intent. These insights affirm that radicalization is not monolithic or predictable, but shaped by personal, social, political and economic factors. Effective responses, therefore, must distinguish between non-violent dissent and real threats, addressing underlying grievances rather than suppressing youth expression. This is critical given the heavy toll that violent radicalization has taken across Africa, especially in Nigeria, where unchecked radicalization has led to extremism, disrupted education, destabilized communities and imperiled youth futures.

This pattern is evident across Africa, particularly in regions like the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, and the Horn of Africa. Nigeria, one of the epicenters of the crisis, has suffered immensely from the Boko Haram insurgency since 2009. Openly hostile to Western education, the group has targeted schools, murdered teachers and students and abducted thousands of children (Ogunyemi, 2021; Tyokyaa & Pinga, 2018). According to UNICEF (2021), over 1,000 schoolchildren were abducted between 2013 and 2021 due to extremist violence, leading to widespread school closures, increased dropout rates and heightened fear among educational stakeholders.

Beyond Boko Haram, radical movements have evolved into violent extremist groups terrorizing Kaduna State and other parts of Nigeria. Cult-related violence and attacks by armed groups sometimes referred to as unknown gunmen have intensified insecurity in schools (Abu, 2022). Kaduna State has become a hotspot for radicalization, banditry and extremist violence, fueled by ethno-religious tensions, economic deprivation, and ideological infiltration. Notable incidents such as the abduction of over 100 students from Bethel Baptist High School in 2021 and frequent attacks in Chikun, Kajuru, and Giwa LGAs highlight the destabilizing impact of radicalism on education and peace (Premium Times, 2021). These traumatic experiences also distort the moral development of students, many of whom begin to normalize violence, hatred and revenge.

The global dimension of this challenge is further underscored by the spread of extremist networks such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda, and their African affiliates, which continue to destabilize societies and manipulate vulnerable youth (UNESCO, 2023; GCPEA, 2022). In contexts where education should safeguard against ignorance and hate, the exploitation of students by extremist ideologies signals a deep



institutional and moral failure. This reality calls for holistic educational, social, and policy interventions. Within this framework, value-based education (VbE) stands out as a critical strategy to counter radicalization by nurturing empathy, tolerance, critical thinking and shared humanity among learners (UNESCO, 2017; World Bank, 2023).

UNESCO (2023) defines VbE as a holistic teaching approach that integrates moral, ethical and civic values into the educational experience. It aims to develop learners not only intellectually but also emotionally, socially and morally. By promoting empathy, integrity, respect and responsibility, VbE cultivates ethical decision-making, good character and responsible citizenship, empowering students to resist violent ideologies (Althof & Berkowitz, 2022; IBE-UNESCO, 2020).

In Nigeria, VbE has been increasingly adopted as a means to combat youth radicalization and extremism by encouraging critical thinking, social responsibility and ethical conduct. Scholars argue that radicalization flourishes where there is moral decay, identity loss and lack of meaningful engagement, especially among youth in conflict zones (Ibrahim & Kamaldeen, 2021). VbE addresses this by embedding values like empathy, mutual respect and justice into education, especially in areas plagued by ethno-religious violence. For instance, peace and civic education programmes have reshaped students' attitudes toward coexistence and non-violent conflict resolution (Ojo & Abdulrahman, 2020). In Northern Nigeria, community and faith-based schools have incorporated character education and interfaith dialogue to foster cross-cultural understanding (Yahaya & Abubakar, 2022). Studies show that when backed by inclusive policies and community engagement, these interventions improve attendance, reduce violence and enhance inter-group tolerance (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2021). Though challenges remain, such as insecurity, inconsistent curricula and inadequate teacher training, VbE remains a vital tool for cultivating morally grounded, socially conscious citizens.

Despite its promise, the implementation of VbE in Nigeria remains uneven. Many teachers and parents lack a deep understanding of its purpose or fail to recognize its potential in shaping students' values. Although elements of VbE exist in subjects like Civic and Religious Studies, teachers often deliver them as routine content without intentionally nurturing the values they convey. Many parents also overlook the long-term impact of value-based learning. Consequently, students remain vulnerable to radical groups, cults and extremist ideologies that exploit resentment and injustice. Tragically, some teachers and students in states like Kaduna have been harassed, abducted, or killed as targets of radical and religious extremism. These realities raise critical concerns about the true reach and effectiveness of VbE in schools. Against this backdrop, this study assessed the effectiveness of Value-Based Education in deterring radicalization and extremism among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The rising wave of radicalization and violent extremism targeting school-aged children in Nigeria, particularly in conflict-prone states like Kaduna, has become a deeply troubling reality. Schools, which are meant to be safe spaces for moral and intellectual development, are increasingly being infiltrated by extremist ideologies and criminal networks. Despite ongoing efforts by the government, school administrators, parents and civil society organizations to ensure the safety of learners and uphold the sanctity of education, radical and extremist groups appear to have intensified their recruitment of young, impressionable students into cults and armed factions.

These groups deliberately manipulate children's vulnerabilities, exploiting poverty, illiteracy, identity crises and broken family systems to indoctrinate them with dangerous ideologies (Ibrahim & Kamaldeen, 2021; UNODC, 2022). In some instances, learners are lured with promises of protection, power, or financial gain, only to be used as tools in campaigns of violence. These indoctrinated youths are not only discouraged from attending school, labeling education as evil or "haram" but are also groomed to engage in acts of theft, rape, kidnapping, arson and even murder under the guise of fighting perceived injustice. Disturbingly, teachers and school staff have also become direct targets of violence, with cases of abduction and killings reported in several communities in Kaduna (Human Rights Watch, 2023). The most worrisome today, is the transformation of vibrant, energetic young boys and girls who should be nation-builders into instruments of destruction, destabilizing both their schools and the wider society. These developments call into question the practical impact of the value-based content integrated into school curricula and raise urgent concerns about whether learners are truly internalizing



these values. It is against this worrisome situation that this study assessed the effectiveness of Value-Based Education in deterring radicalization and extremism among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of value-based education in deterring radicalization and extremism among secondary schools in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

Find out the effectiveness of value-based education in deterring radicalization among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Evaluate the effectiveness of value-based education in deterring extremism among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

What is the effectiveness of value-based education in deterring radicalization among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria?

What is the effectiveness of value-based education in deterring extremism among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Value-based education is not significantly effective in deterring radicalization among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Value-based education is not significantly effective in deterring extremism among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Research Methodology

The study, which was conducted in public secondary schools in Kaduna State of Nigeria, adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of 972 social studies teachers from 574 public secondary schools. These teachers were specifically chosen because, they are the teachers responsible for teaching value-based education to the children. A sample size of 274 teachers was taken for the study, in accordance with both Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table. This convergence confirms that the chosen sample is statistically adequate to represent the target population at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Multistage sampling procedure (Purposive, proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques) was employed.

A researcher-developed instrument titled "Effectiveness of Value-Based Education for Radicalization and Extremism Questionnaire (EVEREQ)" was employed for data collection. The questionnaire was organized into two main sections: Section A gathered demographic information of the respondents, while Section B was divided into two clusters. Cluster I (items 1-5) focused on assessing the effectiveness of value-based education in deterring radicalization among secondary school students, whereas Cluster II (items 6-10) addressed the effectiveness of value-based education in deterring extremism.

Responses were measured using a 4-point scale, with options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts, two from the Department of Educational Foundations and one from the Department of Mathematics and Science Education, all from the Faculty of Education, Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi.

A pilot test of the instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.77, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Descriptive statistics, specifically Mean and Standard Deviation, were used to answer the research questions. Items with a mean score of 2.50 and above were interpreted as having a



positive impact, while those scoring below 2.50 indicated a negative impact. To test the null hypotheses, the Chi-square (χ^2) test of goodness-of-fit was applied at the 0.05 level of significance.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data were analyzed and interpreted in response to the research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question 1: What is the effectiveness of value-based education in deterring radicalization in secondary schools in Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Table 1:

Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of the Effectiveness of Value-Based Education in Deterring Radicalization among Secondary School Students

S/No	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	M	SD	Dec.
1	Teaching moral values helps students reject radical ideologies.	96	101	65	12	3.03	0.87	Agreed
2	Teaching students about their civic duties discourages involvement in radical acts.	94	113	51	16	3.04	0.87	Agreed
3	Religious tolerance taught in schools helps prevent students from being radicalized.	96	110	48	20	3.03	0.90	Agreed
4	Intercultural education helps students embrace diversity and reject extremism.	100	105	58	11	3.07	0.86	Agreed
5	Value-based civic lessons increase students' commitment to peaceful coexistence.	91	96	60	27	2.92	0.97	Agreed
<i>Cluster Mean</i>						3.02		Agreed

Source: *Researchers' Field Survey Results (2025)*

Table 1 showed that the mean ratings of items 1-5 are 3.03, 3.04, 3.03, 3.07 and 2.92 with the corresponding standard deviations of 0.87, 0.87, 0.90, 0.86 and 0.97 respectively. The table revealed that respondents had agreed that teaching moral values helps students reject radical ideologies and that teaching students about their civic duties discourages involvement in radical acts. They also agreed that religious tolerance taught in schools helps prevent students from being radicalized. The respondents unanimously agreed that intercultural education helps students embrace diversity and reject extremism. Moreover, that value-based civic lessons increase students' commitment to peaceful coexistence. The cluster mean of 3.02 was found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50. The standard deviations were closely related, suggesting homogeneity. Thus, indicating effectiveness of value-based education in deterring radicalization in secondary schools in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the effectiveness of value-based education in deterring extremism among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Table 2: *Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of the Effectiveness of Value-Based Education in Deterring Extremism among Secondary School Students*

S/No	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	M	SD	Dec.
6	Teaching moral values helps students develop attitudes that resist extremist views.	85	115	46	28	2.97	0.94	Agreed
7	Lessons on respect for life and human dignity reduce tendencies toward extremist behaviors.	93	104	55	22	2.97	0.97	Agreed
8	Teaching empathy and emotional intelligence reduces the appeal of violent extremism.	99	100	57	18	3.06	0.92	Agreed



9	Moral and civic lessons help students reject violence as a solution to perceived injustices.	90	108	61	15	3.01	0.92	Agreed
10	Exposure to interfaith dialogue in school promotes peaceful religious coexistence.	93	100	53	28	2.97	0.96	Agreed
<i>Cluster Mean</i>						2.99		Agreed

Source: *Researchers' Field Survey Results (2025)*

Table 2 showed that the mean ratings of items 6-10 are 2.97, 2.97, 3.06, 3.01 and 2.97 with the corresponding standard deviations of 0.94, 0.97, 0.92, 0.92 and 0.96 respectively. The table showed that the respondents had agreed that teaching moral values helps students develop attitudes that resist extremist views and that lessons on respect for life and human dignity reduce tendencies toward extremist behaviors. They also agreed that teaching empathy and emotional intelligence reduces the appeal of violent extremism. The respondents unanimously agreed that moral and civic lessons help students reject violence as a solution to perceived injustices. Furthermore, the respondents noted that exposure to interfaith dialogue in school promotes peaceful religious coexistence. The cluster mean of 2.99 was discovered to be higher than the cut-off point of 2.50, and the standard deviations were closely related, indicating that there exist high level of homogeneity. This indicates the effectiveness of value-based education in deterring extremism among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Hypothesis 1: Value-based education is not significantly effective in deterring radicalization among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Table 3: *Chi-Square Analysis of the Effectiveness of Value-Based Education in Deterring Radicalization among Secondary School Students*

Responses	SA	A	D	SD	Total	df	χ^2 cal.	P-val.	Remark
Observed	91	96	60	27	274	3	352.82	.000	Significant
Expected	68.5	68.5	68.5	68.5					

Table 3 shows that χ^2 -cal.= 352.821^a; $P < .05$ with 3 degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that value-based education is not significantly effective in deterring radicalization among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria was rejected. Since the p-value is far less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis. This is an indication that value-based education is significantly effective in deterring radicalization among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: Value-based education is not significantly effective in deterring extremism among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Table 4: *Chi-Square Analysis of the Effectiveness of Value-Based Education in Deterring Extremism among Secondary School Students*

Responses	SA	A	D	SD	Total	df	χ^2 cal.	P-val.	Remark
Observed	94	113	51	16	274	3	352.840 ^a	.000	Significant
Expected	68.5	68.5	68.5	68.5					

Table 4 shows that χ^2 -cal.= 352.84^a; $P < .05$ with 3 degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that the value-based education is not significantly effective in deterring extremism among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria was rejected. Since the p-value is far less than 0.05,



we reject the null hypothesis. This means that: value-based education is significantly effective in deterring radicalization among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Summary of Major Findings

Value-based education is significantly effective in deterring radicalization among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Value-based education is significantly effective in deterring radicalization among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of this study revealed that value-based education is significantly effective in deterring radicalization among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria. This finding because the way and manner teachers deliver value-based education, whether through interactive, inclusive, and ethically grounded pedagogy or through routine, abstract, and disconnected methods, plays a crucial role in shaping students' moral compass and social attitudes, including their resilience against radical ideologies. When values such as tolerance, empathy, respect for diversity, and responsible citizenship are intentionally and consistently integrated into classroom interactions, students are more likely to internalize these principles and reject radical or extremist influences. Supporting this finding, Osler and Starkey (2018) found that students exposed to value-based instructional approaches, emphasizing human rights, democratic engagement, and cultural understanding, were more likely to resist extremist ideologies, underscoring the role of education in shaping inclusive worldviews. Similarly, UNESCO (2020) reported that integrating values such as tolerance, peace, and empathy into school curricula significantly reduced students' vulnerability to radicalization, especially in regions experiencing social or religious tension. On the contrast, Davies (2009) argued that while value-based education has potential, it is often insufficient on its own to deter radicalization. Davies emphasized that without addressing underlying structural factors such as poverty, political marginalization and identity crises, educational interventions may have limited impact in preventing radical tendencies among youth in secondary schools.

The second finding also revealed that value-based education is significantly effective in deterring extremism among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria. This is so, because value-based education promotes empathy, tolerance, and critical thinking, helping students resist extremist ideologies. When teachers model ethical behavior and encourage open, inclusive dialogue, students are less likely to accept messages of hate or violence. This finding aligns with that of Aliyu and Hassan (2021) who found that students exposed to value-based instructional methods, emphasizing empathy, intercultural respect and critical thinking were less likely to embrace extremist ideologies, highlighting the role of education in fostering resilience against radical influences. Similarly, Okonkwo (2022) reported that embedding values such as ethical reasoning, dialogue and social responsibility into classroom practices significantly curtailed students' susceptibility to extremist recruitment, particularly in conflict-prone educational settings. Contrary to this finding, Ibrahim (2020) argued that value-based education alone is insufficient in deterring extremism among students, particularly in environments plagued by poverty, political instability, and lack of trust in institutions. Ibrahim noted that without addressing broader socio-economic and political grievances, educational interventions may have limited impact on preventing extremist tendencies.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that value-based education plays a significant role in deterring radicalization and extremism among secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria. However, a deep concern remains: despite its proven effectiveness, the inconsistent implementation of value-based curricula, the lack of teacher training in ethical instruction and the growing exposure of students to extremist ideologies through social and community channels pose serious threats to long-term stability. If this concern is not urgently addressed, we risk raising a generation vulnerable to manipulation, violence and division, further deepening the already fragile security situation in the state and the country at large. The consequences could include increased youth participation in radical movements,



weakening of civic values and a breakdown in peaceful coexistence. This underscores the urgent need for policymakers, teachers and communities to prioritize, invest in, and fully integrate value-based education into all levels of secondary education as a strategic tool for peacebuilding and national development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study recommended that:

The Ministry of Education and curriculum planners should fully integrate value-based education into the secondary school curriculum, with a strong focus on teaching empathy, tolerance, peacebuilding, and civic responsibility. These values should be embedded across subjects and taught using real-life scenarios to help students critically resist radical ideologies.

Regular training and professional development programs should be organized for teachers to equip them with the necessary skills and pedagogical strategies to effectively deliver value-based education. Teachers should be supported to model ethical behavior and foster inclusive, respectful classroom environments that discourage extremism and promote unity.

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