

Transforming Civic Literacy to Address Ethnic Conflict and the Cosmopolitan Challenges of the Younger Generation

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the role of civic literacy in addressing ethnic conflict and cosmopolitan challenges among the younger generation in the era of globalization. The research method used was descriptive quantitative through the distribution of questionnaires to 50 respondents. The results show that students have a good level of civic literacy, indicated by a high level of tolerance, pride in national culture, and the ability to distinguish global cultural influences. These results confirm that civic literacy contributes to strengthening national identity, preventing potential ethnic conflict, and fostering openness that remains grounded in Indonesian values..

Keywords: *civic literacy; ethnic conflict; younger generation; cosmopolitan challenges*

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of globalization and advances in digital technology have had a significant impact on the lives of Indonesia's young generation (Rahma, 2025). The unlimited influx of foreign information and culture demands that young people be able to critically select values while maintaining their national identity (Kurniawan et al., 2025). In this situation, civic literacy is a crucial element in shaping citizens' awareness, attitudes, and behavior, enabling them to participate actively, responsibly, and adaptively in response to global change (Tinambunan et al., 2025). Civic literacy encompasses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of citizens in understanding their rights and obligations, engaging in public issues, and acting in accordance with national values (Nurfauziyanti et al., 2022). This literacy is not only normative but also a social practice that reflects national awareness, tolerance, and concern for democratic life (Wulandari et al., 2024). Various previous studies have shown that civic education plays a strategic role in fostering attitudes of tolerance and awareness of coexistence in a multicultural society. (Wulandari et al., 2024) emphasized that civic education not only functions as a means of transferring normative knowledge, but also as a medium for internalizing the values of social justice, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

Basic Concept Paragraph Related to Research Topics and Variables Civic literacy includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of citizens in understanding rights and obligations, engaging in public issues, and acting in accordance with national values (Nurfauziyanti et al., 2022). This literacy is not merely a normative understanding, but also a social practice that reflects national awareness, tolerance, and concern for democratic life (Wulandari et al., 2024). Therefore, strengthening civic literacy is an important part in developing the character of the younger generation who are able to face modern social complexities. In addition, Indonesia is a country with high ethnic diversity, so the ability to understand, appreciate, and manage differences is very necessary (Jannah et al., 2025). When civic literacy develops, awareness of social justice, equality, and respect for ethnic diversity is also formed. Sunaryati et al., (2025) showed that the consistent implementation of civic education from elementary school level can instill attitudes of empathy, tolerance, and respect for differences. This shows that civic literacy is a long-term process that must be built sustainably from elementary school to higher education.

Previous research has shown that civics education can increase tolerance and prevent people from actions that have the potential to cause conflict (Tinambunan et al., 2025). Sunaryati et al., (2025) showed that consistent implementation of civics education from elementary school can instill empathy and reduce the potential for discriminatory attitudes. This confirms that civic literacy is a long-term process that must be developed sustainably from elementary school to university. On the other hand, global openness and exposure

to foreign cultures require the younger generation to have a cosmopolitan attitude, namely the ability to interact with foreign cultures without abandoning national identity. Students with a high level of civic literacy are able to filter global culture according to Indonesian values, so that globalization does not threaten national character (Ahmad & Najicha, 2023). Putri et al., (2024) added that civics education has a significant influence on increasing pluralistic attitudes in multicultural societies. Students who understand their rights and obligations as citizens tend to reject discrimination and are more open to differences in social and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, (Muhamad et al., 2021) emphasized that civics education also serves as a bulwark of values in preventing the development of radicalism and intolerance by reinforcing the values of Pancasila, democracy, and humanity. Other research also shows that learning Pancasila and civics has a strong relationship with the development of tolerant attitudes in students (Taniredja et al., 2021). Civics education in higher education contributes to the development of tolerant character in students through value dialogue and social reflection (Widiatmaka, 2021).

Studies in the Undiksha Journal of Civic Education (2021) and the Pamulang University Journal of Civic Education (2018) confirm that the continuous internalization of civic values can shape democratic, ethical, and responsible citizens amidst the diversity of Indonesian society. Thus, civic literacy serves as a bulwark of values and a bridge in facing cosmopolitan challenges. Despite the strategic role of civic literacy, gaps remain in its implementation. Many young people understand the concept of nationality theoretically, but have not yet fully internalized these values in social interactions, particularly regarding issues of diversity and attitudes toward global culture (Ayuning & Dewi, 2021). This challenge is exacerbated by the persistence of cases of intolerance and ethnic conflict in several regions, indicating that awareness of the importance of diversity has not yet been fully developed (Mahfudz et al., 2023). Previous research confirms that civic education plays a role in building an attitude of tolerance, national insight, and the ability to interact harmoniously with diversity. Wulandari et al. (2024) highlighted that civics education can strengthen national values among students. This finding is supported by Tinambunan et al. (2025), who stated that civics education plays a role in internalizing the values of tolerance and social harmony. Furthermore, Mahfudz et al. (2023) found that a good understanding of civics correlates with an attitude of rejecting ethnic discrimination. However, there is little research linking civic literacy to cosmopolitan challenges, even though this study is important in the context of globalization.

This study aims to describe the level of civic literacy among Indonesia's young generation and analyze its relationship to attitudes toward ethnic diversity and the influence of global culture. It also examines how young people's understanding of rights and obligations, tolerance, and national identity is reflected in today's social and digital context (Wulandari et al., 2024). This study is necessary because civic literacy is a crucial foundation for maintaining national identity, building tolerance, and managing social diversity in the global era (Tinambunan et al., 2025). Without adequate literacy, young people are vulnerable to losing their sense of identity and are more easily influenced by foreign cultures that are inconsistent with national values (Ahmad & Najicha, 2023). This research makes a significant contribution to strengthening civic education as a strategic instrument for preventing ethnic conflict, developing healthy cosmopolitan attitudes, and strengthening social cohesion in Indonesia.

2. METHODS

This study uses a quantitative descriptive approach to describe the level of civic literacy among young people and its relationship to ethnic conflict and cosmopolitan challenges. Data collection was conducted online in November 2025 using a Google Form questionnaire (Pratama, 2024)..

The study population was young Indonesians aged 20 to 30. The sampling technique used was accidental sampling, where respondents accessed the questionnaire and agreed to complete it according to the criteria. The sample size was determined based on the total number of questionnaire respondents, with a target of at least 50 respondents (Asrulla et al., 2023).

The instrument used was a Likert-scale questionnaire containing three sections: respondent identity, civic literacy, and attitudes and understanding regarding ethnic conflict and cosmopolitanism (Ibrahim et al., 2021). The instrument was validated through expert judgment before distribution.

Data were analyzed descriptively by calculating percentages and averages to examine trends in civic literacy levels and attitudes of the younger generation toward ethnic issues and cultural openness.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research results, there were 50 respondents consisting of students of various ages ranging from less than 20 years to more than 20 years. The following are the results of the respondents who filled out the questionnaire.:

1. I acknowledge and fulfill my obligations as an Indonesian citizen

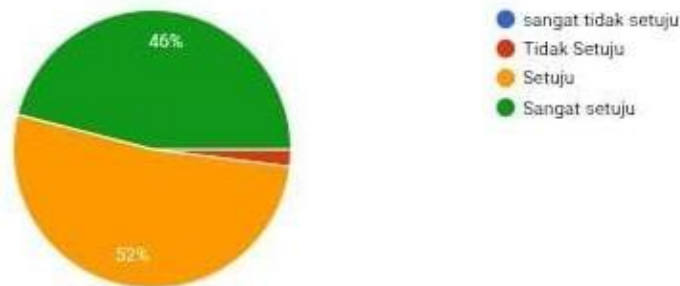


Figure 1. Respondent results

The questionnaire results indicated that the majority of students had a good understanding of their rights and obligations as citizens. Fifty-two percent of respondents agreed and 46 percent strongly agreed with the statement. No students chose the "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" categories.

These results demonstrate that students, as part of the younger generation, already understand their role in national life. Knowledge of rights and obligations is a fundamental element of civic literacy, as students are expected to participate actively, critically, and responsibly in the democratic process and broader social practices. With such a high level of agreement, it is clear that basic civic literacy in this aspect has been well-developed among students

2. I Understand the Importance of Pancasila as a Guide to Life

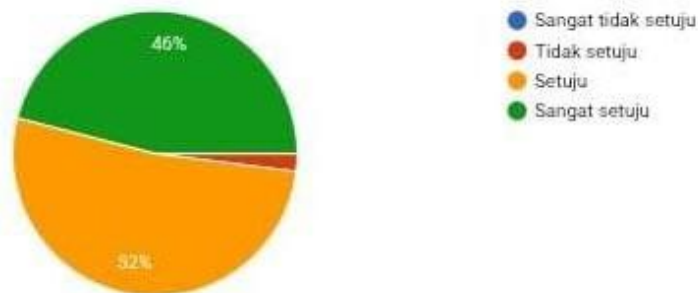


Figure 2. Respondent results

Data in the second statement shows that 52% of students chose Agree and 46% chose Strongly Agree. There were no respondents who stated they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

These results show that students have a high awareness of the position of Pancasila as a moral, ethical and value guide in social, national and state life. This understanding is important in the context of student development as agents of change, because Pancasila functions as a value filter in facing the challenges of globalization, modernization and cultural shifts.

3. I Believe All Tribes in Indonesia Should Be Treated Fairly.

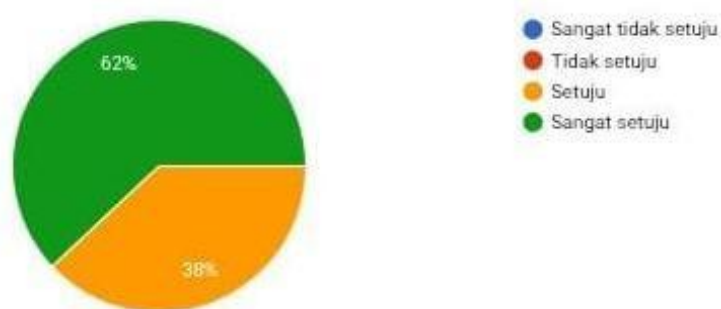


Figure 3. Respondent results

Berdasarkan hasil kuesioner, seluruh responden memberikan jawaban positif terhadap pernyataan ini. Sebanyak 38% responden memilih Setuju, sedangkan 62% lainnya memilih Sangat Setuju. Tidak ada satupun responden yang memberikan jawaban ketidaksetujuan.

Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kesadaran mengenai pentingnya perlakuan yang adil bagi semua suku di Indonesia sangat kuat di kalangan mahasiswa. Tingginya tingkat persetujuan menggambarkan bahwa nilai-nilai kesetaraan dan keadilan telah dipahami dengan baik. Selain itu, hasil ini juga menegaskan bahwa mahasiswa menyadari peran penting keberagaman dalam persatuan bangsa, serta pentingnya menghindari perlakuan diskriminatif terhadap kelompok etnis mana pun.

4. I Reject Attitudes That Demean Other Ethnicities or Cultures.

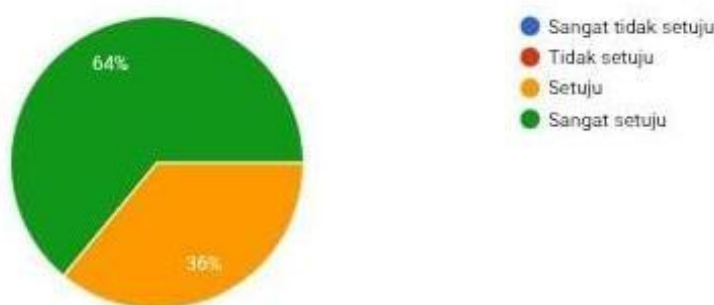


Figure 4. Respondent results

All respondents also expressed a positive attitude toward this statement. 36% of respondents chose "Agree," and 64% chose "Strongly Agree." No respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

These results indicate that students have a high level of awareness in rejecting any form of action that demeans a particular ethnic group or culture. The predominance of "Strongly Agree" responses reflects a well-established understanding of the values of tolerance and respect for differences. This attitude demonstrates that students understand the importance of maintaining harmony between groups and rejecting behavior that could trigger ethnic conflict..

5. Even though I like foreign cultures, I am still proud of Indonesian culture..

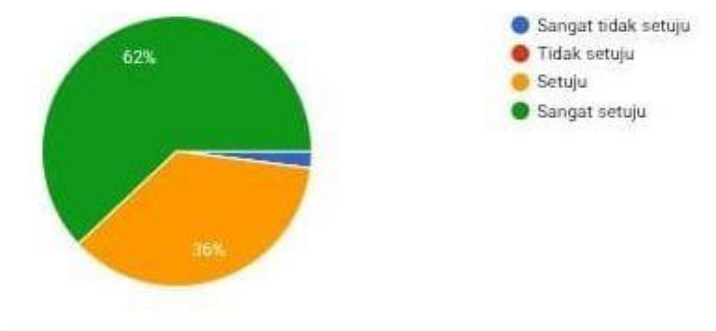


Figure 5. Respondent results

The majority of respondents expressed a positive attitude toward national identity, with 62% agreeing and 36% strongly agreeing. This indicates that despite their exposure to global culture, their sense of pride in Indonesian culture remains strong. This finding reflects good civic literacy, particularly in maintaining national identity amidst globalization..

6. I can distinguish foreign cultural influences that are in line with Indonesian values.

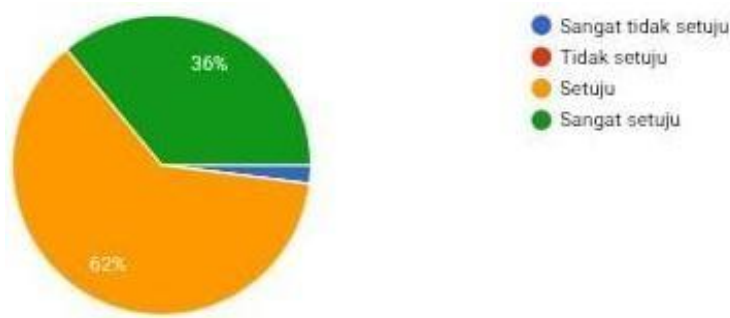


Figure 6. Respondent results

The data shows that 62% agree and 36% strongly agree, indicating that the majority of respondents are able to critically filter global cultural influences. This ability is crucial for the younger generation to remain open to foreign cultures while still adhering to national values.

In general, respondents exhibited strong nationalism and the ability to differentiate between global cultures. This indicates that civic literacy in terms of identity and cultural selectivity is in the good category.

7. Lessons or Information About Citizenship Make Me More Appreciative of Diversity.



Figure 7. Respondent results

Based on the questionnaire results, all students responded positively to this statement. Fifty-four percent agreed, while 46% strongly agreed. No students chose the "disagree" option.

These findings indicate that civics material truly helps students understand and appreciate

diversity. The values of tolerance, coexistence, and respect for differences appear to be well understood. The high level of agreement also illustrates that civics literacy contributes to fostering inclusive attitudes and an awareness that diversity is an important part of social life..

8. Civic Literacy Helps Me Stay Open to Foreign Cultures Without Abandoning My National Identity.



Figure 8. Respondent results

All respondents responded positively to this statement. Fifty-eight percent of students voted "Agree," and 42 percent voted "Strongly Agree." None disagreed.

These results indicate that students have a good understanding of how to behave amidst the currents of globalization. They feel that civic literacy helps them remain receptive to foreign cultural influences while still upholding their national identity and values. This demonstrates that students are able to adapt without losing their identity as Indonesian citizens.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that students have a relatively high level of civic literacy. Specifically, the majority of respondents stated that they remain proud of Indonesian culture, are able to differentiate global cultural influences, and understand their rights and obligations as citizens. Analysis of each questionnaire indicator shows that 62 percent of respondents agreed and 36 percent strongly agreed with the statement "Even though I like foreign cultures, I remain proud of Indonesian culture." This confirms that the younger generation is able to maintain their national identity despite being exposed to globalization, an important aspect of civic literacy.

Furthermore, the indicator of the ability to differentiate foreign cultural influences indicates that students have a critical attitude toward globalization. The 62% Agree and 36% Strongly Agree respondents demonstrated the ability to select foreign cultural influences that align with Indonesian values and norms. This finding aligns with Wulandari et al., 2024, who stated that civics education can foster tolerance and social harmony among students. By being able to discern cultural influences, students are not only open to new things but also maintain their national values.

An analysis of the aspect of equality and fair treatment of various ethnic groups in Indonesia showed that all respondents responded positively, with 62% Strongly Agree and 38% Agree. This finding supports the theory that civics education is effective in fostering awareness of the importance of social justice and respect for ethnic diversity (Tinambunan et al., 2025). Students' tendency to reject attitudes that denigrate other groups reflects the internalization of the value of tolerance, which is part of civic literacy competency.

Another relevant finding concerns how students use digital literacy in their daily lives. The results indicate that civic literacy helps them remain open to external cultures without losing their national identity. Ahmad and Najicha (2023) emphasize that the ability to use digital media wisely plays a role in managing ethnic conflict, enhancing intercultural dialogue, and fostering cosmopolitan attitudes grounded in national values. Thus, civic literacy encompasses not only normative knowledge but also practical skills relevant to social and digital dynamics.

Comparisons with previous research confirm this finding. Mahfudz et al. (2023) found that students actively involved in civic education exhibited higher levels of tolerance and awareness of national identity. This consistency demonstrates that civic education, both through the formal curriculum and extracurricular activities, is a crucial instrument in transforming the civic literacy of

the younger generation. This research confirms that integrating national values with cosmopolitan skills can prevent potential ethnic conflict and enhance social cohesion.

The practical implication of this finding is the need to strengthen civic literacy in higher education through various programs. The curriculum can be developed to emphasize intercultural dialogue, cross-ethnic collaborative projects, and ethics-based digital literacy. These activities aim to ensure students not only understand the concept of citizenship theoretically but also apply it in real-life social interactions, appreciate diversity, and manage conflict constructively.

This study has several limitations that require consideration. First, the data was collected using an online questionnaire, thus relying on respondents' answers that may be biased or lacking in depth. Second, the sample was limited to students from a few institutions, so the generalizability of the findings to the broader student population remains limited. Third, this study used only quantitative methods, so the qualitative aspects of how students actually practice citizenship literacy in their daily lives remain unexplored. Therefore, future research is recommended to use mixed methods such as interviews, observations, and case studies to obtain a more comprehensive picture.

Overall, this discussion confirms that the transformation of citizenship literacy plays a strategic role in shaping a young generation capable of facing global challenges and ethnic conflicts. Civic literacy serves as a social foundation that enables students to live harmoniously amidst diversity, practice tolerance, maintain national identity, while critically and constructively utilizing global opportunities..

4. CONCLUSION

The research results show that civic literacy plays a crucial role in shaping a young generation that is tolerant, critical, and maintains a national identity amidst globalization. Respondents demonstrated positive attitudes toward ethnic diversity, pride in Indonesian culture, and the ability to filter out foreign cultural influences. Civic literacy has been proven to be a foundation for preventing ethnic conflict and fostering a cosmopolitan attitude grounded in national values. Therefore, strengthening civic literacy needs to be continuously developed through formal education and the social experiences of the younger generation..

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