

THE EXISTENCE OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CHARACTER

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Abstract

Civics Education (PKn) in elementary schools is understood as the initial foundation for the formation of national character and social morals in children. The relevance of this study arises from the need to review the position of PKn in the Independent Curriculum, especially since the implementation of P5, which emphasizes strengthening the Pancasila-based student profile. This research explores and summarizes 23 scientific publications from various reputable journals to examine how PKn works in building democratic awareness, tolerance, and national identity in the younger generation. Through qualitative meta-analysis, we found a shift in the orientation of PKn, from being normative to being more reflective and experience-based. The values of Pancasila, the use of Problem-Based Learning (PBL), multicultural learning strategies, and the use of digital media appear to provide space for the growth of cooperation, empathy, and a sense of nationalism in the classroom. These changes demonstrate that PKn not only introduces the concept of the state but also brings it to life in students' daily attitudes and behaviors. The main conclusion emphasizes that the sustainability of PKn depends on the ability to integrate moral values with digital media, participatory learning, and the social context of the school. With this orientation, Civics has strong potential to prepare young citizens who are resilient, ethical, and adhere to the values of Pancasila amidst the dynamics of modern education.

Keywords: *Civic Education; Character Education; National Identity; Independent Curriculum; Pancasila Values; Elementary School.*

Abstrak

Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan (PKn) di sekolah dasar dipahami sebagai fondasi awal pembentukan karakter kebangsaan serta moral sosial anak. Relevansi kajian ini lahir dari kebutuhan meninjau kembali posisi PKn dalam Kurikulum Merdeka, terutama sejak diterapkannya P5 yang menekankan penguatan profil pelajar Pancasila. Penelitian ini menelusuri dan merangkum 23 publikasi ilmiah dari berbagai jurnal bereputasi guna melihat bagaimana PKn bekerja dalam membangun kesadaran demokratis, toleransi, serta identitas nasional generasi muda. Melalui meta-analisis kualitatif, ditemukan perubahan orientasi PKn yang semula normatif menjadi lebih reflektif dan berbasis pengalaman. Nilai-nilai Pancasila, penggunaan PBL, strategi pembelajaran multikultural, hingga pemanfaatan media digital tampak memberi ruang bagi tumbuhnya kerja sama, empati, dan rasa kebangsaan di kelas. Perubahan ini menunjukkan bahwa PKn tidak hanya mengenalkan konsep negara, tetapi juga menghidupkannya dalam bentuk sikap dan perilaku sehari-hari siswa. Simpulan utama menegaskan bahwa keberlanjutan PKn bergantung pada kemampuan integrasi nilai moral dengan media digital, pembelajaran partisipatif, dan konteks sosial sekolah. Dengan orientasi demikian, PKn berpotensi kuat menyiapkan warga negara muda yang tangguh, beretika, dan tetap berpegang pada nilai Pancasila di tengah dinamika pendidikan modern.

Kata kunci: *Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan; Pendidikan Karakter; Identitas Nasional; Kurikulum Merdeka; Nilai Pancasila; Sekolah Dasar.*

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, Civics (PKn) has long been used as a way to help children understand the nation's core values from the very beginning of school. Rapidly changing global conditions due to technology and global trends have shifted the role of education. It serves not only as a place to receive material but also as a space for students to learn about moral, social, and national values that are essential to living together (Arisandhi et al., 2025). At the elementary school level, civics plays a significant role because through this learning, students begin to understand the meaning of Pancasila, learn to love their country, and recognize their responsibilities as part of society (Rhomadhoni & Sukartono, 2025). Values like mutual cooperation, honesty, and tolerance aren't enough if explained simply through theory. Children need to see, try, and experience these values so they can gradually become ingrained in them (Davi & Gunawan, 2025). For this reason, civics is often seen as an important foundation for shaping national character and attitudes in the younger generation.

Changes in education policy in recent years have presented Civics education with new challenges. The shift toward the Independent Curriculum and the emergence of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) have prompted a rethink of how Civics operates in schools. This subject can no longer be understood merely as rules or normative material, but must be present as values that students truly live out in their daily learning activities (Afifah, 2025b). In a situation like this, Civics not only conveys knowledge about citizenship, but also has the task of helping students develop character and social-emotional abilities that are in accordance with the Pancasila Student Profile, such as having faith and good morals, being independent, being able to reason critically, working together, and having creativity. In addition, it can be said that civic education must be in accordance with the values of Pancasila in all aspects of civic learning. Therefore, Pancasila is a characteristic of the Indonesian State as a philosophical system that animates all concepts of Civics teachings and must be applied in the life of the nation and state (Study & Haq, 2022).

Thus, Civics is encouraged to continue to adapt so that its role does not stop at the theoretical level, but becomes an important part in building students' character.

Changes in education policy require Civics (PKn) to reformulate its direction and objectives. This subject cannot simply adapt to new regulations but must also actively contribute to strengthening the nation's ideological resilience. Therefore, Civics needs to incorporate national values into a more lively teaching method, one that is closer to the situations students face, and provides space for them to learn through direct experience. With this approach, Civics (PKn) is expected to be able to meet the needs of the ever-changing era without losing its primary function.

The existence of Civics (PKn) also needs to be seen as an effort to maintain the relevance of national character education, especially as global ideological currents and digital culture increasingly influence students' lives. Rapid social change often brings significant impacts, such as a weakening sense of nationalism, a decline in social awareness, and the emergence of intolerant tendencies among adolescents (Yunita & Santosa, 2025). In situations like this, elementary schools are crucial because it is at this stage that the foundational values of national character begin to be built. Therefore, maintaining the existence of Civics education means ensuring that national values and public morality remain alive amidst the pressures of globalization and the increasing individualism of modern society (Pamungkas & Wutsqah, 2025). Efforts to maintain civics in elementary schools are essentially a strategic step to ensure that national character education does not lose its footing in the digital era.

Historically, civics education in Indonesia has undergone several changes, both in the curriculum and in the values it seeks to achieve. Previously, civics education focused more on understanding the state, the constitution, and state regulations. However, in recent years, this focus has shifted. Civics education now places greater emphasis on character building and national morals in response to the demands of the times (Anugrah et al., 2025). Modern society requires citizens

who are capable of social interaction, critical thinking, and practicing democratic values aligned with Pancasila. Therefore, today's civics education needs to help students internalize values such as justice, equality, and social responsibility through learning methods that are more inclusive and respectful of diversity (Harahap & Ndona, 2025). This change shows that civics is no longer just about teaching state knowledge, but also preparing students with character and social skills rooted in Pancasila values.

The Independent Curriculum provides ample opportunity for civics (PKn) innovation, particularly in strengthening student character development. One widely tried approach is Problem-Based Learning (PBL). In several elementary schools, this model has proven effective in fostering social awareness and a spirit of mutual cooperation among students (Wibowo, 2025). Through PBL, students' critical thinking skills develop, but equally important are the values of cooperation and solidarity that emerge from the collaborative learning process. Furthermore, the use of digital media, such as animated videos or learning content on YouTube, has also shown positive results in increasing student motivation to learn and understanding of Pancasila values (Putriani et al., 2025). These findings indicate that strengthening civics in the digital era needs to be done in ways that are engaging, relevant to students' lives, and capable of providing meaningful learning experiences.

In addition to innovations in teaching strategies, strengthening civics is also greatly influenced by the quality of teachers as bearers of values and moral role models in schools. The role of teachers goes beyond delivering material, but also fosters a school climate that fosters national values, such as discipline, responsibility, and respect for differences. (Sauma, 2025) In practice, civics teachers serve as moral guides, demonstrating good behavior in everyday classroom interactions. Hilman emphasized that teachers who are able to connect learning to real-world contexts and a spirit of nationalism tend to produce students who not only develop intellectually but also have stronger emotional and spiritual character (Hilman, 2025). In line with this, recent studies have shown that the existence of

Civics cannot be assessed solely on the basis of its content, but rather on the extent to which national values are truly present in students' learning experiences (Yunita & Santosa, 2025). Thus, the role of teachers is crucial in determining the success of civics as a medium for developing intelligent, ethical, and nationalistic characters.

Various empirical studies also show that civics has a significant impact on the development of students' social and moral attitudes. Wulandari, through her research, found that civics learning developed with a multicultural approach can foster tolerance and an ability to appreciate differences in elementary school students (Wulandari et al., 2025). Ginting's other findings suggest a similar finding: Civics can play a role in instilling an anti-corruption culture and an honest attitude from an early age (Ginting & Hutagalung, 2025). Both studies illustrate that strengthening civics not only impacts knowledge but also influences social behavior based on moral values.

Civics also plays a crucial role in balancing the influence of global modernization with the local values that characterize Indonesia. In a highly diverse society like Indonesia, character education through civics plays a role in preventing potential social conflict and strengthening a sense of togetherness as a nation (Rahmadiyahani et al., 2024). By instilling values such as justice, togetherness, and solidarity, Civics serves as a social foundation that maintains harmony amidst diversity. In this context, Civics' existence is evident not only in its place in the curriculum but also in its role as a moral force striving to address the challenges of the times.

In national education policy, Civics plays a crucial role because it is related to the educational goals as stated in Law No. 20 of 2003, namely to shape individuals who are faithful, pious, and have noble morals. However, to truly achieve these goals, Civics must be able to adapt to current developments without abandoning its fundamental identity as a values-based education. Efforts to revitalize Civics within the Independent Curriculum also encourage the integration of Pancasila values into every learning activity, so that students not only understand the concepts but are also able to practice them in their daily lives (Kusumawati &

Nugraha, 2024). With this approach, civics can be seen as a means of social reconstruction that simultaneously connects education, public policy, and the formation of national identity.

From the previous explanation, it can be seen that this research is important because it seeks to re-understand how Civics in Elementary Schools plays a key role in the formation of national character amidst changing times. Civics has a significant opportunity to help shape a generation capable of critical thinking, noble behavior, and a strong sense of national consciousness. However, the sustainability of this role requires Civics to continuously adapt to social and technological developments, including through updated teaching methods, the use of digital media, and the strengthening of multicultural and national values. Therefore, this research is necessary to strengthen the theoretical basis and empirical findings that demonstrate that Civics is not only a formal subject, but also a space for character development and national identity based on Pancasila..

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was compiled through a literature review analyzed using a qualitative meta-analysis approach. This method allowed researchers to more deeply examine the position of Civics Education (PKn) in elementary schools as a vehicle for national character formation, particularly within the framework of educational policy changes under the Independent Curriculum. The entire analysis process focused on exploring relevant scientific findings to examine how PKn is implemented, directed, and interpreted at the elementary education level, particularly in relation to strengthening moral, social, and national values in students.

This research design uses a descriptive-analytical approach, focusing on the process of searching, sorting, and interpreting various literature sources to build a comprehensive understanding of the issues discussed. All data were obtained from published scientific publications, without involving field data collection. The sources analyzed were secondary data derived from 23 scientific articles published between 2024 and 2025, all published in Scopus and Sinta-indexed journals.

The data collection process for this study was conducted through a search of relevant literature. Articles that did not align with the study's focus or fell outside the 2024–2025 timeframe were eliminated early on. Each publication that passed the selection process was then reviewed to explore key themes, such as Pancasila values, pedagogical reforms in Civics, character building, and social dynamics influenced by globalization. This approach ensured that only truly relevant academic sources were used to construct the analysis.

The literature synthesis in this study was conducted by organizing the coding results into a table to clearly demonstrate the patterns of similarities, differences, and direction of each study's contribution to the overall theme of the existence of Civics in Elementary Schools. Through a thematic coding approach, study materials were grouped based on emerging meaning patterns, forming interrelated thematic categories that more coherently illustrate the core research findings. This approach helps to present a complete structure of meaning, demonstrates relationships between themes, and demonstrates how each study contributes to the overall picture (Braun & Clarke, 2023). This finding shows that the structure of meaning formed is consistently integrated and clarifies the direction of each study's contribution to the existence of Civics in elementary schools.

Data analysis was carried out using content analysis techniques as explained (Miles et al., 2019). The process involves three steps: organizing and reducing the data, presenting the findings in a structured manner, and then re-examining the conclusions that emerge. From this sequence, the relationships between themes are carefully read to confirm the theoretical position of Civics as a vital part of national character formation.

This approach helps researchers see the connections between educational theory, policy, and practice more coherently, while capturing the latest developments in civics research in elementary schools. To maintain analytical sensitivity, the reading process was conducted reflectively and cross-checked using the framework of national character and Pancasila values. All references were noted in accordance with academic ethics, and each section was thoroughly paraphrased

to avoid plagiarism.

Because this research relies solely on a literature review, no human subjects or direct experiments were involved. All data was obtained from open and ethically sound academic sources. Throughout the process, the researchers ensured that every step of the synthesis and analysis was conducted honestly, transparently, and adhering to the principles of scientific integrity common to library research.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

A review of previous research provides a starting point for reviewing how Civics Education (PKn) is directed in elementary schools. Twenty-three reputable scientific sources analyzed revealed a relatively consistent pattern during the 2024–2025 period. These studies demonstrate a strong trend toward strengthening national character while simultaneously encouraging a curriculum reorientation that places Pancasila values at the core of learning. At the same time, various studies also note changes in Civics teaching methods, which increasingly require adaptation to technology and the dynamics of the digital classroom. Thus, previous studies provide an initial glimpse that Civics is no longer a static subject, but rather a field that continually adapts to contemporary educational needs.

An Empirical Study of the Role of Civics in Character Formation

Various studies have shown that civics at the elementary level serves as an initial setting for the formation of children's moral and social attitudes. An approach that links material to social activities has been shown to help students learn responsibility and understand the meaning of public morality (Davi & Gunawan, 2025). Another finding from Nawa also emphasized the role of the values of mutual cooperation and tolerance in creating a harmonious and respectful school climate (Nawa & Lestari, 2025). Overall, civics is a consistent means of instilling character through the instillation of the values of mutual cooperation, responsibility, and respect for differences.

On a broader level, Civics is understood as a field that integrates multiple dimensions, from legal and moral aspects to social values and nationalism. This

view aligns with Ginting's findings, which indicate that anti-corruption education can be instilled in elementary school through Civics. Both studies affirm that Civics is no longer a subject that merely conveys concepts of statehood, but rather serves as a value education that develops from social practices within the school environment.

Innovation in Civics Learning Methods in the Independent Curriculum Era

The transformation of civics learning began to be felt after the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. The differentiated approach made classes more flexible and adapted to each student's needs, making learning activities less uniform and more humane (Andini et al., 2025). On the other hand, the use of digital media, from animated videos to YouTube platforms, has been proven to significantly boost students' learning motivation and understanding of Pancasila values (Putriani et al., 2025). The combination of the two creates a more lively, adaptive, and relevant learning environment for civics, without altering the essence of the values being instilled.

Furthermore, the application of Problem Based Learning (PBL) in Civics has been proven to provide space for students to build social awareness while learning to work together in real situations (Wibowo, 2025). This model is able to connect Pancasila values to everyday learning experiences, so students not only understand the concepts but also feel their relevance. These findings reinforce the view that pedagogical innovation is crucial for the sustainability of Civics, especially as education demands closer alignment with students' experiences and needs.

Civics as an Instrument for the Nation's Ideological and Moral Resilience

Conceptual studies show that Civics plays a crucial role as a guardian of ideological values amidst rapid social and digital cultural change. Within this, Civics serves to safeguard national identity and reaffirm the values of Pancasila as society faces global challenges. Consistently, several studies emphasize that Civics also fosters national awareness, leading to public morality and respect for diversity. With this position, Civics serves as a learning space that not only instills the

fundamentals of citizenship but also maintains the integrity of national values in a constantly changing reality.

Beyond ideological aspects, several studies also show that civics plays a crucial role in mitigating the moral crisis that is beginning to emerge in students. Namiroh's findings, for example, demonstrate that civics instruction, which emphasizes national values, togetherness, and discipline, can help students build stronger and more honest characters amidst the social pressures of the digital era (Namiroh & Fadhillah, 2025). Through this process, civics not only imparts knowledge but also fosters the resilience and integrity children need to face the changing times.

Multicultural Values and Inclusivity in Civics

Multiculturalism and inclusive education receive significant attention in civics studies. Inclusive approaches applied in the classroom have been shown to help students understand equality and their role as members of the school community (Harahap & Ndona, 2025). Wulandari's findings also show that civics learning based on diversity can broaden attitudes of tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences at the elementary school level (Wulandari et al., 2025). These two studies confirm that civics education that upholds the values of inclusivity and multiculturalism can strengthen students' tolerance and civic awareness without having to deviate from the context of the values being taught.

Meanwhile, Rahmadiyahani developed the concept of Global Civics which combines universal values with local citizenship education (Rahmadiyahani et al., 2024). This idea emphasizes the need for a selective approach to ensure that incoming global values remain aligned with the ethical perspective of Pancasila.

Integration of Pancasila Values in the Context of the Independent Curriculum

Pancasila is understood as a legacy of values that continues to live on and serve as a moral reference for the nation. In the Independent Curriculum, these values remain at the core of cross-subject learning (Afifah, 2025). Through the implementation of P5, Civics gained a new space to translate these values into

activities more relevant to students' experiences. Amani's findings suggest that national defense messages can be conveyed through simple media such as children's animation, making the practice of these values feel more natural and easily accepted (Amani et al., 2025). In this way, the integration of Pancasila in Civics does not stop at the conceptual level, but rather occurs through activities that are contextual and relevant to students.

Conceptual Study on Revitalization of Civics

Civics needs to be refreshed through learning that involves student participation and connects Pancasila values with real situations they face every day (Pamungkas & Wutsqah, 2025). This step is crucial to prevent civics from becoming a formal routine and instead become a more honest and reflective process of internalizing values. Hilman also emphasized that the direction of civics learning should foster a spirit of nationalism that can adapt to technological changes and global cultural dynamics (Hilman, 2025). With this approach, the revitalization of civics can be more vibrant and relevant to student development.

Summary of Previous Studies

Table 1. Summary of Previous Studies

No	Researcher (Year)	Research Focus	Type of Study	Key Findings
1	Arisandhi et al. (2025)	The multidimensional nature of civics	Conceptual	Civics integrates morals, law, social, and nationalism
2	Davi et al. (2025)	Civics and moral formation	Empirical	Civics increases social responsibility and character
3	Putriani et al. (2025)	Digital media in civics	Experiment	Animated media increases motivation and understanding of values
4	Wibowo (2025)	PBL in Civics	Empirical	PBL strengthens social awareness and mutual cooperation

No	Researcher (Year)	Research Focus	Type of Study	Key Findings
5	Afifah (2025)	Pancasila Values in the Independent Curriculum	Conceptual	P5 expands the function of PKN as character education
6	Rahmadiyahani et al. (2024)	Global civics in civics	Conceptual	Global values can be adapted based on Pancasila
7	Wulandari et al. (2025)	Civics and tolerance	Empirical	Multicultural civics enhances inclusive attitudes
8	Harahap & Ndona (2025)	Civics and inclusivity	Conceptual	Civics expands equality and civic awareness
9	Ginting et al. (2025)	Civics and anti-corruption	Literacy	Civics forms public integrity and morality
10	Pamungkas & Wutsqah (2025)	Revitalization of Civics	Conceptual	Civics requires participatory and reflective learning
11	Anugrah et al. (2025)	Democracy and character	Literature	Civics instills democratic and critical character
12	Hilman (2025)	Learning nationalism	Textbook	Teachers are role models of national values
13	Sauma (2025)	Civics and national awareness	Literature	Civics builds public morality and diversity
14	Amani et al. (2025)	National defense values	Media analysis	Children's shows instill nationalism
15	Namiroh et al. (2025)	Civics and moral crisis	Empirical	Civics addresses the degradation of adolescent values
16	Yunita et al. (2025)	Civics and national policy	Conceptual	Civics maintains national identity in the era of globalization
17	Andini et al. (2025)	Differentiation of learning	Empirical	Adaptation of methods to strengthen Pancasila values
18	Nawa et al. (2025)	Tolerance and mutual cooperation	Literature	Civics strengthens social harmony

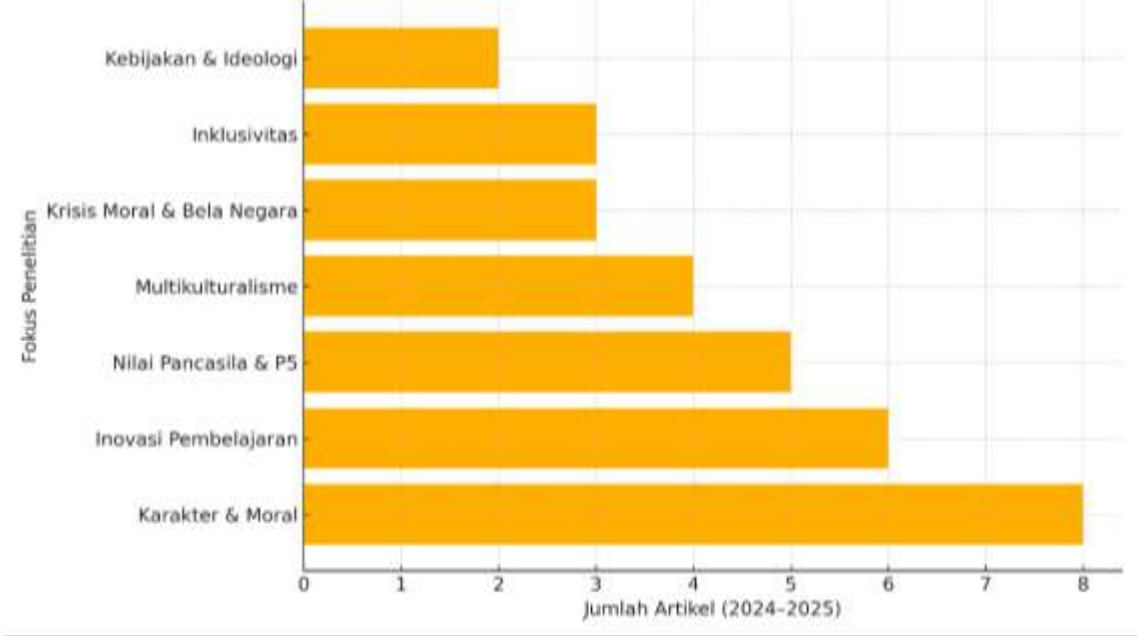
No	Researcher (Year)	Research Focus	Type of Study	Key Findings
19	Davi et al. (2025)	Moral character education	Empirical	The values of responsibility and honesty increase
20	Rahmadiyah et al. (2024)	Global civics approach	Conceptual	Adaptation of global and local values
21	Auliyana Harahap (2025)	Inclusive Education	Civics Literature	Citizenship awareness increases
22	Afifah (2025)	The Relevance of Pancasila	Conceptual	P5 strengthens students' morality
23	Wibowo (2025)	PBL in the Independent Curriculum	Empirical	Participatory learning strengthens social character

Trend and Gap Analysis (Research Gap)

Literature analysis over the past two years indicates a shift in the focus of civics research in elementary schools. The focus of studies is no longer focused on cognitive aspects, but rather on character development and social morality. Most studies also note that various new learning models and the reinforcement of Pancasila values within the Independent Curriculum are the main drivers of this change. However, there is a significant research gap: a. There is still little research that comprehensively examines the existence of Civics as a social value system in the context of digital education. b. There are not many studies that link P5 with the practical strengthening of national ideology in elementary schools. c. Most of the research is still descriptive in nature, not yet reaching the strategic analysis of national character education policy.

This gap underpins the need for a more comprehensive and reflective synthesis of the literature, so that a comprehensive picture of the existence of Civics in Elementary Schools can be understood within the context of strengthening national character. This statement also paves the way for examining Civics research trends for 2024–2025, as visualized in the following diagram.

Figure 1. Diagram of Research Trends in Civic Education (PKn) in Elementary Schools during 2024-2025



(Source: Results of researcher literature synthesis, 2025)

The diagram above displays 7 thematic categories with the number of articles (counts) as follows:

Table 2. 7 Thematic Categories with Number of Articles

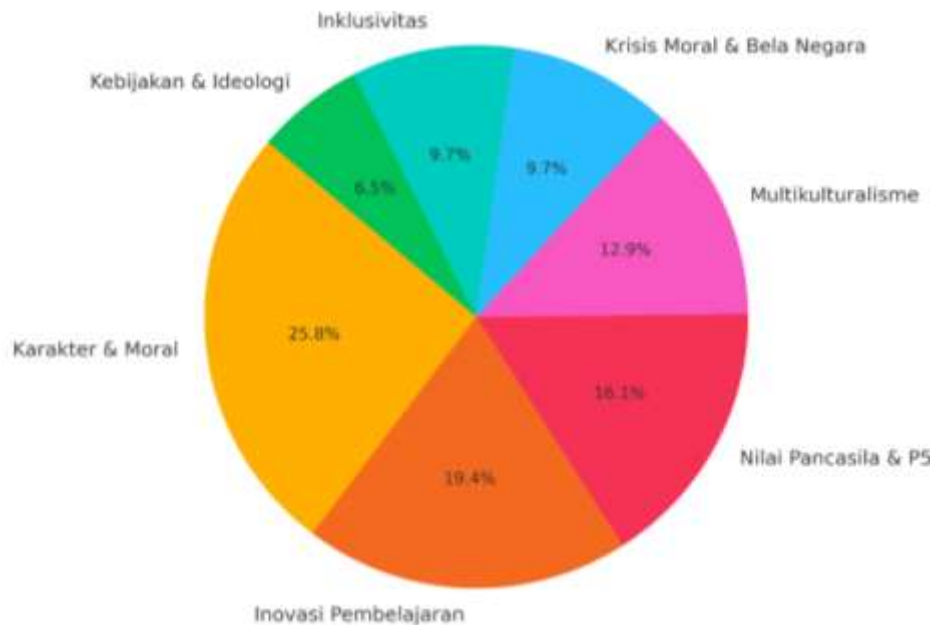
Theme	Number of Articles	Primary Source (example)
Character & Morals	8	Davi et al., 2025; Nawa et al., 2025; Ginting et al., 2025; Namiroh et al., 2025; Anugrah et al., 2025; Sauma, 2025; Afifah, 2025; Arisandhi, 2025
Learning Innovation	6	Andini et al., 2025; Wibowo, 2025; Putriani et al., 2025; Hilman, 2025; Wulandari, 2025; Amani et al., 2025
Pancasila Values & P5	5	Afifah, 2025; Rahmadiyahani et al., 2024; Pamungkas & Wutsqah, 2025; Anugrah et al., 2025; Wibowo, 2025
Multiculturalism	4	Wulandari, 2025; Rahmadiyahani et al., 2024; Harahap & Ndonga, 2025; Sauma, 2025
Moral Crisis & National Defense	3	Namiroh, 2025; Amani, 2025; Ginting, 2025
Inclusivity	3	Harahap & Ndonga, 2025; Wulandari, 2025; Sauma, 2025

A total of 31 thematic focuses emerged from the same coding process, as a single article can contain more than one theme. This distribution is not the result of a conventional statistical calculation, but rather a mapping I compiled based on content analysis in the Previous Studies section of the articles reviewed. Therefore, the horizontal diagram showing the dominance of the themes "Character & Morals" (8 articles), as well as "Learning Innovation" and "Pancasila Values & P5" (6 and 5 articles, respectively), can be considered appropriate because it aligns with the thematic coding results and the proportion of studies found in the literature used.

A more comprehensive picture of the direction of Civics research in elementary schools over the past two years is obtained through a proportional analysis of the main themes of the 23 articles reviewed. This approach helps demonstrate the extent of researchers' attention to various dimensions of Civics, from strengthening character and morals to the learning innovations emerging in the Independent Curriculum. This visualization also demonstrates how the integration of Pancasila values is increasingly prominent in recent research, particularly when linked to the demands of 21st-century learning.

The results of the research theme mapping were then displayed in a proportion diagram to demonstrate the researchers' attention trends. The visualization confirmed that the greatest focus remains on character and morals, while pedagogical innovation and multicultural national values have also shown increased attention in the past two years.

Figure 2. Proportion Diagram of Civic Education (PKn) Research Focus in Elementary Schools during 2024-2025



(Source: Results of processing researcher literature data, 2025)

The visualization in Figure 2 shows that character and moral themes comprised the largest portion, accounting for approximately one-third of all civics research in 2024–2025. This proportion indicates that researchers' primary focus remains on strengthening ethics, social responsibility, and character building from elementary school onward. This focus aligns with the direction of national character building, which is seen as the core of civics education at the early stages.

Meanwhile, learning innovation emerged as the second focus, accounting for approximately a quarter of the total study. This figure indicates that the sustainability of civics education is not solely supported by the delivery of normative concepts but requires a more creative and participatory learning approach. Consistent with previous findings, contextual and project-based learning has been shown to help students internalize civic values more meaningfully (Wibowo, 2025). These findings make it clear that learning innovation is a major pillar of the sustainability of civics education in elementary schools.

The implementation of P5 makes PKn function dually as a medium for reflecting national values and a means of forming a moral identity that is adaptive

to the digital era (Afifah, 2025). After that, these values are reapplied in learning activities that are close to the students' real experiences.

The themes of multiculturalism and inclusivity, which emerged in approximately one-fifth of the studies, demonstrate how civics education is moving toward values education that better values sociocultural diversity. This direction aligns with the view that civics education is now moving toward civic pluralism, a perspective that positions students as young citizens accustomed to living with differences and adopting an open attitude (Wulandari et al., 2025). This shift confirms that civics is no longer merely conceptual, but plays a role in building democratic attitudes that grow from everyday learning experiences.

Discussions on the themes of moral crisis, national defense, and policy and ideology only occupy a small portion, around twelve percent of the total study. While this is not a large amount, this space remains significant because it touches on the fundamental function of civics as a guardian of Pancasila values amidst rapid social change and the penetration of global culture (Yunita & Santosa, 2025). These three themes essentially serve as a reminder that civic education still carries an ideological responsibility that cannot be separated from national goals.

The general picture of this distribution indicates a shift in the direction of civics research in elementary schools. This shift is clearly toward a more reflective, collaborative, values-based education, with learning contexts closely related to students' lives. The focus is not only on thinking skills but also on fostering a stronger sense of moral responsibility and nationalism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Study Results

A synthesis of 23 analyzed articles shows that Civics Education (PKn) in elementary schools continues to move toward a more solid role as a foundation for national character formation. Since the implementation of the Independent Curriculum and the Pancasila Student Profile, the focus of PKn has gone beyond mastering civic concepts. Learning has shifted toward fostering moral awareness, spiritual attitudes, and social sensitivity, which are integral to shaping students'

identities.

Civics is ultimately understood as a space where Pancasila values are put into practice, not simply memorized. Here, students are encouraged to connect their moral perspectives with their learning experiences, fostering a more democratic and open attitude toward differences. In practice, Civics serves as an ethical compass, helping children recognize the boundaries of just, empathetic, and responsible behavior when facing rapid social change.

Distribution of Research Study Focus

Based on a review of these 23 publications, seven theme groups emerged that illustrate the direction of Civics research in elementary schools. Each theme demonstrates a specific trend, whether related to character, learning innovation, or aspects of Pancasila values, which continue to strengthen within the context of the Independent Curriculum. This mapping serves as a basis for observing how the focus of research has evolved and the re-understanding of Civics within the framework of national character formation, as outlined in the following table:

Table 3. Distribution of Research Study Focus

No	Focus of Study Theme	Number of Articles	Main Finding Characteristics
1	Character & Morals	8	Civics strengthens social morality, responsibility, and integrity of young citizens.
2	Learning Innovation	6	PBL model, digital media, and differentiated learning increase learning participation
3	Pancasila Values & P5	5	The integration of Pancasila values in the Independent Curriculum expands the function of Civics
4	Multiculturalism	4	Civics develops tolerance, empathy, and appreciation for cultural differences.
5	Moral Crisis & National Defense	3	Civics is a vehicle for raising awareness of nationalism and preventing the degradation of values.
6	Inclusivity	3	Civics learning based on equality and social inclusion strengthens students' empathy.

7	Policy & Ideology	2	Civics as an ideological stronghold in the national education system
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Most of the studies analyzed focused on the issue of character building and public morality. This direction is evident because Civics (PKn) does not stop at conveying concepts of statehood but rather focuses on instilling ethical values relevant to students' social realities. There is a strong emphasis on Civics as a space for moral habits and the development of social sensitivity, something seen as an essential foundation of basic education.

Research Trend Analysis

The visual analysis in Figure 1 from the previous section of the study shows that the theme of Character and Morals remains the focus of Civics research in Elementary Schools throughout 2024–2025. This portion appears to be the most dominant compared to other themes, followed by a focus on Learning Innovation and studies on Pancasila and P5 values. This pattern appears consistent with the research trend that positions Civics as a domain of character formation, not merely the delivery of state knowledge.

Recent research trends have shown a strong trend toward an approach that places character at the heart of civics learning. The focus is no longer on memorizing concepts, but on developing students' integrity, moral discipline, and social awareness from the beginning of elementary school (Davi & Gunawan, 2025). This trend also emphasizes that civics serves as a primary space for reviving Pancasila values in learning practices relevant to the challenges of 21st-century education.

Thematic Proportion of Research

To provide a proportional picture of the concentration of Civics research in Elementary Schools during the 2024–2025 period, a thematic distribution analysis was then compiled based on the findings in Figure 2. This visualization is used to show how researchers' attention is spread across several main themes, especially

those related to character, learning innovation, and the integration of Pancasila values in the Independent Curriculum.

The visualization results show that character and morality themes emerged as the largest contributors, accounting for approximately one-third of all the studies analyzed. This figure demonstrates the researchers' strong focus on instilling moral values, a sense of responsibility, and habits of honest behavior from elementary school onward. This focus is understandable, as elementary school is the starting point for the formation of attitudes that will later become integral to students' social lives.

The theme of learning innovation occupies about a quarter of the total studies, indicating a marked shift toward a more student-centered approach to learning. Several studies have shown how the use of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and digital media can motivate students to be more active and aware of social issues around them (Wibowo, 2025). These findings demonstrate that pedagogical innovation is not merely a complement, but an effective way to instill civic values through learning experiences that are more vibrant and relevant to children's worlds.

Furthermore, the research focus on Pancasila and P5 values, which covers approximately one fifth of the total study (20%), shows that the Merdeka Curriculum is an important space for updating the direction of Civics in elementary schools. The implementation of P5 provides new impetus because it is able to re-instill the national spirit through projects that emphasize cooperation and value reflection (Afifah, 2025). This finding confirms that the integration of these two aspects is an important foundation for the formation of students' moral identity amidst the rapid changes of the times.

The themes of multiculturalism and inclusivity together cover approximately 20% of the entire study, indicating the expansion of the direction of Civics towards a more open education that values social diversity (Harahap & Ndonga, 2025). Meanwhile, the theme of policy and ideology only accounts for around 8%, but remains important because it demonstrates the function of civics as a supporter of national values amidst rapid social change (Yunita & Santosa, 2025). From this

portion, it is clear that civics research is moving away from an indoctrination approach and placing more emphasis on strengthening moral values that are appropriate to students' real-life situations and the rapidly changing global context.

Synthesis of Finding Patterns

The results of the meta-synthesis of all the references studied show the emergence of four major patterns that explain how Civics in Elementary Schools maintains and strengthens the nation's character: a. **Reorientation of the Paradigm of Citizenship Education.** Civics has shifted from an approach that previously emphasized memorization to a perspective that relies on the values and experiences that students experience every day.(Anugrah et al., 2025)This new pattern allows Civics to function as a space for reflection, inviting students to re-read the social reality around them more clearly. This fosters a critical awareness that extends beyond cognitive awareness to moral and attitudinal domains. Civics ultimately emerges as a values education that grows from social experience, not simply a collection of concepts learned in the classroom. b. **Integration of Pancasila Values and the Independent Curriculum.** Pancasila values are now implemented through the Pancasila Student Profile Project (P5) (Afifah, 2025b; Pamungkas & Wutsqah, 2025). From this integration, Civics gained a more vibrant space, not only as ethical material in the classroom, but as a supporter of national identity that is relevant to the current educational situation. c. **Pedagogical Innovation and Digital Transformation.** Pedagogical innovations based on digital technology are beginning to take a significant role in civics learning. Various online media provide new opportunities to connect Pancasila values with students' everyday experiences, making the learning process feel more accessible and less rigid.(Amani et al., 2025; Putriani et al., 2025)This digital approach ultimately makes civics more flexible and easier to understand, because the values taught are presented in situations they actually encounter. d. **Multicultural and Inclusive Education.** Multicultural education in civics creates a more inclusive social sensitivity and encourages students to understand differences naturally.(Harahap & Ndonga, 2025)This

approach not only fosters a sense of nationalism, but also opens up space for students to see diversity as part of everyday life, not a threat. In another study, (Rahmadiyani et al., 2024) demonstrates how civics can foster global insight without abandoning local values. This is how multicultural education in civics works: strengthening national identity while still encouraging students to be sensitive to broader social realities.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

These findings demonstrate that Civics (PKn) cannot be maintained solely as a subject; it must ensure that national values remain alive amidst rapid social change. From a theoretical perspective, Civics (PKn) is understood as a flexible and dynamic value system, rather than a teaching that requires memorization, thus shaping Indonesians with Pancasila-based character and openness to global developments.

Practically, strengthening PKn requires: 1). Contextual curriculum development based on student experience. 2). Strengthening the capacity of teachers as role models of national values. 3). Utilization of educational technology to expand the internalization of Pancasila values.

Thus, Civics in Elementary Schools has a dual function: as a vehicle for national character education and also as a bulwark of the nation's ideology.

The Existence of Civics in the Framework of National Education Philosophy

Philosophically, the introduction of Civics Education (PKn) in elementary schools stems from the idea that education serves to shape the whole person, not just intelligence, but also faith and national character. This direction aligns with the mandate of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes the importance of developing a dignified national character and civilization. Civics serves as a conceptual space that instills fundamental national values derived from Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, not merely a normative subject. Within this framework, Civics acts as a moral and ideological support,

helping to maintain the direction of national education, ensuring it remains steadfast to national principles amidst the rapid global influence (Yunita & Santosa, 2025). With this role, Civics becomes a value guide that ensures the educational process does not lose its ideological foundation.

Thus, the existence of Civics in elementary schools not only preserves the legacy of nationalism, but places these values in a form that is more sensitive to changes in the times, starting from technological developments, cultural diversity, to the demands to be able to think globally.

The Relevance of Civics to the Independent Curriculum Paradigm

In the policy realm, the shift toward the Independent Curriculum has brought about a significant shift, with the previously teacher-centered learning model gradually being replaced by an approach that provides more space for students to actively construct their own learning experiences. This shift has given Civics a new position as a means of reflection that guides the strengthening of the Pancasila Student Profile (P5), which encompasses six core dimensions of student character development; 1). Faithful and noble. 2). Global diversity. 3). Mutual cooperation. 4). Independent. 5). Critical thinking, and Creative.

These values are applied more openly in Civics (PKn) learning, so that students do not stop at simply understanding the concept of citizenship, but gradually learn to practice national attitudes in their daily actions. This approach emphasizes that Civics (PKn) functions as a values-based curriculum that adapts to context, rather than simply requiring memorization. Through P5 projects, Pancasila values are presented in the form of social experiences, reflective conversations, and direct engagement with the surrounding environment. Therefore, Civics (PKn) has a dual role: it supports the pedagogical principles of the Independent Curriculum while maintaining the ideological direction that underpins national education.

Theoretical Implications for National Character Education

From a theoretical perspective, the synthesis conducted shows that PKn is moving towards transformative citizenship education, an approach that places student participation, reflection on values, and the formation of moral identity as the core of learning (Banks & Banks, 1997). The focus is no longer simply on imparting basic knowledge about the state, but rather on encouraging students to understand their place as ethical and responsible citizens. This approach demands a more conscious, reflective, and hands-on engagement with the lived experience of citizenship.

In the context of national character education, PKn functions as a moral infrastructure that supports three main pillars: 1). The moral values of Pancasila are a source of social ethics; 2). National awareness is the basis of national solidarity; 3). Democratic responsibility becomes an expression of social participation.

This theoretical implication shows that character education is not just a pedagogical issue, but also an ideological and cultural project of the nation.

Implications of National Education Policy

In terms of policy, the results of the literature synthesis show that the existence of Civics in Elementary Schools faces three main challenges: 1). Curriculum Decentralization and Value Consistency. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum, which allows for flexibility, means that Civics education implementation in various regions is not always uniform. This difference has the potential to lead to variations in moral standards if not followed by clear national guidelines.(Pamungkas & Wutsqah, 2025)Therefore, Civics needs to be reaffirmed as a core subject with a consistent and unchanging foundation of national values. 2). Civics Teacher Competence as a Value Facilitator. Civics cannot truly achieve its goals if teachers do not act as ethical role models and bearers of values in the classroom. The reflective qualities of teachers are a key factor in the success of student character formation (Hilman, 2025). Therefore, future teacher training needs to emphasize the development of affective sensitivity and moral reflection

skills, not just technical and procedural cognitive skills. 3). Digital Integration and Values Education. Digital transformation in schools opens up a wide space for creative learning, but it is not entirely free from the threat of values. Digital media in civics has been shown to increase participation and diversity in learning methods (Putriani et al., 2025). However, the rapid flow of technology can erode previously held moral values. Therefore, the direction of education policy must be continuously monitored to ensure that digitalization aligns with Pancasila values as the primary ethical guideline.

Thus, future national education policies need to place civics as a central point in safeguarding the nation's ideology. Character development should not be merely a topic of discussion but a core, sustainable strategy. Civics is positioned as a long-term value support to ensure national identity and morality are not weakened amidst changing times.

Conceptual Synthesis: The Future Model of Civics Existence

Based on the review of the synthesis results and theoretical framework, a conceptual model can be formulated regarding the direction of the existence of Civics in Elementary Schools in the future which is composed of three core components which are interconnected:

Table 4. Conceptual Model of the Existence of Civics in Future Elementary Schools

Dimensions	Value Focus	Implementation Form	Implications
Ideological	Pancasila National Values	& Strengthening project-based contextual learning P5,	Cultivating a reflective national identity
Pedagogical	Innovation Digital Transformation	& Problem Based Learning, digital media, collaborative learning	Forming critical and participatory citizens
Sociocultural	Multiculturalism & Inclusivity	Tolerance education, respect for diversity	Building social harmony and participatory democracy

This model shows that PKn is not just about teaching citizenship, but about building a vibrant ecosystem of values in schools, communities, and digital spaces.

Critical Reflection

Civics education currently stands at a transitional point between its traditional roots and the demands of new innovations. The key challenge is not simply maintaining the subject's inclusion in the curriculum, but ensuring its values are truly reflected in students' behavior. Revitalization efforts are not intended to change the content or essence of Civics, but rather to refresh its implementation strategies to keep pace with rapid social change.

Thus, the existence of Civics in elementary schools can be understood not merely as part of the curriculum, but as a broader cultural endeavor. Through this process, schools, together with the community, educate children to become individuals with critical thinking, strong ethical principles, and a strong sense of nationalism as the foundation of their lives.

CONCLUSION

This study reaffirms the central role of Civics (PKn) at the elementary school level, particularly in strengthening national character during the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. A synthesis of 23 scientific articles reveals a shift in the orientation of Civics (PKn) from normative teaching patterns to more reflective and contextual values learning. The integration of Pancasila, a cross-cultural approach, project-based learning, and the use of digital media enable Civics to function as a means of fostering democratic attitudes, social responsibility, and national identity from an early age. These changes demonstrate Civics as a civic education pathway that aligns with the demands of 21st-century learning while simultaneously shaping an adaptive and moral young generation amidst rapid social dynamics.

From a strengths perspective, this study provides a clear picture of the direction of Civics research in 2024–2025 through a fairly comprehensive mapping of themes. Consistent findings in aspects of character education, teaching

method reform, internalization of Pancasila values, and multicultural practices demonstrate Civics' contribution to strengthening public morality, social empathy, tolerance, and awareness of diversity in elementary schools. However, this literature review still contains several important gaps. In-depth studies on the integration of Civics with digital literacy are scarce, as are empirical discussions on the relationship between P5 and the strengthening of national ideology. Most publications are still predominantly descriptive, requiring further, more analytical research to confirm Civics' strategic position within the national education system.

Going forward, the development of Civics education should ideally be directed toward a citizenship model that integrates Pancasila values with digital skills, reflective learning, and applicable multicultural practices. The quality of teachers as facilitators of values is a key determinant of consistent character internalization in the classroom. With the support of aligned national policies across all regions, Civics education can maintain the sustainability of national values in an increasingly complex social environment. Overall, the findings of this study underscore that Civics education is a crucial moral and civic foundation for the formation of a resilient, ethical generation committed to democracy and diversity.

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