

Strengthening civic literacy through learning civic education courses at Ahmad Dahlan University

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Civic Education course in enhancing students' civic literacy at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan. Civic Education plays a vital role in fostering students' understanding of democracy, human rights, national identity, and social responsibility. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with lecturers and students, and a review of relevant literature. A qualitative approach was employed, involving data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, with data validity ensured through source and method triangulation. The findings reveal that project-based learning significantly contributes to the improvement of students' civic literacy, particularly in the areas of democratic engagement and national identity. Interactive methods, such as case studies, further deepen students' comprehension of contemporary social and political issues. Key influencing factors include the socio-cultural environment of the university, applied pedagogical strategies, and ongoing assessment mechanisms. Regular evaluations allow instructors to adapt teaching methods to students' needs and learning characteristics. Overall, contextually grounded and participatory Civic Education practices are found to be more effective than traditional approaches, enhancing both student motivation and active engagement in the learning process.

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Introduction

Civic Education is an educational process aimed at shaping intelligent, ethical, and responsible citizens in the context of national life. Through Civic Education, university students are expected to understand their rights and obligations as citizens and to develop active participation in social, political, and economic life. In higher education, Civic Education plays a



strategic role in fostering students' character and critical awareness, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to national development and reinforce democratic values.

Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD), a higher education institution grounded in Islamic and national values, is committed to strengthening Civic Education through its curriculum. However, in recent years, there has been a noticeable decline in students' interest and engagement with Civic Education courses across various educational levels, including in universities. This decline is believed to be associated with students' low awareness regarding the importance of civic responsibility in everyday life (Bauml et al., 2022). This trend poses a serious concern, as weak citizenship literacy may lead to low participation in democratic life and indifference toward public issues (Mouritsen & Jaeger, 2018).

Civic literacy refers to the individual's ability to comprehend, reflect upon, and apply civic knowledge, values, and attitudes in real-life societal actions. In the context of higher education, strengthening this literacy becomes increasingly crucial, as students are future leaders and potential agents of social change. Previous research has highlighted the importance of strengthening citizenship literacy in universities. Donbavand & Hoskins (2021) and Perrin & Gillis (2019) found that students who undertake Civic Education courses focusing on citizenship literacy tend to be more actively involved in campus-based and community social-political activities. Alscher et al. (2022) emphasised that direct interaction between students and communities during learning can enhance understanding and engagement with civic issues. Nevertheless, most of these studies are situated within Western contexts or do not deeply consider the socio-religious setting of an institution such as Ahmad Dahlan University.

The research gap addressed in this study lies in the absence of in-depth analysis regarding effective Civic Education teaching methods within higher education institutions grounded in Islamic values like UAD, particularly concerning improving students' citizenship literacy and engagement with the broader community. Furthermore, there remains limited scholarly exploration connecting pedagogical approaches, student perceptions, and their tangible expressions of civic responsibility in everyday life, especially in the Indonesian context.

Based on this gap, the current study addresses several key questions. *First*, it examines students' perceptions of the Civic Education courses they have taken at UAD, especially regarding the relevance of course content, teaching approaches, and the impact on their civic awareness. *Second*, this study investigates which instructional methods are perceived as most effective in cultivating students' citizenship literacy, in terms of pedagogy, material content, and resulting civic engagement. *Third*, the research explores students' forms of civic participation following a literacy-focused Civic Education course, including their involvement in social activities, student organisations, and public issue advocacy. These three questions provide the foundation for a qualitative exploration of the dynamics of Civic Education learning and its impact on reinforcing students' sense of civic responsibility at Ahmad Dahlan University.

Employing a qualitative approach, this study collects data through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis of course materials. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically and practically to developing contextual and transformative Civic Education curricula and instructional methods in higher education. In doing so, the study also reinforces the role of universities as key agents in forming critical, active, and responsible citizens.

Method

This research employed a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design, (Creswell, 2010) to gain an in-depth understanding of strengthening civic literacy through teaching the Civic Education course at Ahmad Dahlan University. The case study method was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore phenomena contextually and comprehensively within a real-life setting, specifically, Civic Education learning embedded in Islamic and national values in higher education.

The participants in this study consisted of four students from three different study programs: Medicine, Mathematics Education, and Primary School Teacher Education, as well as one lecturer responsible for the Civic Education course at Ahmad Dahlan University. The

sampling technique used was snowball sampling, a process where participants are selected through referrals from an initial informant deemed relevant to the focus of the research. This procedure began with one key informant (the Civic Education lecturer), who recommended students from various academic backgrounds with significant experiences and representative perspectives on the Civic Education learning process. This technique was chosen because it enables the researcher to reach deeply engaged and reflective respondents regarding the context of Civic Education learning and broaden the scope of data through socially and academically relevant networks.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and participatory observations. In-depth interviews were used to explore the experiences, perceptions, and reflections of both students and the lecturer regarding the effectiveness of Civic Education in enhancing civic literacy. Observations were conducted during classroom learning sessions to examine teaching methods, student interactions, and participation. Document analysis supported the data, including the Semester Learning Plan (RPS) and course materials. The research instruments focused on three main aspects: (1) the learning models and methods used, (2) students' perceptions of the relevance and effectiveness of the Civic Education course, and (3) tangible forms of civic literacy reinforcement as outcomes of the learning process.

To ensure data validity, the study applied the principle of credibility by conducting source and method triangulation. Triangulation was achieved by comparing information obtained from student and lecturer interviews, classroom observations, and analysed learning documents. A member-checking process was conducted by confirming the preliminary interpretations with participants to ensure that the findings accurately represented their experiences and views. The researcher also maintained reflective engagement and observational rigour as part of the effort to uphold the integrity of the research process.

This study also adhered to research ethics principles. All participants were given a complete explanation of the research objectives, methods, and their rights as respondents, including the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Informed consent was obtained in writing from all participants before interviews and observations. Participant identities were kept confidential, and all collected data were used solely for academic purposes.

The data were analysed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. The data reduction stage was conducted to simplify and focus on relevant data. The data display stage was presented as thematic narratives, and the conclusion drawing stage was carried out iteratively to identify patterns, categories, and themes that reflect the strengthening of civic literacy in Civic Education learning at Ahmad Dahlan University.

Results and Discussion

Results

The findings of this study indicate that in the implementation of Civic Education learning, lecturers have begun to adopt more participatory and contextual learning models. Based on interviews with the course instructor, a shift was identified from using Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in several classes. However, this transition has not been uniformly implemented across all classes.

As stated by the lecturer:

"We are trying to move towards a project-based approach because students tend to be more active when directly involved, for example, by creating videos on local democracy issues or posters about tolerance." (Interview, Civic Education Lecturer, May 5, 2024)

This shift in approach includes developing projects such as videos, posters, and community service reports. Observations show that this approach encourages students to think critically, collaborate in teams, and gain a more tangible understanding of civic issues.

Students also responded positively to this approach. As one respondent noted:

"I understood social issues better when working on the poster project. It is not just about memorising theory but about figuring out how to communicate the message to others." (M1, Student, May 6, 2024)

Other teaching methods, such as discussions, debates, and case studies, were also prominently used, especially on topics like human rights and democracy. Lecturers functioned as facilitators rather than the sole source of knowledge and encouraged students to actively participate in the *tridharma* of higher education, particularly in community service activities.

Despite the positive shift towards more participatory methods, the implementation of these approaches has varied across different classes. Some students indicated that they encountered a traditional, lecture-based approach in certain sessions, which restricted their capacity for active engagement with the content. The observed inconsistency may stem from variations in lecturers' familiarity with contemporary teaching models or insufficient resources and training to effectively incorporate these methods into the curriculum. Consequently, although certain students gain advantages from the hands-on, project-based approach, others may lack equivalent opportunities to engage with their learning meaningfully, resulting in disparities in student experiences and outcomes.

Moreover, although the shift to Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and other interactive pedagogical methods has enhanced student engagement, challenges persist in guaranteeing that these strategies are inclusive and accessible to all learners. Certain students may encounter challenges with the collaborative elements of Project-Based Learning (PjBL), especially if they possess limited experience in teamwork or experience communication difficulties. The time-intensive nature of projects such as video creation or community service reports may pose challenges for students managing various academic and personal commitments. To address these challenges, the curriculum should offer more structured guidance and support for students, ensuring full participation and benefit from learning opportunities. This may encompass more explicit project guidelines, supplementary resources for collaboration, and continuous support from faculty to assist students in effectively navigating these new learning models.

The following matrix summarises the learning models used and their impact on strengthening students' civic literacy:

Table 1.

Learning Models and Their Impact on the Strengthening of Students' Civic Literacy

| Learning Model | Implementation Examples | Impact on Civic Literacy | Data Sources |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Project-Based Learning (PjBL) | Posters, videos, social campaigns | Enhances communication skills and understanding of social issues | Lecturer interview, classroom observation |
| Problem-Based Learning (PBL) | Human rights case studies, discussions on current issues | Improves critical analysis and problem-solving skills | Observation, M2 |
| Cooperative Learning | Group work, inter-group presentations | Strengthens collaboration and peer dialogue | M3, M4 |
| Role Play / Simulation | Parliamentary session simulations, character role-playing | Deepens understanding of political systems and democratic practices | M1, classroom observation |
| Debate and Open Discussion | Topics on elections, intolerance, criminal code revision | Broadens perspectives and encourages freedom of expression | M2, M4, observation |

Source: Research Data, 2024.

The table presents different learning models and their effects on improving students' civic literacy. Project-Based Learning (PjBL), demonstrated through activities such as poster creation, video production, and social campaigns, enhances students' communication skills and deepens their comprehension of social issues, as noted by the lecturer and observed in classroom environments. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) utilises case studies on human rights and discussions of contemporary issues to improve students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, thereby promoting a more profound comprehension of intricate civic subjects.

Cooperative Learning, characterised by group work and inter-group presentations, enhances collaboration and peer dialogue, thereby reinforcing students' teamwork skills and their capacity for constructive discussions. Role play and simulation, including parliamentary session simulations and character role-playing, enhance students' comprehension of political systems and democratic practices, thereby enriching their understanding of governance. Finally, the Debate and Open Discussion segment examines topics such as elections, intolerance, and revisions to the criminal code, thereby expanding students' perspectives and promoting freedom of expression. This environment enables them to articulate their views and participate in civic discourse. These learning models promote comprehensive civic literacy development, equipping students for active engagement in a democratic society.

The Effectiveness of the Civic Education Course in Strengthening Students' Civic Literacy

The Civic Education course has proven effective in equipping students with a deeper understanding of key civic concepts such as democracy, national identity, the constitution, and human rights. Students demonstrated conceptual improvements in civic literacy; however, applying civic values in real-life actions remains inconsistent.

One student expressed:

"I now really understand the importance of human rights and participation, but I am still unsure where to start when it comes to getting involved on campus." (M2, May 6, 2024)

This is reflected in the low levels of student participation in democratic campus activities such as student government elections or student forums. As another respondent noted:

"Lecturers often emphasise the importance of voting, but in reality, many of my peers are indifferent when it comes to electing the student council." (M4, May 6, 2024)

Nonetheless, students acknowledged the benefits of contextual and collaborative learning approaches. Methods such as case studies and role plays were considered effective in fostering empathy and understanding of social issues.

Notwithstanding the favourable results in knowledge acquisition, the difficulty persists in converting this comprehension into concrete civic engagement. The disparity between academic understanding and practical implementation indicates that students may lack the requisite abilities or willingness to engage actively in civic responsibilities. Although students recognise the need of participation, many are uncertain about how to commence or maintain their engagement in community or campus life. This suggests a potential necessity for curriculum modifications that prioritise skill development and practical implementations of civic concepts, rather than solely concentrating on academic comprehension.

The absence of participation may be affected by overarching socio-cultural variables, like apathy, individualism, or a disconnection between classroom discussions and the realities encountered by students. Civic education promotes responsibility and action; hence, there may be a necessity for enhanced incentives or mentorship programs that instruct children on how to effect change in their local surroundings. Facilitating platforms for students to participate in authentic decision-making processes, potentially via community outreach or collaborative campus activities, may cultivate a feeling of purpose and agency.

The problem of inconsistent involvement may also reveal a systemic deficiency in the delivery of civic education across various academic levels. Although lectures and case studies are significant, students may derive greater advantages from experiential learning experiences that connect the classroom to real-world applications. An integrated strategy that combines

civic education with practical projects, volunteerism, or internships may foster a heightened sense of responsibility and enable students to engage in impactful acts within their communities. This would enhance their comprehension of democratic principles and motivate them to consistently apply these principles in their everyday lives.

The following table presents a brief overview of the effectiveness of several learning approaches used in the Civic Education course in relation to various elements of civic literacy:

Table 2.

Aspects of Civic Literacy: Indicators of Improvement, Effective Methods, and Challenges Encountered

| Civic Aspect | Literacy | Indicators of Improvement | of Effective Methods | Challenges Encountered | |
|-------------------------------|----------|---|----------------------|---|---|
| Conceptual Understanding | | Democracy, rights, identity | human national | Case studies, discussions | Lack of value reflection in real-life actions |
| Critical Skills | Thinking | Issue argumentation, debating | analysis, | Debates, problem-solving activities | Not all students actively express their opinions |
| Active Participation | | Awareness of social issues | social | Social projects, community engagement | Low motivation to participate in campus activities |
| Communication & Collaboration | | Ability to work in teams and convey ideas | work in convey | Group presentations, project-based learning | Unequal contributions within team-based assignments |

Source: Research Data, 2024.

The table indicates that although significant advancements have been made in several facets of civic literacy, obstacles remain, especially with real-life application, active involvement, and collaborative teamwork. These challenges indicate the necessity for a more cohesive strategy in civic education, one that enhances students' theoretical comprehension while simultaneously inspiring them to participate actively in civic responsibilities and cultivates a more inclusive, collaborative classroom atmosphere.

Confronting these obstacles will certainly improve both the short-term and long-term effects of civic education on students' personal growth and societal contributions.

Factors Influencing Learning Outcomes in Strengthening Students' Civic Literacy

The research findings indicate that the social environment significantly influences students' learning motivation and success in developing civic literacy. A supportive social environment, such as families engaged in community activities, democratic campus communities, and peers actively involved in public discussions, encourages students to participate more actively and reflectively in the Civic Education learning process.

As one course instructor noted:

"I have observed that students who are active in social organisations tend to grasp Civic Education materials more quickly because they can relate theory to real-life situations." (Interview, Civic Education Lecturer, May 5, 2024)

Conversely, students from environments that are apathetic toward civic issues tend to show low engagement in learning. This lack of engagement affects their initiative in classroom discussions and project assignments that require critical thinking and civic attitudes.

One student shared:

"I come from a family that rarely talks about politics or social issues, so when learning about human rights or democracy, it all felt very unfamiliar." (M3, May 6, 2024)

Another student added:

"My friends who are involved in organisations seem more confident and know how to talk about public issues. That made me want to join discussions too." (M1, May 6, 2024)

The results indicate that peer influence plays a crucial role in determining students' involvement in civic education. Students are more inclined to cultivate an interest in social or political discourse when they are surrounded by classmates who are actively engaged in these discussions. In this situation, peer pressure can serve as a beneficial influence, motivating students to engage in conversations and activities they might otherwise eschew.

The statements of both students and teachers indicate that the presence of peers involved in civic activities not only encourages others to participate but also fosters an environment where civic issues are normalised and incorporated into daily discourse. This underscores the need to cultivate a collaborative and dynamic learning environment, wherein students can derive inspiration from one another and jointly augment their comprehension and application of civic knowledge.

The table below summarises both external and internal factors that influence the effectiveness of Civic Education learning in strengthening civic literacy:

Table 3.

Factors Influencing Civic Education Learning and Their Impact on Students' Civic Literacy

| Influencing Factor | Category | Impact on Civic Education Learning | Data Source |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Family environment | Social-External | Supportive home discussions → stronger conceptual understanding | Lecturer interview, M3 |
| Peer environment | Social-External | Peer activism → stimulates student engagement | M1, M4 interviews |
| Participation in organizations | Social-Internal | Facilitates practical application of democratic values, human rights, and ethics | Lecturer, M2 |
| Campus culture | Social-Institutional | Fosters active participation in discussions and projects | Classroom observation, M4 |
| Personal interest and motivation | Internal | Higher interest → greater learning initiative | M2, M4 interviews |

Source: Research Data, 2024.

The table demonstrates that both external and internal factors are integral to the effectiveness of Civic Education learning. While a supportive family environment and peer influence help build a solid foundation of civic knowledge, personal interest and participation in organizations play a significant role in applying this knowledge in real-world contexts. Moreover, campus culture provides the institutional framework that supports active participation and engagement. Together, these factors create a dynamic and interconnected system that enhances students' civic literacy and prepares them for active, informed participation in democratic life. The *instructional model determines the success of Civic Education learning* and is strongly influenced by students' social context. This underscores the importance of a holistic approach in designing civic education, considering the social and personal factors *shaping* students' experiences.

Discussion

Learning Models and Methods in Civic Education Courses to Strengthen Students' Civic Literacy

The shift in pedagogical models from problem-based learning (PBL) to project-based learning (PjBL) within Civic Education courses reflects a more adaptive and responsive

approach to contemporary educational needs. This *methodological and philosophical transition highlights* the imperative for Civic Education to bring students closer to the socio-political realities they encounter. As Gray and Diloreto (2016) assert, *integrating* experiential learning with academic content enables students to acquire a deeper and more reflective understanding of the material. In this sense, project-based learning enhances the internalisation of civic values through more tangible and contextualised activities.

The implementation of this model is evident in student projects such as the creation of posters and videos, which serve as final products that function as media for expression, idea communication, and the elaboration of civic values within specific cultural and social contexts. This approach aligns with findings by Arsjad et al. (2023) and Bolaños Garita (2023), who emphasise that project-based learning allows students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-life situations and actively engage with their social environments. Moreover, these projects serve as platforms for students to develop essential 21st-century skills, including effective communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and creativity in conveying messages. Muchson (2023) even argues that this method can *bridge* academic competencies and the increasingly complex demands of the real world.

However, the implementation of project-based learning does not come without challenges. Field observations and interviews revealed several significant obstacles, including uneven preparedness among both lecturers and students, limited access to supporting technology and infrastructure, and insufficient institutional policies to support such innovative models. Sharma (2023) emphasises that *successfully implementing* project-based learning requires a robust ecosystem, including faculty training, curriculum reform, and performance-based assessment systems. Nevertheless, the shift from traditional written exams to project-based assessment represents a strategic move toward a more comprehensive evaluation of student learning outcomes. Murphy et al. (2023) and Guo et al. (2020) affirm that project-based assessment can offer a more holistic view of students' conceptual understanding, reflective ability, and civic attitudes and values.

Combining project-based learning with other methods, such as case studies, group discussions, debates, and presentations, enriches the students' learning experience. This multimodal approach plays a critical role in creating a dialogical and participatory learning environment, where civic literacy is understood as a body of theoretical knowledge *and* an element of everyday practice. As noted by Papanikolaou and Grigoriadou (2009) and Battista et al. (2023), such a diversified approach supports the development of reflective capacity, critical thinking, and empathy regarding social and national issues.

Lecturers, as facilitators, play a strategic role in guiding students to explore civic issues more broadly and deeply. Student engagement in the university's tri dharma activities, particularly in community service, *allows* them to apply the civic values learned in real-world contexts. Wrenn and Wrenn (2009) and Bergmark et al. (2024) argue that learning grounded in authentic social engagement fosters civic awareness and a sense of collective responsibility among students. In this context, Civic Education is no longer seen as a purely theoretical subject, but as a transformative space for shaping students' civic character and commitment.

The transformation of pedagogical approaches in Civic Education, *primarily* through project-based models and the enhanced role of lecturers as facilitators, has created broader opportunities to strengthen students' civic literacy. This transformation requires systemic support and consistent implementation to ensure that it effectively contributes to *developing a generation of* critical, participatory, and socially responsible *citizens*.

The Effectiveness of Civic Education Courses in Strengthening Students' Civic Literacy

Civic Education plays a crucial role in shaping students' civic literacy foundation, particularly in understanding core values such as democracy, human rights, national identity, and civic responsibility. At the university level, civic literacy encompasses cognitive competence and affective and psychomotor dimensions that reflect the character of active and responsible citizenship. Medne et al. (2024) emphasise that civic literacy is key to forming civic identity. Therefore, Civic Education must be designed to address all three domains in a balanced

manner. Research findings indicate that through relevant learning approaches, students begin to demonstrate enhanced theoretical understanding of democratic and human rights values and the interconnection between national identity and their socio-political realities as Indonesian citizens.

However, cognitive improvement is not always accompanied by practical application in campus life. For instance, low student participation in campus democratic processes, such as student government elections, reveals a disconnect between theoretical understanding and real-life implementation. Márquez et al. (2023) and Weinberg & Flinders (2018) note that civic education often fails to bridge conceptual understanding and real-world action when not supported by contextual and experiential learning strategies. Students may understand the importance of democratic participation, but are not motivated to act when they do not see a direct connection between the taught theory and their lived experiences.

To address this gap, more applied and interactive learning approaches must be adopted, approaches that not only explain concepts but also invite students to experience them directly. Electoral simulations, community-based social projects, policy advocacy, and role-playing exercises on current social issues effectively bridge the gap between theory and practice. Cohen et al. (2021) and Evagorou et al. (2023) highlight that such methods increase student engagement and help foster critical thinking, empathy, and social responsibility. Through real-life case studies, students are challenged to analyse social problems using multidisciplinary perspectives, leading to more comprehensive and reflective thinking processes.

The lecturer's role in this process is critical not merely as a transmitter of content but as a facilitator and mentor capable of fostering dialogue, creating a reflective learning environment, and linking academic content to students' lived experiences. A contextual teaching approach allows students to develop their civic identity through reflective processes and direct experiences. The lecturer's role-modelling, empathy, and capacity to facilitate meaningful learning significantly influence the effectiveness of Civic Education in shaping students' character. Students inspired by their lecturers are often more likely to engage in campus democracy and social initiatives.

Nevertheless, significant room remains for improvement, particularly in fostering lasting attitudinal and behavioural changes. While many students show increased awareness and knowledge, their actions often lack consistency. This indicates civic literacy has not yet become part of students' habitus. Therefore, continuity between classroom learning and civic habit formation outside the classroom is essential, whether through student organisations, community service programs, or social activities. This ensures that civic learning is more sustainable and transformative.

In the long term, the effectiveness of Civic Education depends on the extent to which students internalise civic values as guiding life principles, not just as academic material. Curriculum design should be informative and transformative, integrating knowledge, attitude, and action. Collaboration among lecturers, institutions, and students' social environments is also a crucial factor in delivering Civic Education that is effective, participatory, and impactful on the broader democratic life of the nation.

Factors Influencing Learning Outcomes in Strengthening Students' Civic Literacy

Students' social environments play a significant role in determining the success of Civic Education learning, especially in enhancing civic literacy. Students who grow up in families and peer communities that uphold civic values, such as openness to diversity, participation in social activities, and concern for public issues, tend to show higher motivation and better capability in understanding and internalising Civic Education content. These findings align with studies by Vries (2023) and Lin et al. (2023), which show that social support from one's immediate environment significantly enhances students' ability to absorb and apply the values of democracy, human rights, and civic responsibility.

Beyond academic support, a healthy social environment also offers strong psychological reinforcement. Emotional support from family and peers can build students' confidence, enhance their sense of security, and cultivate a sense of citizen responsibility. Kosberg (2024)

stresses that supportive interpersonal relationships strengthen students' affective attachment to civic values and boost their internal motivation to engage in public discourse. Conversely, students from unsupportive or politically apathetic backgrounds often feel alienated from the Civic Education content. They struggle to relate the material to their daily lives, resulting in low engagement during class discussions, limited personal reflection, and reduced participation in civic activities.

Such conditions may lead to social isolation, where students feel disconnected from the values taught, leading to decreased motivation, self-confidence, and overall academic performance. Baria and Gomez (2022) report that a lack of meaningful social connection can hinder students' cognitive and affective development in civic learning. The absence of social support increases the risk of disengagement, not only in formal education but also in broader social participation. This is where higher education institutions must play a more active role, not merely as educational providers, but as communities offering social safety nets for students.

Institutions need to provide additional support systems to bridge these gaps. Mentoring programs involving lecturers or senior students, collaborative study groups, thematic discussion communities, and inclusive student organisations are among the strategies that can increase students' sense of belonging and connectedness to the campus environment. These efforts can help students from less supportive backgrounds and create a more democratic and dialogic space where all academic community members can learn and share civic values. By fostering an inclusive and supportive campus ecosystem, higher education institutions can enhance the external factors contributing to successful Civic Education learning.

Strengthening internal factors such as self-awareness, intrinsic motivation, and reflective capacity is also critical. These can be nurtured through pedagogical approaches, encouraging personal value exploration and experiential learning. Activities such as critical reflection, narrative essay writing, and real-world civic engagement projects can help students explore the connection between their social backgrounds and contemporary civic challenges. When students understand their social positions more fully, they become better equipped to act as active, reflective, and responsible citizens. With the synergy between institutional and personal approaches, Civic Education can achieve greater effectiveness in holistically shaping students' civic literacy.

Conclusion

This study presents significant findings regarding the initiatives aimed at enhancing students' civic literacy via Civic Education instruction. Project-based learning and case study models have been found to be highly effective in helping students grasp key concepts such as democracy, human rights, and national identity. These learning approaches enable students to engage thoroughly with concepts, rendering abstract ideas more tangible and pertinent to their daily lives. Furthermore, contextual learning approaches that integrate real-world projects—such as poster creation, video production, and engagement in the university's *tridharma* (education, research, and community service)—have proven effective in enhancing critical thinking, creativity, and active student participation. These practical experiences enable students to apply their knowledge to real-world contexts, thereby increasing their engagement and sense of civic responsibility. The study reveals a significant disparity between theoretical understanding and civic engagement, as evidenced by the low participation rates of students in campus democratic activities, including student executive board (BEM) elections. This indicates that although students comprehend civic concepts, they may lack motivation to implement them in practical, real-world contexts. The study indicates that the social environment of students, especially support from family and peers, significantly influences their motivation and success in civic learning. A positive and engaged social environment encourages students to value civic participation and apply their learning more effectively, demonstrating the crucial role of external influences in fostering civic literacy.

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