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Civic engagement and participation among Ghanaian and Kenyan students and their correlates

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ABSTRACT

This article examines levels of civic engagement among university students in Ghana and Kenya and identifies factors that may account for their civic engagement. Overall, the students reported low civic engagement, with the Kenyans reporting higher engagement. Demographic factors (gender and age) and personal values hardly contributed to the students' civic engagement. Political interest and attentiveness, barriers and motivation towards participation made a consistent and significant contribution to political participation and future participation. Furthermore, trust, social endorsement and social efficacy showed a consistent and significant contribution to civic engagement. The findings underscore the need to work towards getting the youth more engaged.

KEYWORDS

Civic and political engagement; Ghana; Kenya; university students; youth

Situating the Problem and the Research Questions

The present study examines civic and political engagement among Ghanaian and Kenyan students and their correlates. Our interest in focusing on students in these two countries is differences in post-political election reactions in the two countries in spite of similarities in their political past. Ghana and Kenya were both British colonies, and they both gained independence from Britain in the middle of the twentieth century, 1957 in Ghana and 1963 in Kenya. The two countries, however, have had different electoral trajectories (ODI, 2013). Both countries enjoyed a relatively peaceful political climate during the first decade of their independence. Beginning in 1966 till 1981, Ghana experienced periods of military and civilian governments. From 1982 to the present day, however, Ghana has experienced stable governments with peaceful handovers from one government to another.

The Kenyan situation is different: between 1969 and 1991, Kenya had a one-party system until protests and international pressure ushered in a multi-party system

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(Carotenuto, 2017). Although there are over 100 political parties in the country, the country to a large extent has a two-party system, where one is a coalition of several other parties. Three elections organized in 1992, 1997 and 2007 under the multi-party system were characterized by electoral violence (Carotenuto, 2017). The 2007 election was followed by major violence that resulted in the deaths of close to 1000 individuals and an internal displacement of over 300 thousand people (BBC News, 2010). Much of Kenya's post-election violence has been attributed to historical divisions over unresolved land disputes and regional economic inequality (Robert, 2009). Following the 2007 post-election violence and persistent land disputes, international electoral observers anticipated a similar level of violence during the 2017 election. The 2017 elections were relatively peacefully, albeit cases of violent behaviours resulted in the death of over 60 people (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Differences in post-election behaviour raise questions whether the extent of civic and political engagement among the students can account for some of the post-election violent/non-violent behaviours. While acknowledging the need for studies that examine civic and political engagement prior to elections, research on civil and political engagement is still in its infancy in Africa (Kassmir & Flanagan, 2010). We therefore keep our research questions to the basics where our goal is to gain some insight into civic and political engagement among university students in two African countries.

Civic participation and political engagement are the hallmarks of a country's level of democracy (Barrett & Zani, 2014). They also constitute the foundations of a society's collective social well-being (Motti-Stefanidi & Cicognani, 2018), as well as strengthen individuals' sense of social belonging and identity to their society (Albanesi, Cicognani, & Zani, 2007). Indeed, the World Bank (2007) and the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine's Committee on Population, USA (Lloyd, 2005) regard young people's civic engagement as critical for the health of communities, economies, governments and societies.

A cursory look at the aspirations of today's youth compared with those just a generation ago suggests that there is a decline in civic engagement among the youth of today (see Sackett & Mavor, 2003). Undeniably, studies suggest that many Western countries (see Bermudez, 2012; English, 2011; Syvertsen, Wray-Lake, Flanagan, Wayne Osgood, & Briddell, 2011) as well as low-income countries are experiencing a downward trend in both civic and political engagement. If this is indeed the global picture, then present-day societies should be concerned about their future.

Declining civic participation and political engagement have the potential of threatening the political stability of a society and its democracy (World Bank, 2007). To what extent are the youth of today, and in particular those of Ghana and Kenya, politically inclined and ready to take over as the future leaders of their countries? University students are the future leaders of their countries. Thus, understanding their level of engagement, and the factors that account for their engagement may facilitate their transition into the roles of future leaders. Against this background, this study (i) explores civic and political engagement among university students, their attitudes to, and intentions to engage in civic and political activities, and (ii) identifies the factors that may account for these two kinds of engagements.

Clarification of Terms

Although there is no single agreed on definition of civic engagement, for this study, we define *civic engagement* as a phenomenon 'when the citizens of a society participate in

the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future' (Adler & Goggin, 2005, p. 241). *Civic participation* refers to 'voluntary activity focused on helping others, achieving a public good or solving a community problem, including work undertaken either alone or in cooperation with others in order to effect change' (Zani & Barrett, 2012, p. 274). *Political participation* refers to an 'activity that has the intent or effect of influencing regional, national or supranational governance, either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of individuals who make that policy' (Zani & Barrett, 2012, p. 274). Whereas *participation* is a form of activity that involves some observable behaviour, engagement denotes having an interest in, paying attention to, or having knowledge, beliefs, opinions, attitudes or feelings about either political or civic matters (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014). For simplicity, the term *civic engagement* is used in this article to cover political and civic engagement and participation. We have sometimes separated them just to emphasize a point. Additionally, the term is used interchangeably with political/civic activity or involvement.

Theoretical Framework

Using the integrative model proposed by Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014), the working position of this study is that civic engagement is rooted in demographic, psychological and institutional factors. More specifically, demographic factors (e.g., gender) and psychological factors (e.g., social efficacy, national identification and trust) relate to forms of civic engagement (e.g., concrete political activity such as distributing leaflets with political content). Using data collected between two elections in the two countries (2015 in Ghana and 2016 in Kenya), we explore the role of the psychological factors including personal values in civic engagement in Ghana and Kenya.

Values are 'concepts or beliefs about desirable end states or behaviors that transcend specific situations, guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events, and are ordered by relative importance' (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, p. 551). Values have been referred to as people's 'stable life goals' that tend to affect or motivate the types of decisions they make, how they perceive their environment and their actual behaviours (Rohan, 2000). Personal values are likely to influence decisions in choice-behaviour (e.g., from a conscious decision) rather than spontaneous behaviour (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). Personal values may be able to explain why some individuals may be oriented orienteered towards political and civil engagement. Indeed, Schwartz and colleagues (Schwartz et al., 2014; Schwartz, Caprara, & Vecchione, 2010) have demonstrated that personal values are closely related to core political values in a number of Western counties.

Schwartz's value theory organizes values into 10 or 19 motivationally distinct domains. The model posits that the 10/19-value types are organized in a circular structure of value relations, where adjacent values share common goals, and opposite values have divergent goals. The circular structure is further conceptualized into two orthogonal dimensions: self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence and openness-to-change vs. conservation. The self-enhancement dimension represents values that motivate people to enhance their own personal interests in contrast to values that transcend selfish concerns and seek to promote the welfare of others (self-transcendence) (Schwartz & Boehnke, 2004). The 'openness-to-change' dimension represents the extent to which people are motivated to

follow their own emotional and intellectual interests in unpredictable and uncertain directions in contrast to preserving the status-quo and the certainty it provides (conservation) (Schwartz & Boehnke, 2004).

Both Ghana and Kenya are highly religious countries (Win-Gallup International, 2012). A 57-country survey found Ghana as the most religious country, with Kenya at the 8th position. The survey found that 96% and 88% of Ghanaians and Kenyans respectively identified themselves as religious. Religion has been suggested by Gyekye (1996) to permeate the entire Ghanaian society, impacting on the daily lives of Ghanaians. In Ghana, religious beliefs and practices can be witnessed in several public activities including politics, the economy, health and education, to the extent that many public events begin with a prayer.

Similarly, Stoddard (2014) describes many Kenyan local businesses as bearing religious names including that of Mary, Jesus, or God such as 'God's Mercy Unisex Hair Salon'. Stoddard adds that, if the store had no mention of religion, one would most likely see some Christian artefacts (e.g., crucifix) somewhere inside. Moreover, schools and health facilities in Kenya often have signs of sponsorship or funding from faith-inspired organizations through their insignias or names. Religiosity in Ghana and Kenya is a way of life, and individuals' religious beliefs serve as a moral compass in their daily lives. A number of studies have found a positive relationship between religiosity and civic engagement (Lewis, MacGregor, & Putnam, 2013; Ludden, 2011). Considering the ubiquity of religion in both countries, it is logical to examine its contribution to civic engagement.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This article seeks to answer the following questions:

(1) To what extent do university students in Ghana and Kenya engage in civic and political activities?
(2) What socio-psychological factors account for the students' civic engagement?

According to the International Idea Supporting Democracy Worldwide (2017), voter turnout is lower in Ghana than in Kenya. If voter turnout can be taken as an indicator of political engagement, it may be reasonable to expect high civic engagement in Kenya compared to Ghana.

We expect a positive relationship between civic engagement and religiosity. We also expect high political interest and attentiveness, increased motivation for participation and low barriers to participation to be positively related to civic engagement. Similarly, we expect high levels of social efficacy, social endorsement, social democracy and national identification to be positively related to civic engagement. We have not formulated any relationship between trust and civic engagement because this relationship can go in either direction: high trust in the government may result in low engagement as the government is seen as doing a good job. At the same time, high levels of institutional trust may motivate citizens to be equally engaged in organizations and local communities (see Amnå & Ekman, 2014; Ekman & Amnå, 2012 for discussion).

The present study examines the relationship between values and civic engagement from an exploratory position. Some researchers have argued that the relationship between

personal values and political behaviour, such as voting, is a tenuous one (Caprara, Schwartz, Capanna, Vecchione, & Barbaranelli, 2006; Leimgruber, 2011). Specifically, the argument is that the relationship is an indirect one; that the effects of personal values are mediated by political values. As we do not have information on political values, we have not formulated any hypothesis regarding the relationship between the four overarching values and civic engagement.

Much has been written about the relationship between gender and civic engagement (see Cicognani, Zani, Fournier, Gavray, & Born, 2012; Verba, Burns, & Schlozman, 1997) and this relationship can be described as ambiguous. While some studies (e.g., Cicognani et al., 2012) have found females to be less politically interested, informed and efficacious than males. Others (e.g., Gaby, 2017) found that males are less civically engaged and volunteer less often than females. Indeed, Gaby (2017) points out that there has been an increasing gender difference in volunteering since 1979, and further argues that these differences may be due to how civic or political participation is operationalized. Coffé and Bolzendahl (2010), for instance, found that women are more likely than men to vote and engage in 'private' activism, while men are more likely to engage in direct contact, participate in collective action and be (more active) members of political parties. Against this background, we have refrained from hypothesizing a relationship between gender and civic engagement.

Method

Participants

In all, 545 participants (355 [65.1%] Ghanaians and 199 [34.9%] Kenyans) took part in the study. The mean age was 22.42 years ($SD = 2.80$; range 19). Kenyan students were almost a year older (22.98, $SD = 3.72$, vs. 22.12, $SD = 2.10$: $t_{(543)} = 3.46$, $p < 0.001$). The age range was the same (18–37 years) in both groups of students. Gender distribution was uneven. Overall, there were more men (302 [56.7%]) than women, particularly in Ghana (218 men [61.4%] vs. 137 women [38.6%]). There were slightly more women than men in Kenya (99 [52.1%] vs. 91 [47.99%]). The majority of the students (520 [95.4%]–337 [94.9%] in Ghana vs. 183 [96.3%] in Kenya) were undergraduates. Only 4 students indicated that they were at the PhD level, and 19 indicated being Master/post-graduate students.

Measures

A questionnaire containing a number of scales was developed for the study. Many of the scales were either directly taken from, or with some minor modifications from, existing ones, primarily from 'Processes Influencing Democratic Ownership and Participation' project (see PIDOP-project, 2009) and the 2009 *International Civic and Citizenship Education study* by the International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (see Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010). Unless stated, most of the items were responded to on a 5-point Likert-type scale where the anchors were: either 1 'Not at all'; 'Never' or 'Strongly disagree' at the lower anchor and 5 as either 'To a great extent'; 'Very often'; 'Almost every day' or ' Strongly agree' at the upper anchor.

The dependent variable for the study was *Civic engagement,* and this was assessed with four different scales, three of which were *Political participation in the last 12 months*; *Effectiveness of the participation* and *Future intentions for political participation*. These were respectively assessed with the same 15 items. However, the 15 items were introduced with a different opening question, and had different response categories, all on a 5-point Likert-scale. An example of the 15-common items to the three sets of scales was 'Distribute leaflets with a political content'. The opening question to the *Political participation* set of questions was 'Have you done any of the following during the last 12 months?' 'To what extent do you think these actions are effective for change (e.g., government, social … etc.)?' was the opening question to the *Effectiveness of participation*. The response categories were from 1 'Not at all' to 'very effective'. Regarding *Future intentions*, the opening question was 'How likely are you to take each of these actions in the future?'

The fourth aspect of civic engagement was assessed by looking at *Participation and involvement in civic and political organizations*. Here, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they had been involved in eight different kinds of civic and political organizations. The organizations included Trade Unions or Student associations; Religious associations or groups; Leisure or recreational associations (e.g., music). These were rated as 1 'Never'; 2 'Occasionally'; 3 'Continually for less than 6 months' and 4 'Continually for 6 months or more'.

There were several *independent variables,* and these are briefly described below:

Political interest focused on the extent to which participants were interested in politics, and was assessed with three items. A sample item was 'I bring political and social issues into discussion'.

Political attentiveness focused on the extent to which participants gathered information on political issues. It was assessed with three items including 'I follow what is going on in politics by reading articles in newspapers or magazines'.

Motivation for participation was assessed with six items. A sample item was 'I will participate in a political cause because it would help create a better society'.

Barriers to participation were assessed with four items. A sample item was 'I don't get involved in political causes because I'm too young'.

Social endorsement used six items to assess the extent to which participants sought friends' and parents' endorsement for civic and political participation. There were three items focusing on friends' endorsement (e.g., 'my friends would agree that the only way to change anything in society is to get involved') and three items focusing on parents' endorsement (e.g., 'My parents would approve it if I engaged politically').

Orientation to social democracy assessed participants' perceptions about democracy and citizenship with nine items. The following two statements are sample items from the scale: 'When faced with violent threats to national security, the government should have the power to control what appears in the media' and 'All citizens should have the right to elect their leaders freely'.

National identification used six items to assess the extent to which participants identified with their nation and were proud of the country. Sample items were 'To what extent do you agree with the following statements': 'The Ghanaian/Kenyan political system works well' and 'I have great respect for Ghana/Kenya'.

Institutional trust assessed the extent to which participants trusted or distrusted different institutions in the country and in their region of Africa. The institutions included

The Courts; Police force, Newspapers and Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS)/ East Africa Community. The response categories to this scale were 1 'Completely distrust' and 5 'Completely trust'.

Trust in government was assessed with six items, where among others, participants responded to items such as 'You can generally trust people who run our government to do what is right' and 'I will rather live under the Ghanaian/Kenyan system of government than any other that I can think of'.

Religiosity scale assessed individuals' attitudes and perception of religion in a civic society. The scale was made up of five items including 'Rules of life based on religion are more important than civic laws'.

Social efficacy assessed the belief or the perception an individual may have that collective effort would yield expected political and civic outcome. This was assessed with ten items. The scale focused on internal, external, youth collective, tribal and gender efficacy. Each form of efficacy had two items. Sample items were 'by working together, young people are able to influence the decagons which are made by government'; 'I think by working together, people of my tribe/ethnic group can change things for the better'.

Values: the refined 57-item Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVQ-R) by Schwartz and his colleagues (Schwartz et al., 2012) was used to assess individual personal values. Each of the PVQ-R-item describes the person's goals, aspirations or wishes, and points to the importance of a single broad value such as Hedonism (e.g., 'Enjoying life's pleasures is important to him. He likes to "spoil" himself'); Power (e.g., 'He always wants to be the one who makes the decisions. He likes to be the leader') and Achievement (e.g., 'It's very important to him to show his abilities. He wants people to admire what he does'). On a 6-point scale, the response categories were: 'very much like me'; 'like me'; 'somewhat like me'; 'a little like me'; 'not like me' and 'not like me at all'. On the basis of the two orthogonal dimensions, self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence and openness to change vs. conservation, four summated scores were computed in line with Schwartz's recommendation (Schwartz, 2009).[1]

With the exception of four scales, where the internal consistency was relatively low (i.e., Cronbach's alpha below .70), the scales on the whole showed a good internal reliability. Table 1 shows the reliabilities for all the scales in the different groups.

Procedure

Ghanaian participants were recruited from the largest and oldest university in the country. Questionnaires were distributed to willing students during the recess between lectures. Undergraduate students enrolled in various social science courses took part in the study. Research assistants visited lecture rooms following an agreement with the lecturer responsible for the course. Questionnaires were administered in groups (in lecture rooms/classrooms). Instructions on the first page of the questionnaire assured participants of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. They were also informed that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions. Answering the questionnaire took about 30 min. The ethical committee for humanities of the university reviewed and approved the study. Before data collection was undertaken, a pilot study was carried out to ensure that the questions were clear enough.

Table 1. Means, SD and reliability of scales.

	Entire sample			Ghanaians			Kenyans		
	Mean	SD	Alpha	Mean	SD	Alpha	Mean	SD	Alpha
Participation past 12 months	1.89	0.65	.83	1.74	0.49	.74	2.18	0.79	.97
Effectiveness of participation	2.52	0.82	.88	2.46	0.77	.88	2.63	0.90	.88
Future participation	2.37	0.81	.87	2.21	0.70	.85	2.65	0.92	.87
Participation & Involvement in civic/pol …	1.88	0.53	.71	1.91	0.51	.62	1.83	0.57	.87
Political interest	2.90	1.09	.80	2.84	1.04	.81	3.00	1.19	.70
Political attentiveness	2.79	1.33	.84	2.55	0.97	.82	3.22	1.28	.83
Motivation for participation	2.99	1.02	.80	2.80	0.95	.81	3.35	1.07	.81
Berries to participation	2.41	1.03	.67	2.42	0.95	.65	2.40	1.16	.71
Social efficacy	3.33	0.81	.81	3.30	0.72	.77	3.41	0.96	.84
Social endorsement	2.72	0.90	.73	2.66	0.80	.69	2.81	1.06	.78
Social democracy	2.68	1.11	.90	2.01	0.52	.66	3.94	0.78	.76
National identification	2.97	1.12	.83	2.38	0.70	.77	4.07	0.89	.76
Institutional trust	3.15	0.62	.81	3.03	0.50	.74	3.37	0.74	.85
Trust in government	2.54	0.78	.74	2.40	0.62	.66	2.81	0.94	.78
Religiosity	3.47	0.96	.79	3.36	0.89	.79	3.67	1.06	.85
Openness-to-change	4.59	0.82	.79	4.65	0.73	.74	4.48	0.96	.84
Self-enhancement	4.41	0.79	.78	4.45	0.69	.72	4.34	0.94	.84
Conservation	4.58	0.79	.76	4.60	0.72	.83	4.54	0.92	.89
Self-transcendence	4.62	0.79	.88	4.64	0.72	.86	4.56	0.91	.90

Permission to carry out the study was obtained from the Kenyan national ethics board – National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Kenyan students were recruited from the campuses of Nakuru University after securing permission from the Director of the three campuses. Data collection took place outside the lecture halls and on the university grounds during recess. The students received the same instructions that were given to the Ghanaian students. As was in Ghana, the average time taken to answer the questionnaire was 30 min. The response rate in Kenya was 56%, compared to the 79% in Ghana.

Results

Extent of Civic Engagement

Mean scores on the four dependent variables (see Table 1) show that the students on the whole were not very much engaged. All the scores were below 3 (the theoretical mid-point of the scale). Kenyan students, however, were more engaged than the Ghanaians. With the exception of *Participation and involvement*, where no significant difference was found [$t_{(540)} = 1.65$; $p > .05$], Kenyan students scored statistically higher on: *Participation past 12 months* [$t_{(543)} = 6.91$, $p < .001$, Cohen's d =.68]; *Participation effectiveness* [$t_{(543)} = 2.12$, $p < .05$, Cohens'$d = .19$] and *Future participation* [$t_{(543)} = 5.76$ $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .54$]. These effect sizes were moderate for *Participation past 12 months* and *Future participation*, but small for *Participation effectiveness*.

It is also interesting to note (see Table 1) that: (i) scores on most of the independent variables were also either below the theoretical mid-point of the scale, or just around the mid-point; and (ii) on more than half of the independent variables, Kenyan student scores were higher than their Ghanaian counterparts. For brevity, the statistics of the differences are not reported. On the few instances (largely on Personal values) where Ghanaian scored higher than Kenyans, the difference was not significant, except in the case of *Openness-to-change*.

The only gender difference was with *Political participation* during the last 12 months, where men scored higher than women for the entire sample ($t[_{543}] = 2.99$, SD = .01; M = 1.96, SD = .67 vs. 1.80, SD = .60); in Ghana ($t[_{353}] = 3.02$, $p < .01$; $M = 1.80$, $SD = .53$ vs. $M = 1.64$, $SD = .40$) and in Kenya ($t[_{188}] = 2.91$, $p < 0.01$; $M = 2.34$, $SD = 80$; 2.02, $SD = .76$).

Predicting Civic Engagement

Table 2 is a correlation matrix of all the variables. As can be seen, there are some consistent significant relationships among some of the variables. First, the four dependent variables are significantly related to each other with correlation coefficients ranging from .15 (between *Effective of participation* and *Participation the last 12 months* among Ghanaians) to .73 (between *Effectiveness of participation* and *Participation the last 12 months* among Kenyans). Many of the predictors (e.g., *Political interest; Political attentiveness, Motivation for participation and Barriers, Social efficacy and Social endorsement*) were significantly related, both for the entire sample, and for the two national groups. Surprisingly, the personal value variables were generally unrelated to the other independent variables (except among themselves). Religiosity was also unrelated to the different outcomes.

Hierarchical multiple regression in four steps was used to ascertain the contributions of the various predictors. In *Step I*, demographic factors (i.e., age and gender) were introduced in the model. For the entire sample, Country (of residence, coded Ghana = 1) was included. In *Step II*, predictors that reflected political and civic involvements (i.e., *Political attentiveness, Political interest, Motivation to civic engagement* and *Barriers to participation*) were introduced into the Model. In *Step III*, socio-psychological factors involving *Social efficacy, Social endorsement for normative behaviour, National identification* and *trust*s, etc., were introduced. *Religiosity* was also introduced at this Step. Finally, Personal values were introduced into the model at *Step IV*. Other than to ascertain the contribution of various groups of predictors, the order in which predictors were introduced into the model was not grounded in theory. Consequently, to ensure that our regression model was not simply due to the order in which the predictors was introduced, the order of *Steps II* and *III* was reversed. The resulting regression coefficients were about identical for the variables in *Steps II* and *III*.

Analyses were run separately for the entire Sample (Table 3), and for Ghanaians (Table 4) and for Kenyans (Table 5). The same independent variables were used to predict the four outcomes in all the samples.

First, to a couple of observations: (i) demographic factors hardly made any contribution towards civic engagement. Their overall contribution was generally no more than 2% of the explained variance. In the analysis involving the entire sample, the explained variance from demographic factors was quite high, but this was due to the contribution of the country. (ii) The largest contribution to civic engagement generally occurred at Step II, when variables such as political interests and attentiveness were included. These generally accounted for from low 2% of the explained variance in *Future participation* (in the Kenyan sample) and participation and involvement in *civic/political organization*s (in the Ghanaian sample) to high 31% of explained variance in *Future participation* among Ghanaians. Contributions from the socio-psychological factors at *Step III* were generally modest, accounting for approximately 5% of the explained variance.

Table 2. Correlations matrix of the variables in the study♣.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1. Participation past 12 months	–																		
2. Effectiveness of participation	.55[b]	–																	
	.38[b]	–																	
	.73[b]	–																	
3. Future participation	.63[b]	.75[b]	–																
	.52[b]	.70[b]	–																
	.68[b]	.82[b]	–																
4. Participation & Involvement	.20[b]	.19[b]	.16[b]	–															
	.20[b]	.15[a]	.17[b]	–															
	.28[b]	.27[b]	.20[b]	–															
5. Political interest	.34[b]	.19[b]	.31[b]	.14[b]	–														
	.35[b]	.16[b]	.33[b]	.12	–														
	.34[b]	.23[b]	.28[b]	.18[a]	–														
6. Political attentiveness	.39[b]	.23[b]	.35[b]	.08[a]	.53[b]	–													
	.29[b]	.10[a]	.25[b]	.03	.45[b]	–													
	.38[b]	.34[b]	.33[b]	.21[b]	.64[b]	–													
7. Motivation for participation	.46[b]	.42[b]	.54[b]	.12[b]	.33[b]	.37[b]	–												
	.33[b]	.37[b]	.53[b]	.06[b]	.33[b]	.29[b]	–												
	.50[b]	.45[b]	.48[b]	.27[b]	.31[b]	.35[b]	–												
8. Berries to participation	.15[b]	.19[b]	18[b]	.01	.01	.07	.10	–											
	.06	.12[a]	.04	.01	−.04	.06	.02	–											
	.26	.29	.37	.02	.09	.09	.21	–											
9. Social efficacy	.28[b]	.35[b]	.34[b]	.17[b]	.26[b]	19[a]	.36[b]	.07	–										
	.11[a]	.25[b]	.29[b]	.12	.23[b]	.08[b]	.21[b]	−.02	–										
	.41[b]	.46[b]	.39[b]	.25[b]	.27[b]	.29[b]	.54[b]	.17	–										
10. Social endorsement	.37[b]	.34[b]	.35[b]	.13[b]	.28[b]	.28[b]	.50[b]	.11[a]	.36[b]	–									
	.24[b]	.26[b]	.26[b]	.08[b]	.20[b]	.22[b]	.46[b]	.00[b]	.22[b]	–									
	.48[b]	.42[b]	.42[b]	.21[b]	.37[b]	.31[b]	.54[b]	.25[b]	.51[b]	–									
11. Social democracy	.35[b]	.12[b]	.27[b]	−.02	.08[a]	.28[b]	.30[b]	.02	.16[b]	.15[b]	–								
	.16a	.09	.10	.05	−.01	.07	.03	.00	−.08	.05	–								
	.15[a]	.05	.09	.09	.13	.11	.32[b]	.10	.44[b]	.25[b]	–								
12. National identification	.28[b]	.09[a]	.22[b]	.04	.09[a]	.24b	.28[bb]	.02	.14[b]	.08	.75[b]	–							
	.00	−.09	−.05	.17	.02	−.04	.00	.06	−.01	−.11	−.28	–							
	.13	.17[a]	.17[a]	.21[b]	.10	.15	.33[b]	.05	.31	.20[b]	.50[b]	–							

(*Continued*)

Table 2. Continued.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
13. Institutional trust	.22[b]	.18[b]	.26[b]	.16[b]	.11[b]	.21[b]	.26[b]	.05	.12[b]	.17[b]	.27[b]	.24[b]	–						
	.12	.19[a]	.28[b]	.15[a]	.18[a]	.20[b]	.27[b]	.07	.11	.15[a]	.03	.14	–						
	.05	.15[a]	.14	.22[b]	.01	.10	.15[a]	.06	.12	.16[a]	.15[a]	.26[b]	-						
14. Trust in government	.20[b]	.21[b]	.27[b]	.08	.06	.20[b]	.22[b]	.05	.01	.12[b]	.23[b]	.21[b]	.40[b]	–					
	−.04	.18[a]	.25[b]	.05	.08	.13[a]	.25[b]	.08	.00	.17[a]	.13	−.11	.27[b]	–					
	.14	.21[b]	.19[a]	.15[a]	.00	.12	.08	.03	−.03	.04	−.03	.17[a]	.43[b]	–					
15. Religiosity	.07	.09[a]	.06	.09[a]	−.04	.12	.04	.01	.16[b]	.07	.16[b]	.17[b]	.29[b]	.22[b]	–				
	−.04	.03	−.06	.08	−.08	−.03	−.05	.02	.09	.00	−.03	−.05	.16[a]	.11	–				
	.07	.15[a]	.12	.14	−.02	.21	.06	.00	.24	.12	.17[a]	.26[b]	.37[b]	.29[b]	–				
16. Openness-to-change	−.05	.08	.00	.14[b]	.02	.06	.07	.07	.18[b]	.10[a]	−.02	−.03	.12a	.02	.16[a]	–			
	−.04	.01	−.06	.11	−.05	−.01	.04	.06	.09	.13	−.04	−.09	.11	.02	.05	–			
	.03	.10	.12	.15[a]	.12	.20	.18	.08	.29[b]	.08	.27[b]	.23[b]	.20	.07	.34[b]	–			
17.Self-enhancement	.03	.06	.02	.13[b]	.07	.08	.11[a]	.09	.19[b]	.17[b]	−.01	−.01	.15[b]	.08	.14[a]	.76[b]	–		
	.06	.00	−.09	.11	.01	.30[b]	.07	.10	.10	.16	−.07	−.09	.12	.04	.08	.73[b]	–		
	.15[a]	.14	.17[a]	.14	.18[a]	.19[a]	.20	.08	.30[b]	.19[a]	.22[b]	.22[b]	.22[b]	.15[a]	.23[b]	.79[b]	–		
18. Conservation	−.05	.04	−.01	.10[a]	.03	.05	.09a	.06	.13b	.10	.01	.00	.14b	.01	.20b	.80[a]	.77	–	
	−.10	.01	−.07	.04	−.05	−.01	.05	.05	.12	.11	−.09	−.15	.09	−.04	.13	.75[b]	.81[b]	–	
	.02	.08	.08	.18[a]	.13	.14	.17	.07	.26	.10	.25[b]	.26[b]	.22[b]	.08	.30[b]	.85[b]	.84[b]	–	
19. Self-transcendence	−.01	.08	.03	.11[b]	.02	.06	.12[b]	.05	.21[b]	.15[b]	.03	.02	.15[b]	.02	.19[a]	.81[b]	.78[b]	.84[b]	–
	−.08	.07	−.03	.05	−.06	−.02	.01	.01	.17	.17	.15	−.09	.16	−.01	.12	.77[b]	.73[b]	.80[b]	–
	.09	.11	.11	.19[a]	.14[a]	.17[a]	.18[a]	.10	.27[b]	.13	.24[b]	.28[b]	.19	.08	.30[b]	.86[b]	.84[b]	.89[b]	–

Note: The top correlation co-efficient is for the entire sample; the middle for Ghana, and the lower for Kenya.

Table 3. Hierarchical multiple regression predating four different outcomes: political participation; effectiveness of participation; future participation and political and civic engagement in the ENTIRE study sample.

Predictors	Political participation				Effectiveness of participation				Future participation				Participation and involvement in civic/political org.			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
Age	−.06	−.04	−.05	−.06	−.07	−.04	−.03	−.04	−.08	−.04	−.03	.00	−.07	−.07	−.06	−.06
Gender (Male = 1)	−.17[c]	−.08[a]	−.09[a]	−.08[a]	.01	.07	.03	.03	−.05	.04	.02	.03	−.03	.02	.00	.00
Country (Ghana = 1)	.35[c]	.22[c]	.16[a]	.15[a]	.10[a]	−.03	.03	.04	.27[c]	.12[b]	.14[a]	.22[a]	−.06	−.11	−.22[b]	−.20[a]
Political interest		.15[c]	.13[b]	.12[a]		.04	.01	.01		.13[b]	.10[b]	.07[a]		.10a	.09	.09
Political attentiveness		.13[b]	.11[a]	.11[a]		.08	.01	.05		.09[a]	.07	.05		.03	.00	.00
Participation motivation		.28[c]	.17[a]	.17[b]		.37[c]	.24[c]	.24[c]		.32[c]	.33[c]	.26[c]		.10a	.01	.01
Participation barriers		.11[b]	.10[b]	.10[b]		.14[c]	.13[c]	.13[c]		.13[c]	.12[c]	.10[c]		−.01	−.02	−.02
Social efficacy			.08	.09[a]			.20[c]	.21[c]			.15[c]	.16[c]			.09	.09
Social endorsement			.16[c]	.15[c]			.11[b]	.11[b]			.05	.05			.06	.06
National identity			−.03	−.03			−.05	−.05			−.03	−.03			.16[b]	.17[b]
Social democracy			.10	.11			−.05	−.06			−.02	−.02			−.04	−.05
Institutional trust			.02	.03			.02	.03			.05	.08			.13[b]	.12[b]
Trust in government			.05	.04			.13[b]	.13[b]			.13[c]	.13[c]			.03	.03
Religiosity			−.02	.00			.01	.01			−.04	−.03			.04	.03
Openness to change				−.02				.10				.02				.13
Self-enhancement				.08				.09				−.08				.03
Conservation				−.17[a]				.10				−.07				−.05
Self-transcendence				.02				.04				.04				−.05
F-statistics	27.89	37.23	21.31	17.40	2.62	19.96	13.98	11.24	14.52	41.50	24.19	19.45	1.92	3.28	3.70	3.09
R^2-change		.19[c]	.03[c]	.01[c]		.19[c]	.06[c]	.01		.28c	.04[c]	.01		.03[b]	.05[c]	.01[c]
Multiple R^2	.13[c]	.33[c]	.36[c]	.37[c]	.01[a]	.21[c]	.27[c]	.28[c]	.07[c]	.35[c]	.39[c]	.38[c]	.01	.04[c]	.09[c]	.10[c]

Note: Standardized beta co-efficient are reported.
[a]$p < .05$; [b]$p < .01$; [c]$p < .001$.

Table 4. Hierarchical multiple regression predating four different outcomes: political participation; effectiveness of participation; future participation and political and civic engagement in the GHANAIAN sample.

Predictors	Political participation				Effectiveness of participation				Future participation				Participation and involvement in civic/political organizations			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
Age	.06	.00	.00	.02	.09	.05	.03	.03	.07	.00	.01	.01	−.06	−.08	−.10	−.11
Gander	−.15[b]	−.07	−.05	−.03	.07	.11[a]	.09	.10	−.01	.09	.08	.08	−.01	.02	.01	.03
Political interest		.21[c]	.21[c]	.20[c]		.07	.04	.04		.17[c]	.13[b]	.15[b]		.13	.11	.11
Political attentiveness		.10	.04	.07		−.03	−.05	−.05		.06	.04	.04		.,02	−.03	−.02
Participation motivation		.22[c]	.21[b]	.16[b]		.37[c]	.29[c]	.29[c]		.47[c]	.41[c]	.41[c]		.04	−.03	−.01
Participation barriers		.06	.07	.06		.10[a]	.10a	.11a		.03	.02	.03		.01	.00	−.02
Social efficacy			.01	.02			.16[b]	.17[b]			.18[c]	.19[c]			.08	.09
Social endorsement			.08	.10			.06	.06			−.04	−.02			.05	.03
National identity			−.02	−.03			−.09	−.10			−.05	−.05			.10	.10
Social democracy			.15[b]	.15[b]			.13	.12[a]			.11a	.10[a]			.03	.05
Institutional trust			.17[c]	.19[c]			.06	.06			.11a	.12[b]			.12	.12
Trust in government			−.03	−.04			.05	.05			.10[a]	.10[a]			.02	.00
Spirituality			−.03	−.02			−.01	.00			−.07	−.07			.07	.09
Openness to change				.09				.16				.02				.18
Self-enhancement				−.05				−.12				−.16[a]				.18
Conservation				−.04				−.06				.03				−.14
Self-transcendence				−.12				−.02				−.03				−.14
F-statistics	5.28	13.51	8.31	6.90	1.87	11.44	7.46	6.05	.84	26.87	16.01	13.23	.69	|.31	1.17	2.00
R^2-change		.16[a]	.05[b]	.02		.16[c]	.06c	.01		.31[c]	.06[c]	.02		.02	.04[a]	.03[a]
Multiple R^2	.02[b]	.19[c]	.24[c]	.26[c]	.01	.17[c]	.22[c]	.24[c]	.01	.31[c]	.36[c]	.37[c]	.00	.02	$.07_a$	$.09_b$

Note: Standardized Beta co-efficient are reported.
[a]$p < .05$; [b]$p < .01$; [c]$p < .001$.

Table 5. Hierarchical multiple regression predating four different outcomes: political participation; effectiveness of participation; future participation and political and civic engagement in the KENYAN sample.

Predictors	Political participation				Effectiveness of participation				Future participation				Participation and involvement in civic/political organizations			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
Age	−.08	−.03	−.07	−.06	−.12	−.06	−.05	−.06	−.11	−.05	−.07	−.08	−.10	−.09	−.08	−.09
Gender	−.20[b]	−.11	−.13[a]	−.11	−.07	−.01	−.03	−.02	.13	−.03	−.05	.04	−.06	.00	−.02	−.03
Political interest		.09	.03	.04		−.04	−.07	−.06		.05	.03	.04		.05	.05	.05
Political attentiveness		.15	.14	.14		.23[b]	.17[a]	.17[a]		.16	.11	.10		.11	.07	.07
Participation motivation		.37[c]	.21[b]	.23[b]		.34[b]	.16[a]	.16[a]		.34[c]	.23[b]	.23[b]		.21b	.08	.08b
Participation berries		.16[b]	.11	.12[a]		.20[b]	.37[b]	.16[b]		.27[c]	.25[a]	.25[a]		−.05	−.07	−.08
Social efficacy			.14	.14			.32[b]	.32[c]			.15[b]	.15			.13	.13
Social endorsement			.25[b]	.20[a]			.16[a]	.16			.15[c]	.15			.07	.10
National identity			−.04	−.04			.05	.06			.04	.05			.12	.10
Social democracy			−03	−.02			−.23[c]	−.23[b]			−.14[a]	−.14			−.10	−.11
Institutional trust			−.10	−.09			.02	−.01			−.02	−.01			.14	.14
Trust in government			.14[a]	.11			.16[b]	.16[a]			.13[a]	.12			.05	.08
Spirituality			−.01	.03			−.01	.00			.02	.03			.00	−.04
Openness to change				−.14				−.04				.09				.01
Self-enhancement				.22				−.02				.10				−25
Conservation				−.30a				−.06				−.18				.14
Self-transcendence				.15				−.01				−.04				.15
F-statistics	4.78	15.49	9.34	7.78	1.80	12.16	9.42	7.13	.69	1.31	1.78	1.99	1.36	3.23	2.49	2.15
R^2-change		.29[c]	.07[c]	.03		.27[c]	.13[c]	.00		.02	.04[a]	.04*a*		.08	.06	.02
Adjusted multiple R^2	.05[c]	.34[c]	.41[c]	.44[c]	.02	.29[c]	.41[c]	.41[c]	.00	.02	.07[a]	.09*a*	.01	.10	.16	.18

Note: Standardized beta co-efficient are reported.
[a]$p < .05$; [b]$p < .01$; [c]$p < .001$.

Personal values on the whole made very little contribution to the understanding of civic engagement. Their contribution was hardly more than 1%. Because we were particularly interested in the role of personal values, and they did not make any significant contribution when they were introduced at *Step IV*, a separate set of analyses was carried out for only personal values, after controlling for age and gender. This was simply to ascertain the contribution of personal values without the effects of the other predictors. With the exception of political participation among Kenyan students where there was a 6% change in explained variance (the effect coming primarily from Self-enhancement [$b = .40$ $p < .01$] and Conservation [$b = -.41$ $p < .05$]), personal values still hardly made any major contribution to civic engagement.

For the entire sample, and also among Kenyans and Ghanaians, the following predictors, *Political interest, Political attentiveness, Barriers to participation* and *Motivation towards participation* generally, made a consistent and significant contribution to Political participation and Future participation. *Barriers to participation* and *Motivation to participation* also showed some consistent significant contribution to Effectiveness of participation. *Trust in government* and *Institutional trust* also showed some significant contribution towards Effectiveness of participation and Future participation among the entire group. However, when the analysis was split for the two national groups, the contribution of Trust varied: *Trust in government* predicted Political participation ($b = 14$, $p < .05$); Effectiveness of participation ($b = .16$, $p < .01$) and future participation ($b = .13$, $p < .05$) among Kenyan students. However, this contribution was lost when personal values were introduced into the model. The same thing cannot be said for Ghanaian students. *Trust in government* was related to Future participation ($b = .10$, $p < .05$) *Institutional trust* was related to Political participation ($b = .17$ and .19 at Steps III and IV respectively; $p < .01$); and also, in Future participation ($b = .11$, $p < .05$ Step III; and $b = .12$, Step IV, $p < .01$).

Discussion

Our results suggest that while an unambiguous answer can be given to our first objective (i.e., the degree of civic engagement), findings with respect to the second objective (i.e., the role of socio-psychological factors in civic engagement) are quite nuanced. Overall, there is low civic engagement among the youth. Age, gender, religiosity and personal values hardly made any contribution towards civic engagement. *Political interest, political attentiveness, barriers to participation and motivation towards participation, trust, social endorsement and social efficacy* showed some consistent and significant contribution to civic engagement.

While civic engagement on the whole is low, Kenyan youth were more engaged, even then, their scores were below the mid-point of the scales. The generally poor civic engagement may be one reason for the poor voter turnout, at least in Ghana, compared with Kenya (Win-Gallup International, 2012). If civic engagement is to be regarded a foundation for a country's collective social well-being (Albanesi et al., 2007), then Ghana and Kenya as countries need to direct some efforts to get their youth to be more engaged. Although age and gender made very little contribution to civic engagement, men were found to be more politically active. This gender difference is not surprising. Our finding contributes to the debate on gender differences in civic engagement. On

the one side of the debate is that lower political participation among women is due to structural, social and psychological factors that discourage women from being publicly active and engaged. Galligan (2015) argues that structural factors such as power relations prevent women from being politically engaged, and this is grounded in the manner power differences enshrined in unwritten laws, societal customs and practices. A 2016 Africa Human Development Report found that African women are underrepresented in many sectors of the society, and are denied the same kind of economic, social and political opportunities men enjoy (UNDP, 2016).

However, lack of gender difference on the other three dependent variables may lend credence to the suggestion that the operationalization of civic engagement may be a reason for the mixed findings (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010). A cursory examination of the individual 15 items assessing political participation in the last 12 months found some gender differences with respect to the activity. For instance, girls, more than boys donated money to a social or political cause/organization, while boys, more than girls wrote political messages or graffiti on walls.

The low civic engagement among the youth is predicted by low political interest, low political attentiveness, low motivation and barriers to partition. Youth in Ghana and Kenya are very similar in this regard. It should be pointed out that we are not suggesting that low political attentiveness, lack of political interest, etc., cause low civic engagement, but these are related. We believe the two reinforce each other: lack of political interest and low political attentiveness undermine the level of civic engagement. Similarly, when youth are not civically engaged, they are less likely to develop the interest and pay attention to political activities around them. Studies suggest that while there is a general lack of teaching on citizenship in African countries, the civic education curriculum in African countries takes a theoretical perspective, making it difficult for the students to translate theory into becoming better citizens, let alone increase the students' civic engagement (Lepapa, 2017).

In both countries, there was generally low motivation to participation, and low perceived barriers to participation. As expected, high participation motivation was related to higher civic engagement. Surprisingly, perceived barriers to participation were positively related to civic engagement. We could speculate that the more the students perceived barriers they more they saw the need to be engaged. This finding obviously calls for more research.

Political participation and effectiveness of participation are high when there is high social efficacy. This finding is in line with a Thai study that found that when students were trained to increase their perceived self-efficacy, they were also more engaged in civic service (Nuangchalerm, 2014). It is reasonable to assume that when students also have high collective and social efficacy, they are likely to be more engaged in civic activities within their society (Hope, 2016). Closely related to this finding is the role of social endorsement. Our finding is that the more participants perceived their friends and family approving their civic and political involvement, they more was their civic engagement. This finding may be explained by the role of normative beliefs in people's actions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1972).

Among Kenyan students, trust in government predicted political participation, effectiveness of participation and future participation only when personal values were not considered. In Ghana, trust in institutions, rather than trust in government, was related to

political participation and future participation. We speculate that differences in Trust in the two countries may be linked to post-election (non-) violence. The case brought to the Supreme court of Ghana following the 2012 elections, by the losing party may be a reflection of Ghanaians' trust in the law-enforcing institutions making them less interested in post-election violence. In the case of Kenya, we believe that a losing party takes the law into its own hands and use violence to get the attention of the in-coming government. The lower post-election violence in the 2016 Kenya elections may be due to a new trust in the institutions, especially when they also brought their case to the Kenyan Supreme court. We acknowledge that we have very little support to these speculations: we nevertheless hold on to the suggestion that trust in the institutions and the government of the country may be an area for exploration when it comes to post-election violence (see Ekman & Amnå, 2014 for further discussion).

The contribution of social democratic attitudes to civic engagement varied in the two groups of students. On the whole, social democratic attitudes appeared to play a more significant role in Ghanaian students' civic engagement than that of Kenyan students, even though Kenya students scored higher on social democracy than Ghanaians. Linking this finding with trust in government, these seem to suggest that social democratic values such as the rule of law may not translate to peaceful post-election activities.

In spite of its pervasiveness in the two countries, religiosity among the youth did not appear to translate into civic engagement. While religious leaders have the potential to mobilize members to civic engagement, it appears that any religious leader's call to civic engagement may be nothing more than a call to pray about civic and political concerns. A Malawian study, for instance, found that religion may only be marginally related to outward behaviour (Trinitapoli, 2009).

The present study could not find any meaningful relationship between personal values and civic engagement. This finding should probably not be surprising as researchers have argued that the relationship between personal values and political behaviour such as voting is indirect (Caprara et al., 2006; Leimgruber, 2011) involving two different mediation pathways (see Leimgruber, 2011 for discussion of these pathways). The present study did not gather information on political values, and therefore could not explore the various pathway hypotheses. Conservation and self-enhancement were implicated to some extent in civic engagement in Kenya but in combination with the other socio-psychological factors. More systematic studies in these areas particularly in Kenya are needed.

Much as the study provides some important insights into civics engagement, some methodological limitations need to be mentioned. Many of the scales used in the study have not been adapted for use in the two societies. Moreover, aggregating different forms of efficacy (e.g., internal, external, youth) into a single *social efficacy* score might have masked nuances in efficacy and its effects on civic engagement. In the case of social efficacy, to safeguard possible major oversight, we nevertheless examined how the five different efficacies – internal, external, youth collective, tribal and gender may be related to the four dependent variables (in a correlation matrix and multiple regression). The overall picture of these five different efficacies was consistent with the results obtained from the composite scale. Because the five forms of efficacies were each assessed with two items, and failure to establish clear internal reliability, we have not discussed the contribution of the different forms of efficacy to civic participation.

As a cross-sectional study, we are not in the position to make any causal inferences. Furthermore, the study's participants were from two national universities, which unfortunately limits our ability to generalize our findings to the youth of the two countries. Differences in the sampling procedures in the two countries may account for the huge difference in response rates in the two countries and possibly the extent of civic engagement in the two countries.

Notwithstanding the limitations of this study, we found that while civic engagement is low among the youth, there are some socio-psychological factors that can be linked to the level of civic engagement. These socio-psychological factors may serve as good starting points when seeking to get Ghanaian and Kenyan youth to be more engaged. It is important to note that the study was undertaken about one year before political elections in the two countries. Thus, our present conclusions are limited to civic engagement during pre-political elections in two African countries.

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Disclosure statement

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